Centre Handbook
2018 - 2019

Contents

1. Welcome and Introduction

Welcome to the Open Awards Centre Handbook.

This handbook aims to give you a comprehensive overview of the processes required to deliver Open Awards qualifications and quality endorsed units and is intended as a primary reference for all those involved in the delivery, assessment and quality assurance of qualifications and units, including:

- Administration and Exams Officers
- Coordinators
- Managers (including quality managers)
- Internal Verifiers
- Tutors/Assessors

Please note there is separate guidance relating to the delivery of Open Awards [Access to Higher Education Diplomas.](#)

We hope you find this document useful and informative but if you have questions or suggestions about any information provided here, please feel free to contact the Open Awards team on 0151 494 2072 or email info@openawards.org.uk

All information we hold about your centre, key contacts, and your learners is held securely on our database and only used for the purposes provided. Please ensure you have parental/guardian consent to share your learners data with us if the learner is under the age of 13. If you share this data we are entitled to assume that you have this consent. You will find full details on how we use and protect your information at Open Awards in our [Privacy Notice](#). The Privacy Notice gives you details on:

- Your rights in relation to the information we hold
- How we keep it secure
- The type of information we collect and how we use it
- Who we share information with
- How long we hold information for

2. Working with Open Awards

As a not for profit organisation and a registered charity, we are passionate about our mission to change lives through learning and this manifests in our flexibility and creativity when it comes to working with our centres and learners. We know our centres want to support their learners to achieve the very best outcomes and, as a small team, we pride ourselves on having the flexibility, knowledge and passion to react quickly and intelligently to individual learners'and employers'needs.

VALUES

| Respect |
| Excellence |
| Aspiration |
| Innovation |
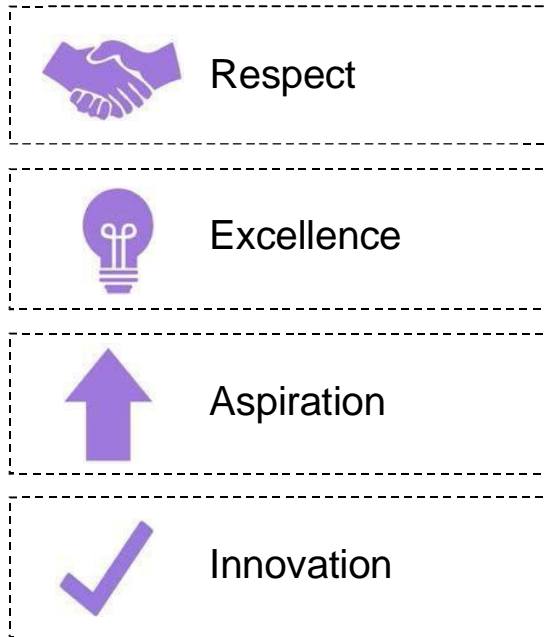
Your Dedicated Team
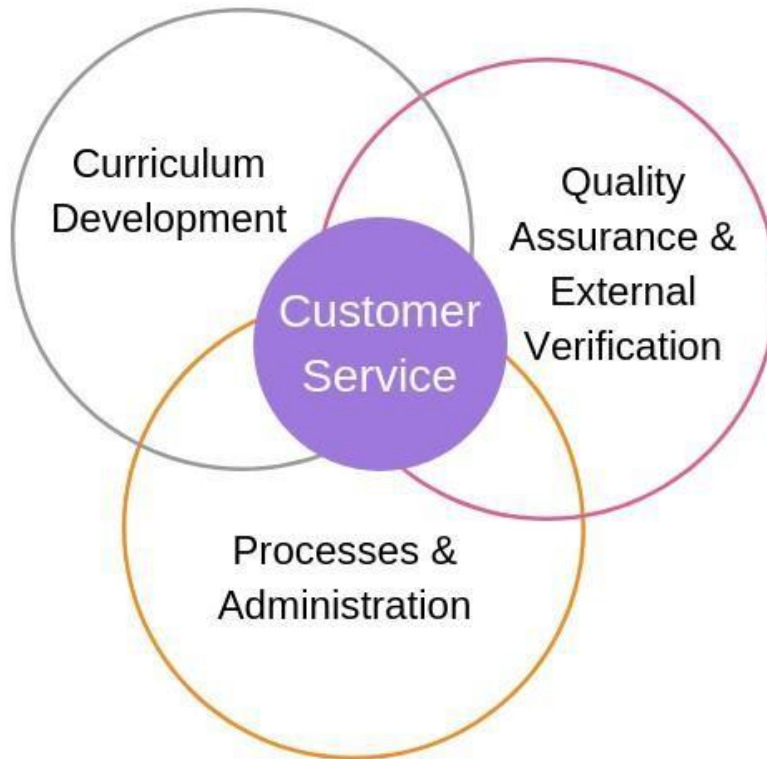
Curriculum Development	Supporting you to create your course and providing ongoing curriculum and development support
Quality Assurance and External Verification	Supporting you to feel confident that you and your learners are meeting the highest standards
Process and Administration	Supporting you through registrations and award processes and offering ongoing support

The Open Awards office is open between 9. 5pm Monday-Thursday and 9-4pm Friday.

All our team have a direct line and/or mobile phone. If you know who you want to talk to, please feel free to contact them directly.

For general enquiries, please call our switchboard on 0151 494 2072 or email info@openawards.org.uk.

3. Becoming an Open Awards Centre

In order to deliver Open Awards qualifications or units, you have to be a recognised Open Awards centre. If you are not already an Open Awards centre, please visit our website for more information or contact a member of the team on 0151 494 2072 or info@openawards.org.uk.

Simple Centre Recognition Process

Complete a New Business Enquiry form which can be found on our website - or simply call our team on 0151 494 2072

Our team will contact you and discuss your curriculum plan and quality assurance processes

You will be asked to complete a Centre Recognition Application Form and, once you have paid the Centre Recognition Fee, we will work together on a plan for maintaining quality and standards

You will be asked to sign a Centre Agreement, confirming you will adhere to Open Awards policies and procedures. On receipt, you will receive a Centre Recognition Certificate

You will now be able to start delivering your courses with on-going support from our team

How much does it cost?

Open Awards publish pricing information annually from 1st August. This can be found on our website.

A hard copy of all pricing information is also available on request from Open Awards.

Please refer to our Invoicing Policy for details of how and when your centre will be invoiced.

What Staff and Resources do I need?

Centre Staff Requirements

Centres must employ staff that are competent to undertake the delivery of Open Awards qualifications and units. In particular, Open Awards require named contacts to be in place at all times that undertake the following functions:

- Head of Organisation
- Centre Contact
- Quality Assurance
- Curriculum Development
- Administration
- Finance
- Safeguarding

A named individual may perform more than one of the functions listed, although we discourage all functions being taken on by the same one or two individuals.

Centres are responsible for notifying Open Awards of staff changes. A 'Changes to Centre Details Request Form' must be completed as soon as a change is known and submitted through the Portal.

Open Awards do not generally specify the experience individuals need to deliver its units/qualifications but expect that centres have appropriate occupationally competent staff with relevant sector experience for their role in the delivery of the units/qualifications being offered.

'Best practice' would be for:

- Assessors to hold the relevant D32/D33/A1/AQA unit(s),Level 3 Award in Education and Training and a degree of occupational competence
- Internal Verifiers to hold the relevant D34/V1/IQA unit(s) and Level 3 Award in Education and Training

Please be aware that some qualifications have specific staff and assessor requirements. This information can be found in the appropriate qualification guides.

Centres are responsible for ensuring that their staff have access to appropriate training and support. Centres are encouraged to take advantage of the range of training opportunities available through Open Awards. Further information can be found on the Open Awards website.

Helpful documents

Changes to Centre Details Request Form	This document is used to advise Open Awards of any changes to key contacts at the centre.

Resources and Arrangements

Approved centres must have the necessary facilities, equipment to deliver and appropriate quality assurance systems in place:

- All resources (including buildings, equipment, systems and materials) enable it to effectively and efficiently undertake the delivery of the qualification in line with Open Awardsqrequirements
- A workforce of appropriate size and competence is available to undertake the delivery of Open Awards qualifications and units
- Staff should be provided with appropriate induction and professional development to ensure they can maintain the relevant expertise and competence required by Open Awards
- Sufficient managerial and other resources available to enable it effectively and efficiently to undertake the delivery of the qualification and units as required by Open Awards
- Effective quality assurance and management processes in place which it regularly monitors and keeps under review

Working with third parties, partnerships and satellite sites

Open Awards are willing to allow approved centres to work with other organisations in delivering high quality provision. However, you should seek prior approval from us before allowing a third party to deliver any part of Open Awardsqqualifications, including assessments and internal quality assurance.

Approved centres must make sure that the quality assurance and management processes they follow are applied across all third parties, partners and satellite sites. You must take responsibility for the management of third parties and keep their capacity and capability under review.

Open Awards will monitor any third party arrangements for delivery, assessment or IQA of qualifications and units to check that they are managed appropriately. Third party arrangements will be included in all Quality Activity Reports produced by LQR/EQAs.

Conflicts of interest

It is a condition of centre approval that an approved centre must have a process to identify, monitor and manage any conflicts of interest in assessment outcomes. Procedures must be in place for avoiding conflicts of interest and, where a conflict of interest cannot be avoided, procedures must be in place for managing that conflict of interest.

Centres must take all reasonable steps to avoid any part of the assessment and verification of a learner's work being undertaken by any person who has a personal interest in the result of the assessment. This includes internal marking, assessment and quality assurance activities.

The assessor role and the internal verifier role must be carried out separately. The assessor cannot quality assure their own assessments as this presents a conflict of interest.

All conflicts should be documented in a conflicts of interest register which is maintained and monitored on an ongoing basis and which should be made available to Open Awards upon request.

Once a potential or actual conflict of interest has been identified, Open Awards must be informed immediately by completing a **Conflict of Interest Declaration Form,** available on the website, and emailing to **quality@openawards.org.uk**.

Where the centre works in partnership with another organisation, or sub-contracts part of the delivery of Open Awards qualifications, they must manage all potential conflicts of interests arising from third parties, partners and sub-contractors.

Helpful documents

Conflicts of Interest Policy	This document outlines our policy for identifying and managing conflicts of interest both at Open Awards and at our centres.
Conflict of Interest Declaration Form	This document is used to advise Open Awards of any potential or actual conflicts of interest identified.

Centre policies and procedures

All approved centres must have must have a number of policies and procedures in place that reflect the way you operate across all your learning provision. They should align with Open Awards policies and procedures wherever possible.

When policies are created or amended, you should include a clear set of procedures to show how the policy will be implemented, reviewed and updated.

They should be working documents that can be accessed by staff and learners alike. Open Awards reserves the right to review these documents at any time and check they are being followed.

Documents must cover the following areas:

Business Policies	Quality Policies
- Complaints - Data Protection - Risk Assessments for specific risk posed by your organisation, e.g. violence at work, service users with challenging behaviours, visitors etc. - Employers Liability Insurance - Equal Opportunities and Diversity - Fire Evacuation - Health and Safety - Checking for Criminal Records - Public Liability Certificate (minimum cover £1milion) - Safeguarding - Conflicts of Interest	- Access to Fair Assessment - Assessment Invigilation - Learner enquiries and appeals - Internal verification and standardisation - Malpractice and Maladministration - Distribution of Certificates for Learners - Recognition of Prior Learning - Quality assurance review of the course (monitoring learner progress, review & feedback) - Learner support (including advice and guidance, initial assessment and induction, protecting interest of learners in event of withdrawal)

4. Setting up your course

Open Awards
Delivering Qualifications and Units
Step by Step Guide

Plan Your Course
STEP 01

How long is it going to be?
What are the goals/objectives?
Where and how are you delivering it?
What resources do you have?
What level are your learners?

Choose your qualification or units. If delivering a qualification, remember to check that the units you choose meet the Rules of Combination and request approval via a New Qualification Request Form (NQRF)

If you are delivering units or Skills for Further Learning and Employment qualification, please complete a New Course Request Form (NCRF) Submit your NCRF or NQRF via the Open Awards secure portal.

STEP 02
Plan Your Delivery and Assessment

Write your session plans and decide what evidence you will collect to fulfil the assessment criteria on the units

Complete internal pre-course verification checks prior to delivery

Complete your induction and IAG sessions and start delivering your programme

Register Your Learners
STEP 03

Register your learners through the Open Awards secure portal
Check the guidance for registration timescales for short and long courses to avoid late charges

Deliver your programme to your learners, assessing work throughout and providing feedback on progress

STEP 04
Assess and Verify Learners' Work

Mark and assess all the evidence your learners have produced against the assessment criteria

Complete Internal Verification checks (both during programme and at end of programme)

Complete the Direct Entry of Results (DER) to confirm achievement via the Open Awards secure portal

Arrange for EV visit to confirm completion and achievement or complete Approved Internal Verifier activity

Certification
STEP 05

Receive learner certificates, acknowledge receipt via the Portal and arrange to distribute

www.openawards.org.uk
@openawards

What do we offer?

At Open Awards, we are committed to flexibility and creativity. With this in mind, we have different types of accreditation to suit different learner needs and outcomes.

An overview of our accreditation solutions are below.

	Qualifications	Qualification Units	Quality Endorsed Units	Badge of Excellence
	Qualifications regulated by Ofqual and Access to HE Diplomas regulated by QAA	Individual Units that sit within a qualification	Highly-bespoke units tailored to suit your learnersq needs	Quality Mark recognising your programme as being at an excellent standard
Externally Regulated (Ofqual or QAA)				
Robust quality assurance				
Requires learner assessment and verification				
Quality assures learner outcomes				
External review of programme materials and outcomes				
Learner receives a certificate				
Flexible delivery methods				
Expert support tailoring provision				
Access to training for your staff				

Please note, separate guidance for the delivery of our Access to HE Diplomas or Badge of Excellence Quality Mark is available via our website.

What is the Regulated Qualification Framework (RQF)?

The Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) is the system for cataloguing all qualifications regulated by Ofqual in England. Qualifications are catalogued based on their size and level. The RQF replaced the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) in October 2015.

You can search all Open Awards qualifications on the RQF on our website.

A register of all Awarding Organisationsqqualifications maintained by Ofqual can be found here.

Qualification Size

The size refers to the amount of time it is likely to take to complete a qualification, including any assessments or examinations. The size is expressed in terms of a Total Qualification Time (TQT).

We also provide a recommended number of Guided Learning Hours (GLH). This gives you an indication of the amount of time that the learner should normally be taught or supervised, rather than studying alone. GLH includes any invigilated examinations or assessments.

Open Awards qualifications are referred to as Awards, Certificates or Diplomas. This reflects the Total Qualification Time as shown below:

	Total Qualification Time
Award	Between 1 and 129 hours.
Certificate	Between 130 and 369 hours.
Diploma	370 hours or above.

Qualification Level

Levels indicate the difficulty and complexity of the knowledge and skills associated with any qualification. Open Awards are approved to provide qualifications from Entry Level to Level 4. Information about the different levels can be found here.

The size and level of each of our qualifications, including information on the Total Qualification Time and Guided Learning Hours, can be found on our website and in the individual qualification guides.

Choosing a Qualification

We have qualifications available in the following sectors:

PREPARATION FOR LIFE AND WORK	AGRICULTURE, HORTICULTURE AND ANIMAL CARE	ARTS, MEDIA AND PUBLISHING	CONSTRUCTION, PLANNING AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT
EDUCATION AND TRAINING	HEALTH, PUBLIC SERVICES AND CARE	INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY	LEISURE, TRAVEL AND TOURISM
RETAIL AND COMMERCIAL ENTERPRISE	ENGINEERING AND MANUFACTURING TECHNOLOGIES	FUNCTIONAL SKILLS	SKILLS FOR FURTHER LEARNING AND EMPLOYMENT
	SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS		

To find a qualification to meet the needs of your learners, you can search our website here. From here you can access the qualification guide, rules of combination, a list of units and the purpose statement for the qualification.

When delivering Open Awards regulated qualifications, centres should ensure that the rules of combination are fully adhered to, including the use of mandatory and optional units. The rules of combination enable the learners to benefit from the flexibility of the qualification whilst enabling full qualification achievement. The rules of combination specific to the qualifications are outlined in the individual Qualification Guides.

To check whether a qualification is eligible for ESFA funding, you will need to check The Hub.

Designing a Course Using Individual Units

Open Awards offers different types of units:

Qualification Units	Units that form parts of a qualification regulated by Ofqual
Quality Endorsed Units	Units that do not form part of a qualification regulated by Ofqual

You can search for and view all units available to be used in individual unit courses via our Unit Bank on our website.

You can package units together to create a bespoke course using either qualification or quality endorsed units. Please note, you cannot create a course with a mixture of qualification and quality endorsed units.

It is essential that your learners are aware of what type of unit they are working towards, if they are not completing a full qualification. If you are unsure about what type of unit you are delivering, please contact a member of the team for advice.

If we do not currently have a unit that meets the requirements of your learners, Open Awards can work with you to create a bespoke quality endorsed unit.

Please contact the team for more information or for help with finding the right units for you.

To check whether a qualification unit is eligible for ESFA funding, you will need to check The Hub.

Qualification and Unit Reviews

Open Awards reviews its qualifications and units through a validity process.

Validity is about ensuring that our qualifications have a clear purpose and are successful in achieving this purpose. Our validity process has been designed to check that there is clear evidence that those who successfully complete an Open Awards qualification have met the aim or purpose of the particular qualifications. Our qualifications should also fit with the Mission and Vison of Open Awards . which is to ʻchange lives through learningʼ

Validity for Open Awards means:
- a strong focus on the quality of the qualifications we provide and an ongoing review process allowing us to take action where problems are identified
- flexibility, ensuring that qualifications we provide respond successfully to the needs of employers and learners across the sectors we support

- a responsibility for providing easily accessible information about the qualifications we offer for learners, employers and training providers
- demand for the qualification from a defined target market
- an assessment approach consistent with the purpose of the qualification
- robust quality assurance arrangements

We collect a range of quantitative and qualitative data to feed into the qualification and unit review process including:
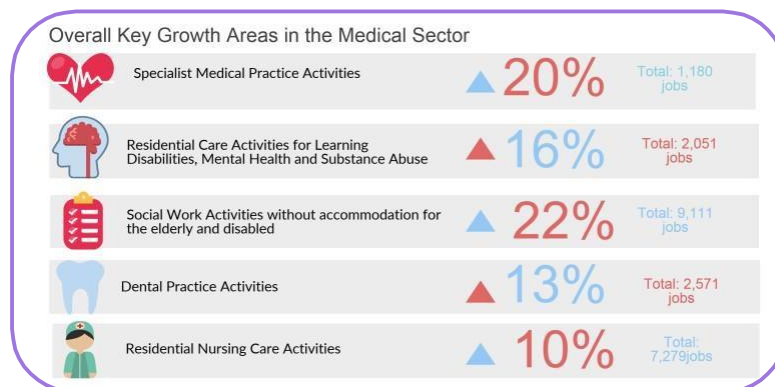
Quantitative Data

- Number of registrations
- Number of awards
- Progression data
- Number of centres utilising qualifications/units

Qualitative Data

- Feedback from questionnaires sent to relevant centres and/or employers two months before the date of the validity panel
- Feedback from Business Development Consultants and Lead Quality Reviewers
- Additional data collected by Open Awards

Collect supporting labour market intelligence data - EMSI

EMSI will be used to gather labour market intelligence to support the validity of qualifications including information on expected growth in occupation and/or industry; annual turnover of jobs in occupation; and related occupations impacted.

Overall Key Growth Areas in the Medical Sector

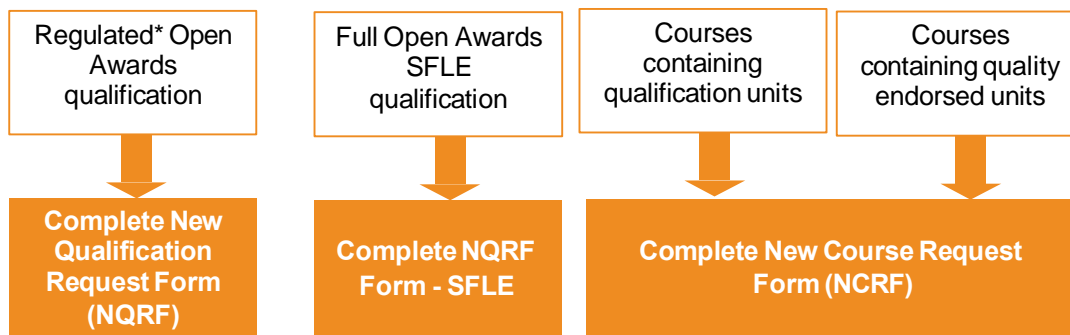|		
Specialist Medical Practice Activities	▲ 20%	Total: 1,180 jobs
Residential Care Activities for Learning Disabilities, Mental Health and Substance Abuse	▲ 16%	Total: 2,051 jobs
Social Work Activities without accommodation for the elderly and disabled	▲ 22%	Total: 9,111 jobs
Dental Practice Activities	▲ 13%	Total: 2,571 jobs
Residential Nursing Care Activities	▲ 10%	Total: 7,279 jobs

It is really important to us that we are able to utilise the expertise and feedback from our centres and learners so please take the time to complete validity surveys when circulated and to give us feedback throughout the life cycle of a qualification.

All information on the qualifications we are reviewing can be found on our website. You can find information on when the qualification or unit you are using is due for review in the individual qualification guides.

How do I set up a qualification or course?

To set up a new qualification or course, you will be required to submit the appropriate request form.

Regulated* Open Awards qualification	Full Open Awards SFLE qualification	Courses containing qualification units	Courses containing quality endorsed units
Complete New Qualification Request Form (NQRF)	Complete NQRF Form - SFLE	Complete New Course Request Form (NCRF)	

NQRF, NCRF-SFLE and NCRF documents must be submitted prior to the qualification being delivered. Failure to do so could potentially result in learners not being awarded. To offer a Skills for Further Learning qualification you must package the units you wish to offer into a course using the NCRF . SFLE Form.

Where can I find these forms?
These forms can be found under the "View Documents" section of the Secure Portal (Resources / Documentation page under "Open Awards Templates"). To access documents already completed select the name of the document from the drop down menu.

New Qualification Request Form (NQRF)
When completing this form, please note that the following information is mandatory:

Field	Details
Centre name	As appears on your Centre Agreement
Qualification details	Specify the qualification(s) and level you wish to offer.
Similar qualifications offered	Information about any other qualification you offer via another awarding organisation should be entered.
Declaration	This section must be completed to enable the form to be processed

Centres should ensure that learners are registered for Qualification courses prior to the Qualification accreditation end date and/or unit expiry date, and also meet the minimum age requirements for the Qualification.

New Course / Qualification Request Form - SFLE (NCRF - SFLE)

When completing this form, please note that the following information is mandatory:

Field	Details
Centre name	As appears on your Centre Agreement
Qualification details	Select the qualification you wish to offer. Only select one qualification per request form.
Course Title	Choose an appropriate title for your course avoiding use of the words Award, Certificate or Diploma in the title, or any other words that could be confused with the qualification.
Authorised Internal Verifier	If a centre has an Authorised Internal Verifier (AIV), the assigned AIV will be asked to verify the course. If a centre does not have an AIV, this field should be left blank.
Unit Details	Enter the units you wish to offer using the qualification guide to ensure units are chosen meet the rules of combination required for the qualification you are offering.
Declaration	This section must be completed to enable the form to be processed

New Course Request Form (NCRF)

When completing this form, please note that the following information is mandatory:

Field	Details
Centre name	As appears on your Centre Agreement
Course Title	A centre cannot use the words Award, Certificate or Diploma in the title of their course, or any other words that could be confused with a qualification e.g. Functional Skills; Access to HE Diploma
Authorised Internal Verifier	If a centre has an Authorised Internal Verifier (AIV), the assigned AIV will be asked to verify the course. If a centre does not have an AIV, this field should be left blank.
Intended Credit Value	This must be the total number of credits you expect a learner to achieve on this course
Declaration	This section must be completed to enable the form to be processed

Centres should ensure that a course is fit for purpose and only register learners for whom the course is appropriate for their ability and age.

Please see our Privacy Notice for details on how we use, store and protect all personal information collected by Open Awards for our legitimate business interests.

How do I submit these forms?
Completed forms should be submitted via the Documents section of the Secure Portal. More information on downloading or uploading documents can be found under the Documents section of the Secure Portal Guidance.

What happens when I have submitted these forms?

Open Awards process these forms within 5 working days of receipt. If the application is successful, you will be sent a qualification or course approval email, including a link to the relevant qualification guide, or a course confirmation report.

Rules of Combination

To achieve the regulated qualifications, learner must meet the rules of combination. If the learner does not meet the rules for the intended qualification, an alternative relevant qualification may be awarded in line with the Open Awards Awarding Policy

What will learners receive?

Qualification	Upon successful completion of the rules of combination, learners will be awarded the full qualification for which they were registered **and** a certificate listing the units achieved. Learners successfully completing a Functional Skills qualification will be awarded the full qualification for which they were registered.
Course	Upon successful completion of a course, learners will be awarded a course certificate listing the course name and units achieved. Upon successful completion of a course offering a Skills for Further Learning qualification, learners will be awarded a course certificate listing the course name and units achieved plus a qualification certificate.

How should I promote or market my course?

We are committed to supporting you with your marketing and communications. Once you are an approved Open Awards centre, you may use our logo to support the marketing of our Open Awards programmes and courses.

When marketing your courses or programmes, it is essential that any marketing or information provided is clear and accurate so that your learners are fully informed about what they are studying, what they will achieve at the end, what type of accreditation it is and what their progression opportunities are.

For full advice and guidance on how to market your course and the use of the Open Awards logos, please read our centre marketing guidance.

There are lots of ways we can help you to market your course:

Case Studies and News Stories	We are always happy to share best practice case studies on our website, newsletter and via social media. This could be an individual learner story, a best practice programme, award of learners or a case study of your centre as a whole.
Events and Celebrations	If you have any events or celebrations that you would like a member of the team to attend either as a delegate or a speaker, please contact the marketing team on marketing@openawards.org.uk We are happy to share details of your events and celebrations via our social media channels.
Video Content	If you would like to work with us to create an animation or video of your learners or programmes, please contact the team.
Social Media	Please engage with us via social media: @openawards YouTube Channel www.linkedin.com/company/openawards
Feedback and Feedforward	We welcome any and all feedback and will share this where appropriate via our social media platforms and websites. We provide continuous feedback to our centre through external verification visits, quality compliance meetings and curriculum support meetings/events. You can make use of your EV and Quality Review centre reports in your marketing but please ensure any content accurately reflects the original. Alternatively, please contact the marketing team to ask us for a quote or feedback to use in your marketing materials or funding applications

5. Registering Learners

How do I Register my Learners?

There are different timescales for registrations dependent on duration of the course

Short courses (less than 15 weeks)	Register learners within 25 working days of the start date of the course
Long Courses (15 weeks duration +)	Register learners within 60 working days of the start date of the course

If centres register learners after these times a late registration fee may be charged and centres will be required to take action to prevent further late registrations.

All learner registrations submitted to Open Awards will be charged in accordance with our published charge. Please refer to the "Pricing Information" section of our website.

Online Registration

To register learners the Administration Contact should create a new Course Run via the Secure Portal. For full guidance on this process please refer to the Web Portal - User Guidance.

What is a unique learner number?

The ULN is a unique10-digit number used in England, Northern Ireland and Wales to identify an individual learner. Most learners aged 14+ have a ULN and it is designed to work with a learner's Personal Learning Record (PLR) to provide proof of their learning and achievements.

The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), an executive agency of the Department for Education (DfE), creates and holds the Unique Learner Number to enable effective management of information to fulfil the functions of the DfE. The Learning Records Service (LRS) is operated by the ESFA and collects information about learners registering for qualifications and qualification units.

The ULN is mandatory for all learners aged 14 or over or in receipt of a diploma qualification. ULNs are also mandatory for learners in England funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

We request ULNs from a centre at the point of registration to enable us to upload achievement data to a learner's Personal Learning Record (PLR) for qualifications and qualification units achieved, to allow the learner to access this information.

The Personal Learning Record (PLR) is a learner's permanent record of their qualifications and achievements.

To be able to obtain ULNs for learners your centre must be registered as a Learner Registration Body (LRB).To register as a Learner Registration Body further information can be found at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/learner-registration-bodies-user-guide

Once you are registered you will be able to obtain ULNs for your learners.

NB: Some learners may already have a ULN.

Fair Processing and Extended Privacy Notices

As an awarding body we have a responsibility under the Data Protection Act to ensure that learners are informed of how their information is processed and shared. Please ensure you make learners aware that their information will be passed to Open Awards for registration purposes. You should also provide a copy of the Privacy Notice . Learner Information to your learners so that they understand what data we hold about them, why we hold it and how their data is used.

We strongly recommend that you give learners or encourage learners to read the LRS Privacy Notice on the Learning Record Service website to understand how their data is used and may be shared.

Centres must also make learners aware that upon achievement of qualifications and/or qualification units - achievement details will be passed by Open Awards to the Learning Records Service for the purpose of updating their Personal Learning Record.
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How do I amend a course run?
After registrations have been submitted, the Administration Contact should contact their Open Awards team to discuss any requests for changes.

Once the course run has been submitted, you may register additional learners at any time prior to the end date of the course (for guidance please refer to the Web Portal - User Guidance. Should you identify learners that have been missed following the end date of the course; you will need to contact the Open Awards team for assistance.

An administration charge may be applied for amendments made following the initial registration of learners to a course.

Recognition of Prior Learning

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) is a process by which learners are given credit for knowledge, understanding or skills they have already achieved.

It is used to recognise a learner's achievement outside the rules of combination for a qualification where this achievement is deemed to be equivalent to the demands of the unit(s) against which it is being considered.

Open Awards' approach to RPL encompasses learning that is either supported by formal certificated achievement or informal, non-certificated learning or experience.

In order to be considered eligible for RPL, the learner will need to show that the knowledge, understanding or skills they already have means that they do not need to repeat units or complete additional assessment activity. The learner may also need the support of their employer or other organisation (e.g. if they have worked as an unpaid volunteer) in order to be able to confirm achievement of assessment criteria for practical tasks where there may be no tangible evidence available.

The centre must ensure that all learning outcomes and assessment criteria being claimed are met by mapping prior learning evidence to ensure it is valid and current, reliable, authentic and sufficient to meet the requirements of the unit(s).

RPL Request Forms (supported by mapping evidence) should be submitted to quality@openawards.org.uk as soon as the learner is registered. A decision will be made within 5 working days of receipt of a completed form supported by mapping evidence.

Where learner evidence is not sufficient to cover all learning outcome for which RPL is being requested, additional assessment methods should be employed to generate the sufficient evidence required to make a safe assessment decision.

Helpful documents

Recognition of Prior Learning Policy and Procedures	This policy states why and how Open Awards considers RPL requests.
RPL Request Form	This document needs to be completed for each learner for which RPL is being considered. The form can be used to cover multiple units for one learner.

6. Delivering and Assessing

Assessment Planning

Once approved to deliver Open Awards qualifications and units, centres must plan how learners will be assessed.

Most Open Awards qualifications and units have been designed around the principle that the learner will build evidence towards the achievement of the assessment criteria over a period of time.

It is likely that a variety of assessment methods will be used so an assessment plan should be created outlining how each unit will be assessed. Consideration should be given to:
- How each unit/ assessment criteria will be assessed
- The availability of resources at the centre
- Staff expertise (and training requirements)
- The most appropriate assessment methods to use
- Devising assessment tasks that can be evidenced and verified
- Scheduling assessment across the programme to ensure that learners are not over-assessed at any given point.

Centres must make sure that sufficient evidence is generated for each learner that clearly meets all learning outcomes and assessment criteria for all relevant units.

It is essential that all tutors/assessors:
- Know who is managing the internal quality assurance process and who will carry out the internal quality assurance of the work they will be assessing
- Clearly understand the internal verification requirements and procedures
- Have information about, and access to, training opportunities and support materials, both within the centre and as provided by Open Awards
- Know about any issues relevant to their work that may have arisen from previous Internal or External Quality Assurance reviews or from evaluation of the verification process.

Helpful documents

Assessment Mapping Sheet	This document allows you record your planned activities for a unit and ensure that all assessment criteria can be met and evidenced.
Assessment Definitions	This document defines fourteen different types of assessment that could be used to generate learner evidence against Assessment Criteria.

Assessment methods

Open Awards normally allows centres the freedom to assess their learners in a way that best suits the centre and their learners so long as the assessment criteria are met in an appropriate way. Occasionally units and/or qualifications prescribe the assessment methods that must be used . this will be clearly identified in the qualification guide.

Where assessment methods are not prescribed, centres should use a variety of assessment methods to assess learners as this will allow learners to demonstrate their knowledge and/or skills without relying on a single assessment method. The most important factor is that the assessment method(s) is appropriate for the intended outcome.

Assessors must consider the way that assessment criteria are worded to identify what is being assessed. When designing assessment activities, assessors should pay attention to the verbs used in the Assessment Criteria . e.g. Describe, List, Compare, Evaluate . as these indicate what types of assessment activities might be appropriate.

Assessors can then identify the most appropriate assessment method to demonstrate learnersqachievement against each assessment criterion.

Helpful documents

Qualification guides	Each qualification guide includes a recommended assessment method section. These documents should be reviewed to check for any mandatory or barred methods.
Assessment Definitions	This document defines fourteen different types of assessment that could be used to generate learner evidence against Assessment Criteria.

Devising assessment tasks

Once centres have decided on appropriate assessment methods they must devise assessment tasks that are fit for purpose and:

a) Deliverable using the available resources;
b) Allow learners to meet **all** learning outcomes and **all** assessment criteria;
c) Allow learners to meet the level specified by the unit/qualification criteria;
d) Allow accurate and consistent grading to be applied (where appropriate);
e) Allow learners to generate evidence that can be authenticated as their work;
f) Written using language appropriate to the level.

It is not necessary to design an assessment task to assess each assessment criterion separately. An assessment task can be used synoptically to meet more than one assessment criterion. Each assessment task must be mapped to the assessment criteria that it is intended to meet. This will allow centres to monitor that all assessment criteria from every unit being delivered will be assessed.

If assessment evidence is inaccurately and/or inconsistently mapped to assessment criteria then then Open Awards may not be able to certificate learners.

The strategy for assessment, and the assessment tasks should be internally quality assured prior to use to make sure they are fit for purpose. We recommend that this is recorded on the Open Awards Pre-Course Verification (PCV) form.

Helpful documents

Level Descriptors	All qualifications and units are assigned a level that aligns with RQF requirements. This document outlines the knowledge and understanding, and skills descriptors at each level.
Pre Course Verification Form	This document can be used to enable tutors/assessors and internal verifiers to explore assessment planning and design before the course starts
Assignment Briefing and Feedback sheet	An outline of the tasks to be completed and Assessment Criteria to be met. This document is to be given to learners once an assignment is set, but it is good practice to create the document at this stage.

Evidence requirements

For the majority of Open Awards qualifications, each learner will need to build a portfolio of evidence to demonstrate that all the assessment criteria associated with each unit has been met. Portfolios could include a variety of evidence including:
- Practical demonstrations . possibly supported by photographs or video
- Reflection log/diary
- Notes from group discussions . including clear indications of what and how each learner participated
- Observation records and witness statements
- Worksheets and workbooks
- Professional discussion . possibly supported by audio or video
- Record of questions and answers
- Peer reports. Peer feedback can be an effective developmental tool, but the final decision should be made by the assessor, not peers
- Assignments

Please note that this list is not exhaustive

You need to ensure that all evidence presented in a portfolio is:

Authentic	It should clearly be the work of the learner.
Valid	It should clearly demonstrate the knowledge or skills that are set out in the assessment criteria.
Reliable	It will, in general, produce the same range of responses from learners, as long as they are used in similar circumstances and with similar groups of learners.
Inclusive	It will ensure that no individual learner is excluded from the opportunity to show their achievement because of their individual background or experience.

Portfolios

Where portfolios are used for collating learner evidence, they should be presented in a manner that allows internal and external quality assurers to be able to easily locate evidence that meet specific assessment criteria.

A completed portfolio should include, as a minimum:

- The name of the learner, assessor(s) and internal quality assurer
- A tracking sheet that states where to find evidence that each assessment criteria has been met
- A statement signed by the learner that confirms that the evidence in the portfolio is their own work
- Assignment briefs, where applicable
- All evidence of learner achievement
- Evidence of the tutor's feedback to the learner

We strongly recommend that centres use the helpful documents created by Open Awards that are listed below. These are available on the Secure Portal.

Portfolios that do not include evidence that clearly demonstrates that a learner has achieved all outcomes and assessment criteria must be deemed to be incomplete. Further evidence will need to be obtained in order to prove that the learner has completed the qualification/ unit.

Helpful documents

Learner Evidence Tracking Sheet	This document is completed by the learner and presented with evidence for formal assessment to clearly show where evidence requirements have been met.
Learner Evidence Authenticity Statement	This form is completed by the learner to confirm that the work/evidence they have submitted is their own work and has been created by the learner. It also confirms that the learner understands that their results may be invalidated if they have submitted evidence that does not belong to them.
Assignment Brief and Feedback sheet	The learner is presented with an outline of the tasks to be completed and Assessment Criteria to be met.
Individual Progress Record	Allows you to record individual learner achievement for a unit.
Witness Testimonial Form	You may complete this form if you are a witness to a learner achieving criteria, by clearly listing or describing the evidence presented by the learner and linking to the assessment criteria met.
Assessment Observation Record Form	A task set for a particular unit may involve observing a learner. The Assessment Observation Record Form will allow you to summarise clearly the activities observed and the unit assessment criteria the learner met.
Assessment Q&A Record Form	If the task set involves question and answer activities, this form will help you to list the questions posed and outline the learner¢s responses.
Group Progress Record	Allows you to record achievement of a unit by group.

E-Portfolios

Traditionally learner evidence and associated documentation/records have been paper based. However electronic portfolios/record keeping is now being supported. Open Awards accepts and endorses %OneFile+ e-portfolio online, paperless, assessment management system and is committed to supporting the use of paperless/online e-portfolio systems provided they are secure, complete (i.e. evidence is clearly cross-referenced to the learning outcomes/assessment criteria and all associated assessment/IV documents and tracking is available) and allow for Lead Quality Reviewer/External Quality Assurer access.

Evidence Retention

Centres must keep complete and accurate records, for at least three years from the end of year to which they relate, for all units/qualifications and make these available to Open Awards 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) and internal verifier(s)
- Assessment records, including assessment decision and reason for decision. Where these records cannot be separated from the learner's evidence, please liaise with your LQR to agree what records to keep.
- Internal verification reports.

Following a successful external quality assurance review, evidence should be returned to learners. Centres should retain copies of sufficient learner evidence to allow them to participate in standardisation events.

External assessment

Where an Open Awards qualification has an external assessment method (e.g. externally set and marked online multiple choice assessment), centres must ensure that these assessments are carried out in controlled conditions to minimise the potential for plagiarism. In order to ensure these conditions are enforced external assessments must be delivered in accordance with the following guidance:

- [Assessment Venue and Invigilation Requirements](#)
- [Unannounced Visits Guidance](#)

Centres must ensure that there are no conflicts of interest between the invigilator and learners by checking in advance of the assessment (e.g. a relative of a learner or there is a personal interest in the outcome of the assessment).

Reasonable adjustments and special considerations

Open Awards is committed to ensuring access to fair assessment for all learners and to protecting the integrity of the award of credit and qualifications.

There may be circumstances whereby arrangements need to be made to take account of particular learners' requirements in order to ensure that this is achieved without giving any unfair advantage over other learners.

Reasonable adjustments

Reasonable adjustments are actions made help to reduce the effect of a disability or difficulty that places a learner at a substantial disadvantage in the assessment situation. These amendments to assessment allow a disabled learner to demonstrate his or her knowledge, skills and understanding to the levels of attainment required by the specification for that qualification.

The centre must ensure that it creates, at all times, an inclusive assessment process that adheres to disability and equal opportunity legislation and other regulatory criteria whilst ensure that standards of assessment are maintained.

When considering reasonable adjustments, the centre should first check whether permission needs to be obtained from Open Awards. If you are unsure whether permission is required, please contact Open Awards for advice.

In cases where the centre has applied reasonable adjustments or special considerations, records must be kept for at least 3 years from the end of the year to which they relate.

Where reasonable adjustments have been agreed, centres should make the learner evidence available to Open Awards at quality assurance visits.

Special considerations

Special considerations are adjustments which may be applied after an assessment where the learner has encountered exceptional circumstances that have disadvantaged them during their assessment.

A learner may be eligible for special consideration if their performance in an assessment has been, or is likely to have been, affected by mitigating or adverse circumstances beyond their control. For example illness or injury, or some other event outside of their control, which has affected the learner's ability to take an assessment or demonstrate his or her level of attainment in an assessment.

Special consideration is not appropriate for a minor illness or a minor disturbance.

The centre must inform Open Awards of any requests for special consideration within 48 hours of becoming aware of the mitigating/adverse circumstances occurring.

The centre should complete form SC1 Request for Special Consideration form, and return it to Open Awards together with any supporting evidence or documentation within seven working days of the end of the assessment period.

A separate form should normally be completed for each learner for each unit or qualification. However, in cases where a group of learners has been disadvantaged by a particular event (for example a fire alarm) a single form should be submitted. A list of learners affected should be attached to the form.

Open Awards will consider each case on its individual merits and inform the centre of its decision within five working days.

If the application for Special Consideration is successful, the learner's performance will be reviewed in the light of available evidence. It should be noted that a

successful application of Special Consideration will not necessarily change a learner's results.

Helpful documents

Open Awards Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy	This document sets out the principles which should be followed when making decisions about adjustments to assessment. It outlines Open Awards' reasonable steps to ensure it avoids disadvantage (directly or indirectly) in line with the requirements of The Equality Act 2010 (Disability) Regulations 2010.
Form RA1 - Record of Reasonable Adjustments made at the discretion of centres	This form is used to record all reasonable adjustments made at the discretion of centres . in accordance with the relevant permissions as outlined in the policy.
Form RA2 - Request for Reasonable Adjustments requiring Open Awards' Approval	This form is used to request that Open Awards consider allowing a reasonable adjustment . in accordance with the relevant permissions as outlined in the policy.
Form SC1 - Application for Special Consideration	This form is used to apply for special consideration to be made by Open Awards

7. Internal Quality Assurance

Quality assurance is at the heart of Open Awards' practices and we expect our centres to follow suitably rigorous processes to ensure that the integrity of our qualifications is maintained.

All centres delivering Open Awards provision must operate rigorous internal quality assurance systems. Internal quality assurance is the process of reviewing and evaluating assessment practices and decisions which ensures that:

- An identified individual is responsible for coordinating internal quality assurance processes
- There are clear and documented roles and responsibilities for all those involved
- All learners are assessed accurately, fairly and consistently to the right standard
- Internal quality assurance is structured and incorporates all of a centre's Open Awards provision
- Assessment tasks and learner work are sampled appropriately
- Good practice is promoted through internal standardisation events and quality assurance meetings
- Decisions are supported by full and clear records and action plans that are followed
- Internal processes are transparent and regularly evaluated

Depending on the size of the centre, and the volume of Open Awards provision being delivered, there may be more than one internal quality assurer in place. Each individual undertaking this role must 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 by completing appropriate assessment tasks
- Learners' work is presented in a manner that enables effective verification to take place
- Learners' assessed work is authentic
- Evidence of learner achievement is clearly mapped to the assessment criteria
- Recommendations for the award of credit are valid, reliable and consistent.

Stages of internal quality assurance

The following activities take place during the course of an internal verification cycle:

| Verification Plan | Pre-Course Verification | Verification of Achievement | Standard-isation | Action Plan |
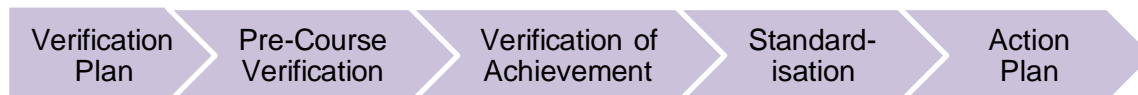
All documents supporting the internal quality assurance process can be found on the Open Awards Portal.

Stage 1: Verification Plan

| Verification Plan | Pre-Course Verification | Verification of Achievement | Standard-isation | Action Plan |
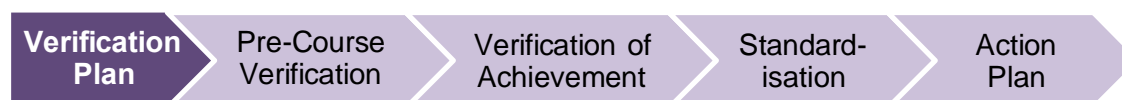
A centre must identify how they will internally verify and standardise their delivery and assessment before delivering a course. A documented Verification of Achievement Action Plan (VAAP) allows the centre to allocate internal resources over a period of time work for them, and provides Open Awards with evidence that their quality assurance processes are suitably robust. A VAAP must indicate:

- What will happen
- When it will happen
- Who is to be involved
- How it is to be recorded

Helpful documents

Verification of Achievement Action Plan (VAAP)	A plan of proposed internal verification activity to be developed before delivery begins.

Stage 2: Pre-Course Verification

| Verification Plan | Pre-Course Verification | Verification of Achievement | Standard-isation | Action Plan |
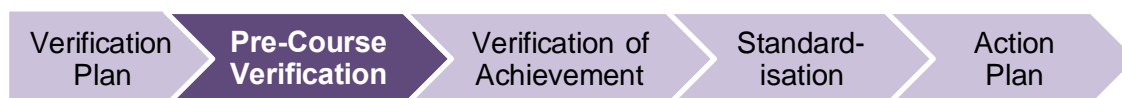
It is essential that assessment is carried out in a structured way, both for the benefit of the learners and to ensure effective internal verification of achievement can take place.

The IQA therefore needs to work with tutors/assessors before a course begins to ensure that:

- Assessment tasks are planned in a coherent way to allow learners to meet all the necessary assessment criteria
- Assessments are valid and appropriate to the level
- Assessment briefs clearly show the assessment criteria to be met
- Wherever possible a range of assessment methods is used
- All tutors/assessors ensure that assessment is fair and inclusive, reflecting diverse needs
- Learners are made aware of assessment requirements at the beginning of the course
- Adequate and appropriate resources are in place to enable the learner to generate the required evidence to meet the assessment criteria
- Recording systems are in place to monitor learner progress and achievement
- A process is in place that incorporates constructive individual feedback to learners on their assessed work.

Helpful documents

Pre-Course Verification (PCV) Form	This document is designed to allow the IQA to verify the planned assessment activities to make sure they are valid and robust.

Stage 3: Verification of achievement

Verification Plan	Pre-Course Verification	**Verification of Achievement**	Standard-isation	Action Plan

The Internal Quality Assurer is responsible for safeguarding the validity of assessment. This includes observing assessment practice during the course delivery and ensuring the reliability of assessment judgements.

The IQA will be expected to monitor the quality of assessment by sampling assessment practices and decisions. The IQA will also meet with learners at some point during their course to ensure that their experience of assessment is positive.

The role of the IQA in this stage of the process is to ensure that:
- Assessment tasks are authentic and belong to the learner
- Assessment decisions are fair and consistent, both across provision and over time
- Learners are given appropriate opportunities to generate evidence against all assessment criteria
- Evidence of learner achievement is clearly cross-referenced to the each of the assessment criteria

- Assessment does not discriminate against any learner and is appropriate, consistent, fair and transparent
- Learners receive clear and constructive feedback on their assessed work;
- They give clear written feedback to tutors/assessors on their assessment practice
- Learner evidence is presented in a way that enables effective verification to take place
- Clear and accurate assessment records are maintained
- Recommendations for the Award of Credit (RACs) are completed thoroughly and are valid.

Sampling

It is the IQA's responsibility to monitor the quality of assessment through the sampling of assessment practices and decisions. The IQA should specify the sample of assessed work that s/he wants to see, and ensure that it is sufficient to allow them to test the consistency and validity of the assessment and be based on a representative sample.

Open Awards require that the IQA samples a minimum of **5 or 20%** (whichever is the greatest) of portfolios from a single cohort of learners. **Where there are in excess of 50 units, 10% of total units should be sampled.**

Where new assessors are being used, 100% of the first two cohorts assessed should be sampled. Thereafter, the sample size is at the discretion of the IQA who must ensure that the sample allows them:

- To ensure assessment is appropriate, consistent and complete
- To ensure that assessment is consistent for all learners
- To establish that standards are maintained across units, assessors and sites, and over time, and continue to reflect the requirements of the assessment criteria

The IQA must take into account all variable factors that may impact on the quality of assessment, such as:

- Delivery sites
- Tutors/assessors
- Number of units
- Unit level and size
- Delivery methods
- Assessment methods
- Type of learner evidence available
- Borderline cases
- Reasonable adjustments
- The sampling strategy adopted in previous verification activities
- Issues arising from previous verification activities.

Helpful documents

Verification of Achievement Record (VAR)	This document is used by the IQA to record the outcomes of their sampling activities and provide feedback to the tutor/assessor.
Verification of Achievement Action Plan (VAAP)	A plan of proposed internal verification activity to be developed before delivery begins.
Learner feedback form	This document can be completed by learners to feedback to the centre about their experiences on the course.

Authorised Internal Verifiers (AIVs)

Where a centre has demonstrated robust internal quality systems in delivering Open Awards qualifications over a period of time, and whose internal quality assurers have met the minimum requirements for the role, we may consider recommending individuals to apply to be an Authorised Internal Verifier (AIV).

An AIV is considered able to make the right decisions about awards to learners and is given the responsibility by Open Awards to verify assessment decisions and directly claim credit certificates for learners.

AIV status is a mark of confidence by Open Awards in the individual and the centre. It is based on trust and subject to continuous effective performance of verification which is monitored on an ongoing basis by the Open Awards LQR allocated to the centre.

AIV status relates only to an individual verifier within a particular centre and **is not transferable, either between individuals or between centres.** An AIV will be approved for particular curriculum area(s) /sector(s) and to specific levels. AIVs cannot sign off the award of credit in a limited number of cases, such as externally marked assessments.

AIVs must produce AIV reports for every course run they have reviewed. Multiple course runs can be included on an AIV report. We expect an AIV report including the relevant course run to be uploaded to the Portal at the same time as results are uploaded. **Open Awards will not certificate any learners unless and until the centre submits an AIV report for the relevant course run.**

Failure to submit an AIV Report in a timely manner will result in late certification fees for the learners on the relevant course run(s). AIV status can be withdrawn if AIV Reports are frequently delayed.

If an Authorised Internal Verifier leaves the centre, Open Awards must be informed **immediately**.
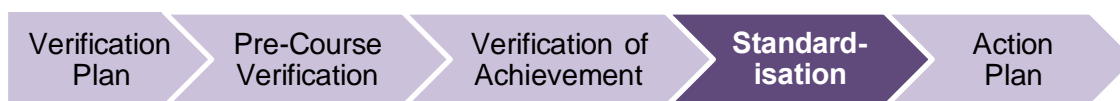
Where there is evidence that the required standards have not been met, Open Awards may decide to withdraw AIV status.

It is mandatory for centres with Direct Claims Status to have at least one AIV attend at least one of the regional standardisation events during the academic year. In cases of non-attendance, AIV status will be removed.

Helpful documents

AIV Report template	This report must be completed by AIVs and uploaded to the portal for all course runs they have verified.
AIV Policy	This policy outlines how to become an AIV, what needs to be done to maintain AIV status and how Open Awards monitor and manage performance.

Stage 4: Internal Standardisation

Verification Plan → Pre-Course Verification → Verification of Achievement → **Standard-isation** → Action Plan

Where Open Awards provision is delivered by more than one assessor, or at more than one site, internal standardisation ensures that internally set tasks and the outcomes of internal assessment are consistent and valid.

Internal standardisation involves ensuring that, where there is more than one tutor/assessor delivering Open Awards provision and/or where provision is delivered at more than one site, the outcomes of internal assessment are consistent across the range of courses with assessors assessing to a consistent standard. It is recommended that internal standardisation meetings include all tutors and internal verifiers concerned and that action plans are produced and followed up.

Open Awards Lead Quality Reviewers will ask to see evidence of internal standardisation activities and of how the centre identifies and disseminates recognised good practice.

It is recommended that internal standardisation meetings include all relevant tutors and internal verifiers and that action plans are produced and followed up.

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.

Samples must include:

- Unit
- Assessment task
- Learner work
- Tutor feedback
- IQA feedback

Internal standardisation events should consider evidence produced in the last year. This will involve a minimum sample of three from every tutor/assessor, representing the full range of provision.

It is recommended that centres also attend Open Awards standardisation events to ensure that they are working at the same standards as other approved centres. Open Awards may mandate attendance at these events if there are concerns over your centre's quality assurance processes.

Helpful documents

Centre Standardisation Form	A template document to record discussions and decisions made at internal standardisation events.

Stage 5: Action Planning

Verification Plan	Pre-Course Verification	Verification of Achievement	Standard-isation	**Action Plan**
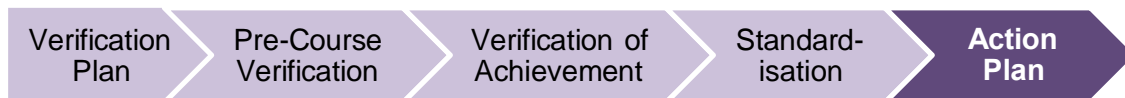
On completion of any internal quality assurance activity, the centre should action individuals for areas of improvement. Actions should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time bound (SMART).

The actions should be incorporated into the verification of achievement action plan for the next course where appropriate.

Verification of Achievement Record (VAR)	This document is used by the IQA to record the outcomes of their sampling activities and provide feedback to the tutor/assessor.
Verification of Achievement Action Plan (VAAP)	A plan of proposed internal verification activity to be developed before delivery begins.

Learner feedback form	This document can be completed by learners to feedback to the centre about their experiences on the course.

8. External Quality Assurance

We work closely with our centres to be sure that robust quality assurance systems are in place and are followed. Our Lead Quality Reviewers work with centres on quality improvement, we provide training on delivery and assessment and internal quality assurance, share exemplar paperwork and offer national standardisation events.

Once recognised as an approved centre, Open Awards allocates a Lead Quality Reviewer (LQR) to perform four functions:

- To support centres to improve the quality and standards of delivery, assessment and internal quality assurance
- To externally quality assure centres' recommendations for awards
- To ensure consistency in standards between centres and over time
- To ensure ongoing compliance with the Open Awards centre agreement, policies and procedures.

In some instances, centres will also be allocated an External Quality Assurer (EQA) to undertake external quality assurance of learners' work. This is most likely to be the case where the centre:

- Offers specialist qualifications
- Is located some distance from the nearest LQR
- Is low risk

There are five main ways in which your centre will be supported by Open Awards through your allocated LQR/EQA:

- External verification
- Annual quality assurance review
- Quality assurance support
- National standardisation
- Training and events

Interactions with your LQR, such as visits to your centre may cover more than one of these types of support.

Please note that Lead Quality Reviewers are unable to visit your centre if no learners have been registered so it is important that learners are registered at the beginning of the course so that quality assurance support visits can be arranged.

External Verification

When you believe that your learners have achieved all the necessary units, you must submit your recommendations for the award of credit through the Portal (see Section 9).

Once Open Awards is aware that you require an external quality assurance review, your allocated LQR will normally contact you within 5 days to make the necessary arrangements.

Centre visits

Prior to the visit

In most cases, our LQR will arrange to visit your centre. When arranging a visit, our LQR will confirm:

- The date, time and approximate length of the visit
- The site to be visited
- The course runs to be reviewed
- The names of any learners, assessors and internal quality assurers they wish to meet
- Any other discussion points (where known in advance).

We recommend that you raise any issues or concerns you have with the LQR prior to the meeting, so that they be included in the discussions on the day.

During the visit

During the visit, our LQR/EQA will review the assessment decisions made by assessors and the checks carried out by the internal quality assurers. They will consider the quality and consistency of assessment decisions and assessment practice by:

- Sampling learner assessments
- Reviewing records of assessments, internal quality assurance and team meetings
- Speaking with learners and assessors to ensure that evidence and records of assessment are both valid and authentic
- Reviewing procedures.

Sample sizes will vary from centre to centre and will depend on how long the qualification has been approved at the centre, staff familiarity with the qualification and number of learners. Sampling strategies we may adopt include:

- The use of all assessment methods across a range of units
- A selection of units across a sample of learnersqevidence

- A full qualification across a sample of learners' evidence
- A sample of units delivered by more than one tutor/assessor
- Sampling of satellite sites and other assessment sites where applicable.

We will increase the sample size as required to satisfy their need to ensure that assessment decisions are valid.

We will also check that learners have been given appropriate access to assessment following the requirements specified in the Open Awards Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy.

At the end of the visit, the LQR will confirm any actions required, highlight examples of particular good practice and update your centre's risk rating.

After the visit

Within 5 working days of the visit taking place, the LQR will either confirm or reject the recommendation of the award of credit for the course runs reviewed at the visit.

A visit report will be made available to you via the Portal normally no more than 10 working days after the visit took place. This report will follow a standard format which will include any actions required, highlight examples of particular good practice and update your centre's risk rating.

We reserve the right to consider additional actions following the visit in cases where further information comes to light at a later date that the centre needs to address.

Where a centre is giving cause for concern, additional visits may be deemed necessary for which Open Awards may impose additional charges. The centre's risk rating will be increased.

In cases where a centre is giving serious cause for concern, or actions are not completed within agreed timescales, sanctions may be imposed on the centre as a whole or on a named individual at the centre in line with the Open Awards Sanctions Policy.

Helpful documents

Quality Activity Report template	This document is completed by the LRQ/EQA to record the outcomes from the visit.

Remote Monitoring

In certain circumstances, Open Awards may decide to undertake an external quality assurance review remotely. This may be considered appropriate where:

- The evidence sampled during the previous visit was satisfactory
- Open Awards is satisfied with all aspects of the centre operation
- The claim for the Award of Credit only involves a small number of learners
- Your centre is in a remote geographic location
- Your centre has a large throughput of learners and/or roll-on roll-off courses

The LQR will provide you with a list of all information required for a remote monitoring review. This will include learner evidence and proof that this evidence has been assessed, internally quality assured and recorded in line with Open Awards requirements. We may also request evidence that you have implemented the actions/recommendations in your most recent action plan.

Open Awards is willing to review electronic versions of learner evidence, such as emailed documents, video and audio files subject to the quality of evidence being suitable and appropriate data protection legislation being adhered to.

Where evidence is sent by post, centres must securely package, label and distribute learner evidence and associated documentation/records to their LQR by a secure, traceable postal service. A return address must also be supplied on the package.

When work is returned to the centres by the LQR, this will be sent by a secure, traceable postal service. Centres are expected to bear the cost of any postage incurred.

Following an external Quality Assurance Review, the LQR will produce a summative report which will include any actions required, highlight examples of particular good practice and update your centre's risk rating.

Where a centre is giving cause for concern, additional visits may be deemed necessary for which Open Awards may impose additional charges. The centre's risk rating will be increased.

In cases where a centre is giving serious cause for concern, or actions are not completed within agreed timescales, sanctions may be imposed on the centre as a whole or on a named individual at the centre in line with the Open Awards Sanctions Policy.

Lost work

Open Awards will always securely package, label and distribute learner evidence and associated documentation/records to centres by a secure, traceable postal service. We expect centres to follow the same process.

In the event of work being lost in the post, Open Awards will take the following action:
- Request the centre to make the appropriate investigations with the carrier
- Request alternative evidence from the centre upon which an assessment decision may be made. If alternative evidence is not available Open Awards may be unable to certificate.

Annual Quality Assurance Reviews

As an approved centre, you have undertaken to meet certain requirements regarding internal quality assurance arrangements as detailed in the Open Awards centre Agreement. Compliance with these requirements will be monitored regularly by your allocated Open Awards Lead Quality Reviewer, who will report on the progress of any agreed actions for quality improvement.

Newly approved centres will be subject to a quality assurance review once they begin to deliver Open Awards qualifications or units. The focus of this review will be to monitor any areas identified for development in the initial risk assessment process and determine your centre's quality risk rating.

Before the review

You will need to prepare the following documentation for the LQR/ EQA to review at the visit. If this is being undertaken remotely, the documents must be sent to the LQR/EQA by the date requested:

- Evidence of completed actions
- Staffing structure
- Portfolios with assessment and IQA paperwork
- Course resources
- New staff CVs
- IQA sampling strategy
- Assessment Standardisation arrangements, including copies of SF1 or minutes of standardisation meetings
- Amended contacts list (if applicable)
- Updated policies, procedures, insurance.

During the review

Open Awards needs to undertake a review of each centre's quality assurance systems, processes and related policies on an annual basis to ensure that standards are maintained. Where concerns are raised as a result of this activity, we may undertake review visits more frequently.

The Annual Quality Assurance Review will provide Open Awards LQR/ EQA with an up to date record of specific areas of compliance with the centre Agreement. Evidence will be reviewed that covers:

- Policy and practice
- Learner appeals and complaints
- Malpractice or maladministration issues
- Conflicts of interest
- Staffing and resources
- Data management
- Internal quality assurance systems
- Attendance at Open Awards training and events
- Course administration

In many cases, the annual review will be scheduled to allow for verification of learners' work at the same time.

Following the review

A visit report will be made available to you via the Portal no more than 10 working days after the visit took place. This report will follow a standard format which will include any actions required, highlight examples of particular good practice and update your centre's risk rating.

We reserve the right to consider additional actions following the visit in cases where further information comes to light at a later date that the centre needs to address.

Where a centre is giving cause for concern, additional visits may be deemed necessary for which Open Awards may impose additional charges. The centre's risk rating will be increased.

In cases where a centre is giving serious cause for concern, or actions are not completed within agreed timescales, sanctions may be imposed on the centre as a whole or on a named individual at the centre in line with the Open Awards Sanctions Policy.

Helpful documents

Quality Activity Report template	This document is completed by the LRQ/EQA to record the outcomes from the review.

Quality assurance support

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. LQRs may also invite named individuals to apply to become Authorised Internal Verifiers for the centre (see section 7).

Your centre's allocated LQR/EQA will identify areas for improvement that you need to address in order to improve quality assurance at the centre. SMART (specific, measureable, achievable, realistic and time bound) actions can be set at any interaction between the centre and the LQR.

Where a centre is giving cause for concern, additional visits may be deemed necessary and Open Awards may impose additional charges and the centre's risk rating increased.

In cases where a centre is giving serious cause for concern, or actions are not completed within agreed timescales, sanctions may be imposed on the centre as a whole or on a named individual at the centre in line with the Open Awards Sanctions Policy.

National Standardisation

Open Awards recognises the benefits of centres comparing assessment and internal quality assurance practices with one another in order to share best practice.

We run a number of standardisation sessions throughout the year in various locations. Details of these events can be found on the Open Awards website.

Whilst it is not mandatory for all centres to attend standardisation activities, we strongly recommend attendance and in some cases will make attendance mandatory for centres/ individuals whose practices need to be improved.

It is mandatory for centres where AIVs are in place make sure that at least one AIV attends at least one of the regional standardisation events every academic year. Where a centre does not send any AIVs to standardisation within an academic year, Open Awards will remove AIV status from the centre.

All individuals attending standardisation will be expected to bring evidence of retain the assessment and internal verification processes at their centre, including copies of learners work.

Where appropriate, Open Awards will work with other awarding organisations offering the same qualifications to help raise quality standards nationally and assure that specified levels of attainment for a qualification are consistent and reliable.

Training and Consultancy

Open Awards training has been designed to aid centres in day-to-day operations in working with us. A number of training places are included in your annual fee.

Further information is available in Section 10 and on the [website](#).

Our LQRs are also willing to provide bespoke training and consultation to your centre staff on specific areas on which you need additional support. A fee may be incurred for bespoke training.

9. Award and Certification

Recommending Learners for Credit

To safeguard the interest of learners and to ensure prompt certification, all results must be verified and uploaded to the secure portal within 3 months of the end date of the course. Where results are not received within this timescale a late fee may be charged and centres will be required to take preventative action.

All results received outside of the timescale will be charged in accordance with our published charge. Please refer to the "Pricing Information" section of our website.

Open Awards supports two ways in which credit can be awarded to learners:

* Lead Quality Reviewer/External Quality Assurer, or
* Authorised Internal Verifier (AIV)

Open Awards uses Direct Entry of Results (DER), which is an online mechanism for claiming credit for your learners. Credits are claimed through the Open Awards Secure Portal. For full guidance on this process please refer to the Web Portal User Guidance.

Tutors are responsible for ensuring the recommendation of award is accurately claimed for each learner. Credit **must only** be recommended when a learner has achieved **all** of the learning outcomes for a unit. If a learner has previously been awarded credit for the unit(s) the unit cannot be re-awarded (Please note; there is no requirement to mark learners as "not achieved" as this will be logged automatically by default).

If a unit is to be exempted for a learner in line with the Recognition of Prior Learning Policy, the centre should contact Open Awards at the point of registration.

External Verification

The award of credit must be verified by an Open Awards External Quality Assurer/Lead Quality Reviewer or an Authorised Internal Verifier (AIV) at the centre.

If amendments to credits being recommended for award are required they must be made by the centre. Open Awards cannot make any amendments once results have been presented for verification.

If units have been identified as being exempt for a learner (see Open Awards Recognition of Prior Learning policy for more information) then any requests made by the centre to exempt units for learners must be checked at the point of verification. The External Quality Assurer/Authorised internal Verifier needs to check

that verified copies of the relevant certificate(s) are included in the learner's portfolio.

If certificate(s) are not present in the portfolio, this needs to be raised with the Tutor before authorisation can take place. If relevant certificate(s) are present, checks must be made against the Rules of Combination for the identified Qualification and recorded on the Learner Past Achievement Form. This should include checking that the Unit being used as an exemption or equivalent is stated as being eligible within the Rules of Combination for the qualification. If the relevant information is not stated within the Rules of Combination, this needs to be raised with the Tutor. If any requests for exemptions have been considered and agreed and all relevant checks have been carried out on the portfolio/evidence results can be verified by the Authorised internal Verifier/External Quality Assurer and submitted to Open Awards for processing.

Further information on the assessment and quality assurance processes leading up to the recommendation for the award of credit can be found in Sections 7 & 8.

Amending the Award of Credit

Before claiming award of credit, please check all information is accurate, including the spelling of learnersqnames. The Administration Contact should contact the appropriate Open Awards team member to discuss any requests for changes. A charge will be applied for amendments made following the award of credit.

Issuing Certificates

Open Awards will issue certificates for learners registered with Open Awards who have successfully completed unit(s), **within 10 working days of receipt of verified results.**

Certificates include:

Ofqual Regulated Qualification	Qualification certificate Open Awards and Ofqual Logo
Qualification Unit Course	Course certificate with unit transcript Open Awards and Ofqual Logo
Quality Endorsed Course	Course certificate with unit transcript Open Awards Logo
Access to HE Diploma	Access to HE Diploma qualification certificate Open Awards and QAA Logo
Badge of Excellence Course	Certificate of attendance Open Awards and Badge of Excellence Logo

All certificates will be forwarded to your centre, via recorded delivery, for the attention of the Administration Contact. Please notify us within 5 working days if you identify any problems with the certificates that you receive.

Once you have checked that all certificates are present and correct, you must confirm receipt within 10 working days. Confirmation of receipt of certificates is completed via the Secure Portal. For full guidance on this process please refer to the %Web Portal User Guidance Document+.

Re-issue and Replacement Certificates

A replacement certificate will be issued within 10 working days of receipt of all authenticated claims. A charge will be made for each replacement certificate. Where possible the original certificate(s) must be returned to Open Awards before a replacement can be issued. Please complete the request form, available on the ±centresqsection of our website, and upload this to Open Awards via the Secure Portal.

10.   Training and Consultancy

Training is important at Open Awards, as we believe that supporting our centres will allow for continued growth and success and supports our mission to support educational achievement for all learners.

We deliver open, in-house and e-learning training opportunities and consultancy services that draw upon both our long history and practical experience in business planning, delivery, assessment and quality assurance. Such services are available to centres currently offering Open Awards programmes and prospective centres.

Our training and consultancy services are supported by quality assurance systems and delivered by highly experienced practitioners.

We offer a variety of training opportunities, including:
- Administration
- Authorised internal Verifier
- Delivery and Assessment
- Quality Assurance
- Standardisation

We offer Consultancy Services in:
- Business planning and development solutions
- Curriculum planning

Bespoke centre training and national/international training is available upon request.

You can view upcoming training and events on our website here.

What are the benefits of our training and consultancy services?
- Our courses are interactive and engaging
- An opportunity to acquire new, modified or refreshed knowledge, behaviours, values and skills
- We offer comprehensive, up-to-date training packs
- All our courses can be tailored and booked to take place at your venue
- Opportunities to share best practice

11.   Issues at centres

Open Awards acknowledges that our approved centres generally act in the best interests of the learners, although there are some instances where we may need to intervene.

Where we become aware of an incident that has arisen, or we have cause to believe that an incident may arise, we need to investigate.

Incident reports

Open Awards reviews and monitors any incidents that may affect the secure administration and award of learners on our units, courses and qualifications and offer any guidance and training that would help to improve practice at centres. Centre are sent an incident report to complete within 10 working days to outline the incident, summarise how the situation occurred and describe the measures they have taken to ensure similar instances do not occur in the future.

The report is reviewed by a member of the Open Awards quality department and a decision made as to whether to undertake further investigations.

Where the centre is found to be non-compliant with areas of the centre Agreement, Open Awards may consider the incident to be maladministration or malpractice and place sanctions against the centre. This will affect the centre's risk rating and could result in centre's recognition being withdrawn.

Maladministration and malpractice

Maladministration is defined as any activity, neglect, default or other practice that results in a centre not complying with the specified requirements for delivery of the qualifications as set out in the guidance.

Malpractice is any act, default or practice which is in breach of the Regulations which:
- Compromises, attempts to compromise, or may compromise, the process of assessment/examinations, the integrity of any qualification or the validity of an examination result or certificate, including maladministration
- Damages the authority, reputation or credibility of the awarding organisation or centre or any officer or employee
- Involves a failure by a centre to investigate allegations of suspected malpractice in accordance with the requirements set out in this document also constitutes malpractice awarding organisation or centre.

A centre must report any allegation of suspected malpractice/maladministration to Open Awards. Failure to report allegations of malpractice/maladministration can lead

to awards not being conferred and certificates not being issued, and future registrations not being accepted.

Where a centre is found to have not reported allegations of suspected malpractice/maladministration Open Awards may apply sanctions as set out in our Sanctions Policy.

We review a centre's compliance with the Open Awards maladministration and malpractice policy and how it takes reasonable steps to prevent and/or investigate instances of malpractice and maladministration periodically through our centre monitoring arrangements.

Helpful documents

Maladministration and malpractice policy and procedures	This document defines maladministration and malpractice, clarifies the roles and responsibilities of centres, learners and Open Awards, and outlines the procedures to be followed when there are issues of suspected maladministration or malpractice at a centre.
Report of Suspected Malpractice (Form M1)	This form is to be used by centres to report instances of suspected malpractice on Open Awards Units or Qualifications.

Sanctions

Open Awards reserves the right to place sanctions on its centres in order to safeguard the award of qualifications and units and protect its interests and those of its learners. Sanctions may be applied to individual staff within centres, and/or the centre as a whole. Sanctions may also be applied to learners.

Open Awards can impose a range of sanctions on a centre depending on the seriousness of the situation, the level and track-record of the centre's non-compliance and the risk to the interests of learners and the integrity of the qualifications and units and the effect on public confidence in Open Awards.

The level of sanction imposed will depend on the nature of the centre's non-compliance. If a previously imposed sanction is not acted upon within agreed timeframes, or if actions requiring sanctions have been made repeatedly, a higher level of sanction may be applied.

Approved centres must comply with all sanctions imposed upon them, within the time limits stated. Sanctions will remain in place until the issues identified have been fully resolved. Where sanctions involve any extra visits to the centre, this will be at the centre's expense. The fees are non-refundable.

In cases of serious non-compliance, for example in relation to the security of its assessments, Open Awards may withdraw a centre's approval to deliver its qualifications and units.

In order to meet our regulatory responsibilities, Open Awards is required to share certain information relating to the imposition of sanctions with other Awarding Organisations and the Regulators. This may impact upon your ability to deliver qualifications with other Awarding Organisations.

Sanctions Policy	This document outlines issues of non-compliance that could result in a sanction and the actions we can take to enforce the terms of the centre Agreement.

12. Centre Withdrawal/ Closure

If you wish to withdraw from Open Awards recognised centre status or have ceased trading, Open Awards must be notified, in writing (by post or via email to enquiries@openawards.org.uk)

You may be required to participate in a closing visit to ensure that quality assurance requirements have been met.

You will be asked to ensure that:
- Any outstanding claims for learners who have achieved their unit/qualification are submitted and their evidence externally quality assured by your Lead Quality Reviewer/External Quality Assurer
- Your centre recognition certificate is returned to Open Awards
- Any Open Awards certificates you have been unable to issue to learners are destroyed or returned to Open Awards
- Our logos and/or references to being an Open Awards centre are removed from your website, social media platforms and all resources

Open Awards reserves the right to close a centre if:
- A centre fails to pay monies owing to Open Awards within the standard payment period outlined in our Invoicing Policy
- The centre does not adhere to our expected quality assurance standards.