



openawards

# Provider Handbook

2021 – 2022



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# 1. Welcome and Introduction

Welcome to the Open Awards Provider 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 [enquiries@openawards.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@openawards.org.uk)

All information we hold about your Provider, 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 Providers and learners. We know our Providers 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.



## Your Dedicated Team



Curriculum Development	Supporting you to create your courses 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 of delivery and assessment quality
Process and Administration	Supporting you through registrations and award processes and offering ongoing support

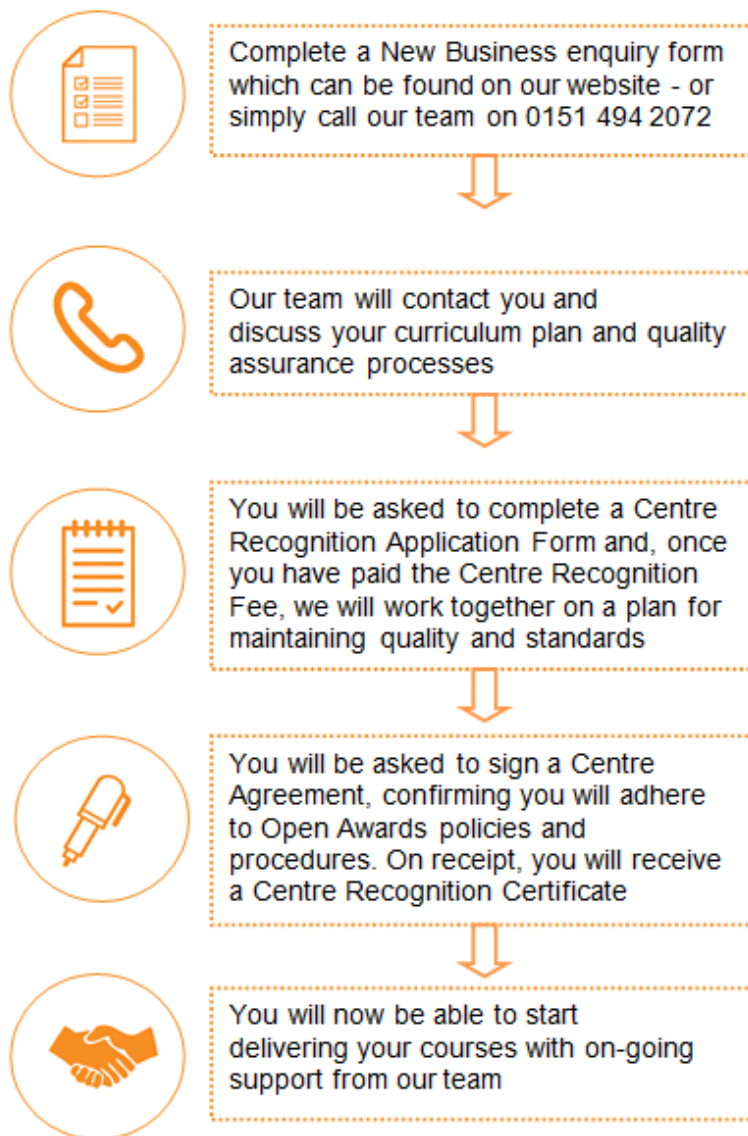
The Open Awards office is open between 9–5pm Monday-Thursday and 9-4pm Friday.

All our team have a [direct line and/or mobile phone](#). If you know who you would like to talk to, please feel free to contact them directly.

For general enquiries, please call our switchboard on 0151 494 2072 or email [enquiries@openawards.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@openawards.org.uk).

### 3. Becoming an Open Awards Provider

In order to deliver Open Awards qualifications or units, you have to be a recognised Open Awards Provider. If you are not already an Open Awards Provider, please visit our [website](http://www.openawards.org.uk) for more information or contact a member of the team on 0151 494 2072 or [enquiries@openawards.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@openawards.org.uk).



## How much does it cost?

Open Awards publish pricing information annually from 1<sup>st</sup> 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 Provider will be invoiced.

## What Staff and Resources do I need?

### Provider Staff Requirements

Providers 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:

<b>Head of Organisation</b>	The head of the organisation, e.g. Chief Executive. This person will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• act as the ultimate point of accountability for the delivery of Open Awards qualifications</li></ul>
<b>Provider Contact</b>	This person will be the key contact between the Provider and Open Qualifications. They will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• be authorised to sign the Provider Agreement</li><li>• commit resources on behalf of the Provider.</li></ul>
<b>Curriculum Development Contact</b>	The person with overall responsibility for curriculum planning and development within your Provider. This person will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure that qualifications submitted to Open Awards for approval have been through an internal approval process</li><li>• Liaise with the designated Business Development Consultant to develop the curriculum at the Provider</li></ul>
<b>Quality Assurance Contact</b>	This person is responsible for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Maintaining assessment and internal quality assurance processes including internal standardisation</li><li>• Liaising with Quality and Standards Advisers and External Quality Assurers as required</li><li>• Ensuring the training and updating of staff involved with internal quality systems</li><li>• Ensuring the regulations for qualifications are met</li><li>• Ensuring that the Provider abides by the Open Awards Provider Agreement and associated aspects of regulatory compliance</li><li>• Ensuring the Provider engages in external standardization</li></ul>



<b>Administration Contact</b>	<p>This person is responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring accurate and prompt completion of administrative forms/ processes</li> <li>• Registering learners within specified time frames</li> <li>• Liaising with Open Awards staff</li> <li>• Ensuring other Provider staff have access to necessary documents.</li> <li>• Maintaining accurate records of all course and learner registrations</li> <li>• Ensuring complete and accurate records are retained in accordance with the Provider Recognition agreement</li> <li>• Ensuring the distribution of certificates to learners</li> <li>• Monitoring administrative processes and addressing any issue arising</li> <li>• Keeping the password for the portal secure.</li> </ul>
<b>Finance Contact</b>	Person responsible for ensuring timely payment of invoices.
<b>Safeguarding Contact</b>	Person responsible for ensuring that the Provider safeguards the interests of learners and staff.

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.

Providers are responsible for notifying Open Awards of staff changes. A Changes to Provider 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 Providers have appropriate occupationally competent staff with relevant sector experience for their role in delivery. '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), 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.

Providers are responsible for ensuring that their staff have access to appropriate training and support. Providers 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**

<b>Changes to Provider Details Request Form</b>	This document is used to advise Open Awards of any changes to key contacts at the Provider.
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## Resources and Arrangements

Approved Providers 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 Awards' requirements
- 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

Providers may use alternative locations and/or subcontractors for the delivery and assessment of Open Awards qualifications. This may be due to a number of factors, depending on the type of Provider and qualification(s) being offered.

Open Awards are willing to allow approved Providers 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 Awards' qualifications, including assessments and internal quality assurance.

In all instances where alternative locations and/or subcontractors are used Providers must comply with Open Awards quality assurance requirements.

You must take responsibility for the management of alternative locations and third parties and keep their capacity, capability and quality assurance practices under review. We will monitor this through external quality assurance activities. Failure to effectively manage the quality assurance of delivery, assessment and record keeping at alternative locations and/or third parties will affect your Provider's risk rating and may result in sanctions being placed on the Provider.

## Conflicts of interest

It is a condition of Provider approval that an approved Provider 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. Providers 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 quality assurer 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 conflict 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](mailto:quality@openawards.org.uk).

**Where the Provider 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*

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

#### **Provider policies and procedures**

All approved Providers 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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complaints</li><li>• Data Protection</li><li>• Risk Assessments for specific risk posed by your organisation, e.g. violence at work, service users with challenging behaviours, visitors etc.</li><li>• Employers Liability Insurance</li><li>• Equal Opportunities and Diversity</li><li>• Fire Evacuation</li><li>• Health and Safety</li><li>• Checking for Criminal Records</li><li>• Public Liability Certificate (minimum cover £1million)</li><li>• Safeguarding</li><li>• Conflicts of Interest</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Access to Fair Assessment</li><li>• Assessment Invigilation</li><li>• Learner enquiries and appeals</li><li>• Internal verification and standardisation</li><li>• Malpractice and Maladministration</li><li>• Distribution of Certificates for Learners</li><li>• Recognition of Prior Learning</li><li>• Quality assurance review of the course (monitoring learner progress, review &amp; feedback)</li><li>• Learner support (including advice and guidance, initial assessment and induction, protecting interest of learners in event of withdrawal)</li></ul>

## 4. Setting up your course



## 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.

	Regulated Qualifications  Qualifications on the Ofqual register or Access to HE Diplomas regulated by QAA	Qualification Units  Units that sit within a regulated qualification that can be counted towards a regulated qualification	Badge of Excellence  Quality mark accrediting your education/training against Open Awards Standards of Excellence	Quality Endorsed Units  Bespoke units that do not form part of a regulated qualification
<b>Externally regulated (Ofqual or QAA)</b>	✓	✓		
External accreditation of education and training	✓	✓	✓	✓
Robust quality assurance	✓	✓	✓	✓
Requires learner assessment and verification	✓	✓		✓
Quality assures individual learner outcomes	✓	✓		✓
External review of programme materials and planning			✓	
Learner receives a certificate	✓	✓	✓	✓
Flexible delivery methods	✓	✓	✓	✓
Expert support to tailor Provision	✓	✓	✓	✓
Access to training for your team	✓	✓	✓	✓

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 RQF qualifications on our [website](#).

Ofqual's register of regulated qualifications for all awarding organisations 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, examinations and self-directed study. The size is expressed in terms of 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.

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:



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, Providers should ensure that the rules of combination are fully adhered to, including the use of mandatory and optional units. The rules of combination provide flexibility whilst ensuring 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:

<b>Qualification Units</b>	Units that form parts of a qualification regulated by Ofqual
<b>Quality Endorsed Units</b>	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 regulated 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 Vision of Open Awards – which is to ‘change lives through learning’.

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 Providers utilising qualifications/units

### Qualitative Data

- Feedback from questionnaires sent to relevant Providers and/or employers two months before the date of the validity panel
- Feedback from Business Development Consultants and Quality and Standards Advisers
- 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.



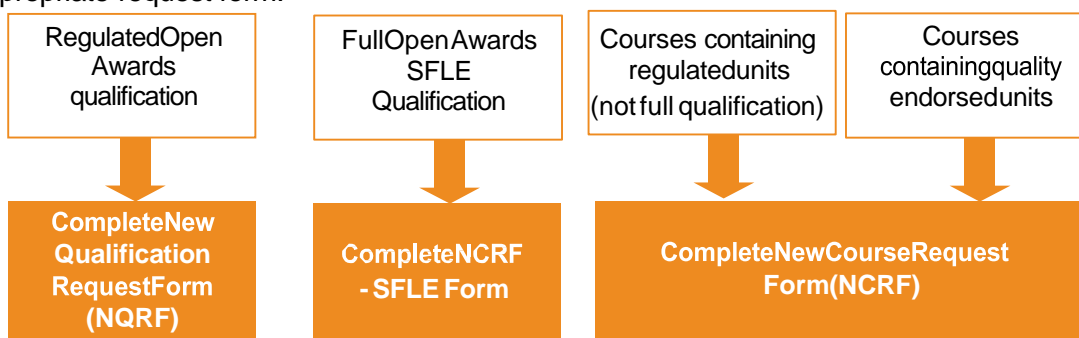
It is really important to us that we are able to utilise the expertise and feedback from our Providers and learners so please take the time to complete validity surveys when circulated and to give us feedback throughout the life cycle of a qualification.

All information on the qualifications we are reviewing can be found on our [website](https://www.openawards.org.uk).

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.



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

Providers 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
<b>Provider name</b>	As it appears on your Provider Agreement.
<b>Qualification details</b>	Select the qualification you wish to offer. Only select one qualification per request form.
<b>Course Title</b>	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.
<b>Authorised Internal Verifier</b>	If a Provider has an Authorised Internal Verifier (AIV), the assigned AIV will be asked to verify the course. If a Provider does not have an AIV, this field should be left blank.
<b>Unit Details</b>	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.
<b>Declaration</b>	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
<b>Provider name</b>	As appears on your Provider Agreement
<b>Course Title</b>	A Provider 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
<b>Authorised Internal Verifier</b>	If a Provider has an Authorised Internal Verifier (AIV), the assigned AIV will be asked to verify the course. If a Provider does not have an AIV, this field should be left blank.
<b>Intended Credit Value</b>	This must be the total number of credits you expect a learner to achieve on this course
<b>Declaration</b>	This section must be completed to enable the form to be processed

Providers 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, a 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?

<b>Qualification</b>	Upon successful completion of the rules of combination, learners will be awarded the full qualification for which they were registered <b>and</b> a certificate listing the units achieved. Learners successfully completing a Functional Skills qualification will be awarded the full qualification for which they were registered.
<b>Course</b>	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 Provider, 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 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, the type of accreditation 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 contact [enquiries@openawards.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@openawards.org.uk)

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

<b>Case Studies and News Stories</b>	We are always happy to share best practice case studies on our website, in our 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 Provider as a whole.
<b>Events and Celebrations</b>	<p>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 <a href="mailto:enquiries@openawards.org.uk">enquiries@openawards.org.uk</a></p> <p>We are happy to share details of your events and celebrations via our social media channels.</p>
<b>Video Content</b>	If you would like to work with us to create an animation or video of your learners or programmes, please contact the team.
<b>Social Media</b>	<a href="#">Twitter</a> <a href="#">YouTube</a> <a href="#">LinkedIn</a> <a href="#">Facebook</a> <a href="#">Instagram</a>
<b>Feedback and Feedforward</b>	<p>We welcome any and all feedback and will share this where appropriate via our social media platforms and websites.</p> <p>We provide continuous feedback to our Providers through external verification visits, quality compliance meetings and curriculum support meetings/events. You can make use of your EV and Quality Review Provider reports in your marketing but please ensure any content accurately reflects the original content.</p> <p>Alternatively, please contact the marketing team to ask us for a quote or feedback to use in your marketing materials or funding applications.</p>

## 5. Registering Learners

### How do I Register my Learners?

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

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

If Providers register learners after these times a late registration fee may be charged and Providers 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 charges. 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 [Secure Portal Guidance](#).

### What is a unique learner number?

The ULN is a unique 10-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 Provider 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 Provider 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 organisation 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.

Providers 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.

## **How do I amend a course run?**

After registrations have been submitted, the Administration Contact should contact the Open Awards team to discuss any requests for changes to your course/run.

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 [Secure Portal 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 (as outlined in our Recognition of Prior Learning Policy and Procedures) 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 Provider 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](mailto: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, Providers 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 Provider
- Staff expertise (and training requirements)
- The most appropriate assessment methods to use (this may differ from group to group)
- 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.

Providers 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 Provider 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 / online training modules***

<b>Assessment Planning Sheet</b>	This document allows you to record planned activities for a unit and ensure that all Assessment Criteria can be met and evidenced.
<b>Assessment Activity Front Sheet</b>	This document template allows Providers to outline the scope of each specific assessment activity, allowing tutors / assessors to detail tasks and list resources needed.
<b>Assessment and Delivery (Online Training)</b>	This course will support you to develop assessment activities that meet the requirements of Open Awards Qualifications.

## Assessment methods

Open Awards normally allows Providers the freedom to assess their learners in a way that best suits the Provider 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, Providers 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 learners' achievement against each assessment criterion.

### *Helpful documents / online training modules*

<b>Qualification guides</b>	Each qualification guide includes a recommended assessment method section. These documents should be reviewed to check for any mandatory or barred methods.
<b>Assessment Planning Sheet</b>	This document allows you to record planned activities for a unit and ensure that all Assessment Criteria can be met and evidenced.
<b>Assessment and Delivery (Online Training)</b>	This course will support you to develop assessment activities that meet the requirements of Open Awards Qualifications.

## Devising assessment tasks

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

- Deliverable using the available resources;
- Allow learners to meet **all** Learning Outcomes and **all** Assessment Criteria;
- Allow learners to meet the level specified by the unit/qualification criteria;
- Allow accurate and consistent grading to be applied (where appropriate);
- Allow learners to generate evidence that can be authenticated as their work;
- 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 Providers to monitor that all Assessment Criteria from every unit being delivered will be assessed.

**If assessment evidence is not clearly and consistently mapped to Assessment Criteria, 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 you record this on the Open Awards Pre-Course Verification (PCV) form.

### ***Helpful documents***

<b>Level Descriptors</b>	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.
<b>Pre-Course Verification Form</b>	This document can be used to enable tutors/assessors and internal verifiers to explore assessment planning and design before the course starts
<b>Assessment Activity Front Sheet</b>	This document template allows Providers to outline the scope of a specific assessment activity, allowing tutors / assessors to detail tasks and list resources needed.
<b>Assessment Planning Sheet</b>	This document allows you to record planned activities for a unit and ensure that all Assessment Criteria can be met and evidenced.

### **Evidence requirements**

Providers must set up and maintain reliable quality assurance systems for documenting and recording assessment decisions. Their records must enable them to track learner progress and be up to date and accurate. They should clearly indicate the names of tutors/ assessors and internal quality assurers. Records should be made available to Open Awards to allow for external quality assurance.

For the majority of Open Awards qualifications, each learner will need to build a portfolio of evidence to demonstrate that they have met all Assessment Criteria associated with each unit. 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 recordings
- 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:

<b>Authentic</b>	It should clearly be the work of the learner.
<b>Valid</b>	It should clearly demonstrate the knowledge or skills that are set out in the Assessment Criteria.
<b>Reliable</b>	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.
<b>Inclusive</b>	It will ensure that no individual learner is excluded from the opportunity to show their achievement because of their individual background or experience.

## Portfolios

Portfolios used for collating learner evidence 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 Providers use the helpful documents created by Open Awards that are listed below. These are available on the Secure Portal.

Portfolios that do not provide evidence that clearly demonstrates that a learner has achieved all Learning 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

<b>Portfolio Front Sheet</b>	This document includes the details of the learner and units to be completed. It incorporates a checklist for the assessor to ensure that the portfolio is complete.
<b>Assessment Evidence Tracking Sheet</b>	This document is completed by the learner and presented with evidence for formal assessment to clearly show where evidence requirements within their portfolios have been met.
<b>Learner Evidence Authenticity Statement</b>	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.
<b>Assessment Feedback Form</b>	A template for providing developmental feedback to learners following submission of an assessment. These forms can also be utilised for both witness statements and observational feedback.
<b>Group Progress Record</b>	Allows you to record achievement of a unit by group.

## E-Portfolios

Along with paper-based learner evidence and associated paperwork, Open Awards also accepts e-portfolios such as OneFile. Online e-portfolios should be secure and complete with evidence clearly cross-referenced to Assessment Criteria, be supported by assessment and internal quality assurance records and allow learner progress to be tracked. Open Awards representatives must be able to access all relevant documentation for external quality assurance purposes.

If you are unsure whether an e-portfolio system meets our requirements, please contact your Quality and Standards Adviser.

## Retention of Learner Evidence

A portfolio of evidence is the property of the learner. The Provider should retain all learner work until the course run has been external quality assured. Following a successful external quality assurance review, original evidence should be returned to learners. For Providers with AIV status, the completion of the AIV Report is deemed to be equivalent to a successful external quality assurance review and original learner evidence should be returned to learners at this point.

If assessment records cannot be separated from the learner portfolio, Providers must also retain a copy of the specific areas of assessment within the learner portfolio.

Providers should retain copies of sufficient learner evidence (electronic copies are acceptable) to allow them to participate in internal and external standardisation events. Samples should include all assessed work produced by selected learners for the whole unit/ qualification. Wherever possible, evidence should be retained for learners with borderline levels of achievement (i.e. on the pass/fail border, merit/ distinction border etc.). Copies should be retained up to one year after certification providing external standardisation events have taken place.

Where the Provider repeats the delivery of the same course multiple times, evidence should be retained to ensure standards of assessment and internal quality assurance are comparable over time.

### **Retention of Assessment and Internal Quality Assurance Records**

Providers must keep complete and accurate learner assessment and internal quality assurance records, for at least three years following certification, in case any issues arise. These records must be made available to Open Awards upon request. If relevant regulatory authorities make a request to see these records, either directly to the Provider or via Open Awards, they must be made available.

This evidence should cover all units/ qualifications and be made available to Open Awards on request. Electronic versions of this evidence is acceptable.

Providers must retain the following records: A

list of all learners registered

- Learner name
- Date of birth
- Contact address
- Registration date
- Open Awards learner registration number
- Unique Learner Number (ULN) - where applicable
- Unit names and unit codes for each unit completed

Learner assessment records:

- Name of the assessor(s)
- The assessment methods used
- Evidence of the assessment decision being made
- Reasons for the assessment decision made
- the location of relevant supporting evidence

Records of internal quality assurance activity

- Name of the internal quality assurer(s)
- Name of the Authorised Internal Verifier (where applicable)
- Sampling strategy, including the sample selected and the rationale for choosing that sample

- Details of internal standardisation meetings relating to the units
- Copies of AIV Reports for the course runs
- Evidence of assessor competence (including copies of certificates, CVs and evidence of continuing professional development)
- Records of certificates claimed
- Records of learner complaints – including outcomes
- Records of learner appeals – including outcomes

If Providers do not comply with these record retention requirements and cannot substantiate claims made on behalf of learners it will affect their Provider's risk rating.

## External assessment

For some Open Awards qualifications (e.g. Functional Skills Qualifications), learners must complete assessments that we set. Providers 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 our Instructions for Conducting Controlled Assessments.

Where Providers are remotely assessing, external assessments must be delivered in accordance with our Instructions for Conducting Controlled Assessments Remotely.

**Providers 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.

The Provider 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.

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 to help 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.

Reasonable adjustments must not affect the reliability or validity of the assessment outcomes but may involve:



- Changing the usual assessment arrangements, e.g. allowing a learner extra time to complete an assessment activity
- Adapting assessment materials e.g. by providing large print or providing materials in Braille
- Providing assistance during an assessment e.g. by providing a trained signer, interpreter, a reader or a scribe
- Changing the assessment method e.g. from a written assessment to a spoken assessment
- Using assisted technology such as screen reading or a voice activated software.

Reasonable adjustments must be approved and set in place before the assessment takes place. The work produced by the learner will be assessed in the same way as all other learners.

When considering reasonable adjustments, the Provider should review the Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy which can be found on the Open Awards [Secure Portal](#)

The policy clearly states whether reasonable adjustment requests can be approved by the Provider or whether they need to be submitted to Open Awards for approval.

Where reasonable adjustments have been agreed by the Provider, completed RA1 forms must be made evidence available to Open Awards at quality assurance visits and will be reviewed alongside learner evidence.

Where approval needs to be sought from Open Awards, the Provider must complete Form RA2 as soon as possible after the need has been identified, and in any event at least 20 working days before the assessment is due to be taken. For short courses lasting less than 20 working days, Providers are advised to complete Form RA2 as soon as possible. Supporting evidence must be provided along with RA2 forms– this may include one or more of the following:

- The Provider's assessments of the learner's needs
- History of provision within the Provider
- Medical certificate
- Psychological or other professional assessment/report

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

All RA2 forms and supporting evidence will need to be submitted for approval via the Open Awards [Secure Portal](#)

## 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. Mitigating/adverse circumstance(s) that could result in the need for Special Considerations to be made may include:

- temporary illness or accident/injury at the time of the assessment
- bereavement at the time of the assessment
- domestic crisis arising at the time of the assessment
- serious disturbance during the assessment
- IT issues / outages beyond the Providers/learners control (were applicable)
- other accidental events, such as being given the wrong assessment
- failure by the Provider or Open Awards to implement agreed reasonable adjustments.

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

It is important to note that it may not be possible to apply special consideration where:

- An assessment requires the demonstration of a practical competence
- The assessment criteria have to be fully met
- Unit(s) confer license to practice.

Where an assessment has been missed or is in the form of an on-demand test, such as an electronic test set and marked by computer, the Provider should offer the learner an opportunity to take the test at a later date/series.

Open Awards will ensure that any special considerations claimed:

- do not confer an unfair advantage over other learners
- do not mislead users about level and extent of attainment
- do not compromise the integrity or credibility of the unit(s), for the learner concerned or for other learners
- are clearly tracked for audit purposes, with all supporting documentation where appropriate.

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

The Provider should complete form SC1 Request for Special Consideration, and submit to Open Awards via the [Secure Portal](#) together with any supporting evidence or documentation within seven working days of the end of the assessment period.

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

If an application for Special Consideration is successful, the learner's performance will be reviewed in the light of available evidence. It should be noted that successful Special Consideration applications will not necessarily change a learner's results.

### ***Helpful documents***

<b>Open Awards Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy</b>	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.
<b>Form RA1 - Record of Reasonable Adjustments made at the discretion of Providers</b>	This form is used to record all reasonable adjustments made at the discretion of Providers – in accordance with the relevant permissions as outlined in the policy.
<b>Form RA2 - Request for Reasonable Adjustments requiring Open Awards' Approval</b>	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.
<b>Form SC1 - Application for Special Consideration</b>	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 Providers to follow suitably rigorous processes to ensure that the integrity of our qualifications is maintained.

All Providers 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 to ensure 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 Provider'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 Provider, and the volume of Open Awards provision you deliver, you may need more than one Internal Quality Assurer in place. Each individual undertaking this role must ensure that:

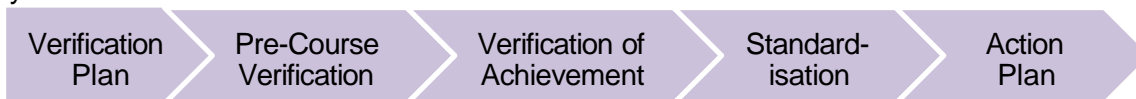
- assessment is appropriate, consistent, fair and transparent and does not unintentionally discriminate against any learner
- tutors/assessors receive ongoing advice and support, for example in designing assessment activities
- learners clearly understand assessment requirements and are given opportunities 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.

### ***Helpful online training modules***

<b>Quality Assurance Training (Online course)</b>	This course is to support Providers to improve their quality assurance of the Open Awards qualifications you are approved to deliver.
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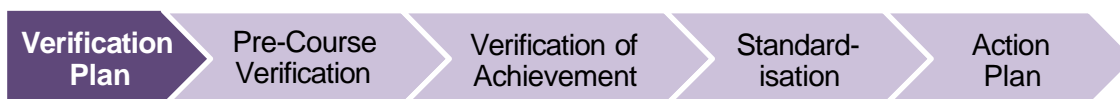
## Stages of internal quality assurance

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



All documents supporting the internal quality assurance process can be found on the Open Awards Portal.

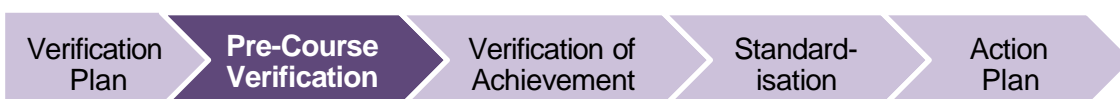
### Stage 1: Verification Plan



A Provider must identify how they will internally quality assure and standardise their delivery and assessment before delivering a course. A documented plan allows the Provider to allocate internal resources over a period of time, and provides Open Awards with evidence that their quality assurance processes are suitably robust. It should indicate:

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

### Stage 2: Pre-Course Verification



It is essential that assessment be carried out in a structured way, both for the benefit of the learners and to ensure effective internal quality assurance of achievement can take place.

The Internal Quality Assurer (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 are 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 to provide constructive feedback to each learner on their assessed work.

### **Helpful documents**

<b>Pre-Course Verification (PCV) Form</b>	This document is designed to allow the IQA to pre-verify the planned assessment activities to make sure they are valid and robust
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### **Stage 3: Verification of achievement**



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 is expected to monitor the quality of assessment by sampling assessment practices and decisions. The IQA will also meet with learners 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:

- Learner evidence is authentic
- Assessment decisions are fair and consistent, across tutors/ assessors and over time
- Learners are given appropriate opportunities to generate evidence against all Assessment Criteria
- Evidence of learner achievement is cross-referenced to each 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
- 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 complete and valid.

## ***Sampling***

It is the IQA's responsibility to monitor the quality of assessment through the sampling of assessment practices and decisions. The IQA is responsible for creating sampling plans which should outline what will be monitored and how the sample will be selected.

The sampling strategy for each Provider will vary according to the needs of the Provider and the particular qualifications, but in all cases must be agreed with Open Awards.

Sampling plans should specify the sample of assessed work they want to see and ensure that it is a representative sample based on sound principles and takes into consideration risk factors at the Provider. It should be sufficient to allow them to test the consistency and validity of the assessment.

Typical risk factors that would be taken into consideration when initially planning the sample would be areas such as:

- the number of learners on the course run(s)
- numbers of assessors
- number of alternative delivery locations or third parties
- experience and confidence of assessors
- changes to the qualification
- known problem areas/units/learning outcomes
- methods of assessment
- specific requirements of the qualification (where applicable)

It is important that the IQA looks at the decisions of the entire team in any given period (either on a calendar basis, or by course run). The sample should also 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
- Recognition of prior learning
- Reasonable adjustments
- The sampling strategy adopted in previous verification activities
- Issues arising from previous verification activities.

The IQA must sample 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 in total, a minimum of 10% of total units should be sampled.** The IQA should increase the size of the sample if the minimum sample does not provide the necessary assurances.

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 give clear written feedback to tutors/assessors on their assessment practice, identifying areas for improvement and monitoring progress towards actions. Learners should not be given copies of IQA reports as they are written to address assessor practice and may contain comments that may undermine learner confidence in delivery staff. Good practice for IQA reporting includes:

- IQA feedback must be directed to the relevant assessor and should address their practice.
- The IQA should avoid generalised statements
- Clear and focused comments on the work sampled should support professional development and evidence the rigour of internal quality assurance activity
- The IQA should indicate the actual items of work or evidence sampled by initialling and dating what has been reviewed.
- The IQA must record the unit and learning outcomes sampled on in their report for audit purposes and to assist Open Awards in their external quality assurance.
- The IQA should indicate all the units reviewed on their report.
- The IQA should record the method of assessment used
- The IQA should include a judgement as to whether the evidence is valid, authentic, reliable, current and sufficient
- The IQA should report on whether there is evidence of consistent practice.
- The IQA should note whether the records have been signed and dated by assessors, and authenticated by learners.
- If a standardisation issue is identified, the IQA will need to record this and ensure it is incorporated into internal standardisation and discussions with delivery staff.
- All actions raised must be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time bound (SMART).
- Once actions have been met, the IQA must record this.
- If the IQA identifies serious concerns which need to be addressed, these should be raised with the Provider manager and brought to the attention of the Quality and Standards Adviser,
- All original IQA records must be retained for three years following certification.



- Learners who withdraw from the course before completing all units are entitled to unit certification so should be included in the IQA sample and documentation.

### ***Helpful documents***

<b>Verification of Achievement Record_AIV Report (VAR)</b>	This document is used by the IQA to record the outcomes of their sampling activities and provide feedback to the tutor/assessor.
<b>Verification Sampling Plan (VSP)</b>	A summary of the learners, units and assessors included in the IQA sample, including a rationale for the size and content

## Authorised Internal Verifiers(AIVs)

Where a Provider has demonstrated robust internal quality systems in delivering Open Awards qualifications over a period of time, and whose internal quality assurers meet minimum requirements for the role, we may consider recommending named individuals to apply to be an Authorised Internal Verifier (AIV). An AIV is authorised to make verify assessment decisions and directly claim credit certificates for learners from Open Awards.

The following criteria must be met before AIV Status can be applied for:

- The provider must have a Low Risk quality status.
- The provider has implemented robust internal quality assurance systems.
- The provider has received two external quality assurance monitoring reports from Open Awards.
- The provider has demonstrated consistently high standards of internal quality assurance practice over at least two consecutive external quality assurance activities.
- The provider has not been subject to any high-level sanctions from Open Awards within the last 12 months.
- One or more named individuals at the Provider have been recommended by an Open Awards Quality and Standards Advisor (QASA) to apply to become an AIV.

An AIV will receive approval against specified qualifications and will need to apply to extend AIV approval for other qualifications in due course.

Open Awards reserves the right to approve AIV status for some, but not all of the requested qualifications and to refuse to grant AIV Status for one or more qualification(s) if there are concerns which could lead to Open Awards becoming non-compliant with Ofqual's General Conditions of Recognition. The Authorised Internal Verifiers Policy and Procedures can be found on the Open Awards [Secure Portal](#).

AIV status is granted according to the skills, knowledge and experience of the individual as well as the Provider's scope of approval. Each AIV will be approved for specific qualifications in which they meet the necessary criteria.

Approval is restricted by:

- Qualification title
- Qualification level

Larger providers offering a range of qualifications and units will be more likely to require more than one AIV. More than one AIV can be allocated to each qualification, although the maximum number of AIVs must be appropriate to the amount and scope of Open Awards provision your provider offers. For example, a provider offering one qualification to fewer than fifty learners per year is not likely to need more than two AIVs.

Additional requirements may be required to become an AIV for qualifications at Level 3 or above. There are some qualifications that Open Awards do not allow AIV status, these are outlined in the AIV Handbook which can be found on the Open Awards [Secure Portal](#).

AIV status relates only to a named individual at a named Provider and **is not transferable, either between individuals or between Providers.**

AIV status is a mark of confidence by Open Awards in the individual and the Provider. It is based on trust and subject to continuous effective performance of verification which is monitored on an ongoing basis by the QASA allocated to the Provider. In order to maintain AIV status, the following conditions must be met:

- The provider's quality risk rating must remain at low
- All actions raised by the QASA during the year must have been completed by the target completion date
- The AIV must be able to demonstrate progress on actions with completion dates in the future.
- All AIVs at the provider must complete the mandatory training every 12 months.
- All AIV Reports must be submitted for all courses in a timely manner. **Open Awards will not certificate learners unless and until the Provider submits an AIV Report for the relevant course run.**
- The provider must not have been guilty of maladministration and/or malpractice.
- The AIV must not have been guilty of maladministration and/or malpractice.
- The AIV remains employed by the Provider and continues to have internal quality assurance responsibilities.
- The AIV must not have been guilty of maladministration and/or malpractice
- The AIV remains employed by the Provider.

If the internal quality assurance procedures and practices do not meet the specified criteria, sanctions will be imposed which may result in AIV status being suspended for an individual AIV or across the whole Provider.

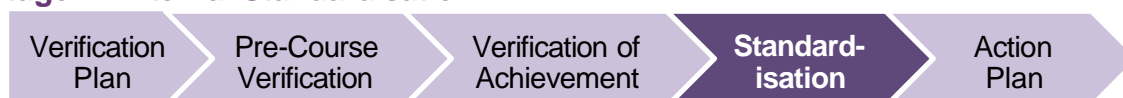
If an AIV leaves the Provider, Open Awards must be informed immediately so we can remove their access to the Portal.

Open Awards retain all evidence of AIV activity, including application forms, action plans, AIV Reports and attendance at our standardisation activities. Open Awards QASAs will monitor AIV performance on an ongoing basis and complete annual reviews of their activity to inform decisions about the continuation of AIV Status.

### ***Helpful documents***

<b>AIV Handbook</b>	This handbook gives more detailed overview of the role of the AIV, the application and approval process.
<b>AIV Policy and Procedures</b>	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.
<b>AIV Report template</b>	This report must be completed by AIVs and uploaded to the portal for all course runs they have verified.

## Stage 4: Internal Standardisation



Where more than one member of staff assesses learners on the same course or similar courses, the Provider must arrange internal standardisation exercises to review the assessment practices and decisions of each member of staff. This ensures that decisions and recommendations for the award of credit to learners are based on common understanding and practices.

The internal quality assurer (or AIV, where appropriate) is responsible for arranging and facilitating Provider standardisation events.

Internal standardisation is included in the standardisation policy which can be found on the Open Awards [Secure Portal](#).

Internal standardisation should include all appropriate team members particularly for Providers with a number of dispersed, part-time, contracted or inexperienced assessors. The internal verifier for the course(s) has the responsibility for arranging and facilitating standardisation events.

The frequency of internal standardisation exercises depends on Providers' internal quality assurance processes. This will depend on factors such as the:

- size of the Provider
- number of tutors/assessors and internal verifiers at the Provider
- quantity of units and/or qualifications delivered at the Provider
- range of units and/or qualifications delivered at the Provider
- number of new or inexperienced staff delivering the unit/qualification.

Approved Providers must implement a standardisation strategy which plans when each unit is to be standardised and ensures that, over time, all units and courses are reviewed. Open Awards may request that you include specific units within your internal standardisation.

Clear instructions must be agreed and given to assessors and internal quality assurers about what should be included in the sample. There should be a clear rationale for the sample choice which may include any of the following factors:

- strong evidence of achievement
- weak evidence of achievement and the reason for that judgement
- evidence which is not sufficient to demonstrate achievement of all the assessment criteria
- the use of an innovative assessment strategy or a new or innovative assessment method
- an example of good and constructive feedback to a student
- an example of good and constructive feedback from the internal quality assurer to the assessor
- evidence from a student who has not achieved and why
- any other valid reasons for the selection

The sample should include evidence assessed by each of the assessors involved and evidence internally verified by each of the IQAs. It should support the evidence of achievement for a whole unit of assessment and include:

- List of learners including achievement tracking sheets
- Unit specification including unit code and any additional unit information
- Unit assessment strategy mapped to all relevant assessment criteria and including grading assessment plan where appropriate.
- Assignment brief(s)/ task sheet(s)
- Learners' assessed work
- Record of the assessment decision including feedback to the learner in relation to achievement/non-achievement of the assessment criteria/grading criteria (if applicable).
- Internal quality assurance records including feedback to the Assessor and the IQA's judgements on the security of the award of credit.
- Evidence where possible of subsequent monitoring of any actions identified by the internal quality assurance process.
- Completed RA1 form for all learners for which a Reasonable Adjustment has been made at the discretion of the Provider
- The Provider's internal quality assurance policy and procedures

Documented evidence of internal standardisation exercises must be available for review by Open Awards quality staff. This should include detail of the qualifications/ units reviewed and the outcomes of the events, including action plans where appropriate.

Template documents for Provider standardisation events are available through the Open Awards Portal.

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

### ***Helpful documents***

<b>Standardisation Policy and Procedures</b>	This document sets out our approach to standardisation and our expectations of Providers to maintain the validity, quality and consistency of our qualifications.
<b>Provider Standardisation Form</b>	A template document to record discussions and decisions made at internal standardisation activities.

## Stage 5: Action Planning



On completion of any internal quality assurance activity, the Provider 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.

<b>Verification of Achievement Record_ AIV Report (VAR)</b>	This document is for by the IQA (or AIV) to record outcomes from their sampling activities and provide feedback to the tutor/assessor.
<b>Verification Sampling Plan</b>	A plan of proposed internal quality assurance activity which is developed before delivery begins.

## 8. External Quality Assurance

Open Awards work closely with each approved Provider to be sure that robust quality assurance systems are in place and followed. We monitor a Provider's processes and practices to ensure they meet all Open Awards, qualification-specific and regulatory requirements. Along with the need ensure compliance, we also supporting Provider staff on matters relating to assessment and quality assurance; giving advice and guidance to help them improve.

Each Provider is allocated a Quality and Standards Adviser (QASA) who has overarching responsibility for ensuring the Provider's ongoing compliance through their quality assurance policies and practices. The QASA role is designed:

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

On occasions, Providers will be allocated an External Quality Assurer (EQA) to undertake external quality assurance activities. This is most likely to be the case:

- for qualifications requiring specialist knowledge and experience
- when the QASA does not have the capacity to undertake the activity within the agreed timescale.

The level of external quality assurance intervention a Provider receives is determined by the Provider's quality risk rating and the risk rating of the qualifications that they deliver.

### ***Risk-based approach***

Open Awards adopts a risk-based approach to the external quality assurance of approved Providers. By monitoring the assessment and internal quality assurance policies and practices, Open Awards makes judgements about the potential risk posed to the integrity of the award of credit or the Provider's ability to comply with the Provider Agreement. Judgements are informed by the number and significance of the issues identified during external quality assurance activities and events and the urgency of the remedial action that is required to address them.

Risk ratings are based on a professional judgement which takes account of the specific circumstances that may apply in a particular Provider at a particular time. Open Awards will increase or decrease risk ratings throughout the year to ensure they are an accurate portrayal of the risks identified at any given time.

Approved Providers are allocated one of four risk ratings:

- New Provider
- High Risk
- Medium Risk
- Low Risk

All our qualifications are now allocated one of three risk ratings:

- High Risk
- Medium Risk
- Low Risk

The following table outlines the proportion of course runs to be sampled depending on the risk rating of the Provider and the qualification being delivered within a 12-month period.

All course runs of high-risk qualifications must be sampled, regardless of the Provider's risk rating. All course runs of New Providers and High Risk Providers must be sampled.

Where a low or medium risk Provider does not deliver sufficient course runs for 10% and 25% course sampling to be possible, learners must be sampled from a minimum of two course runs. If only one course run has been delivered for qualifications at low or medium risk, this course run must be sampled.

For smaller classes sizes, samples should include a minimum of 3 learners (where <3 learners registered, all learners must be sampled).

<b>Provider Risk Rating</b>	<b>Qualification Risk Rating</b>		
	Low risk qualification	Medium risk qualification	High risk qualification
Low risk rating	10% of course runs. 10% of learners. 10% of units.	25% of course runs. 10% of learners. 10% of units.	100% of course runs. 10% of learners. 20% of units.
Medium risk rating	25% of course runs. 10% of learners. 10% of units.	50% of course runs. 10% of learners. 20% of units.	100% of course runs. 20% of learners. 20% of units.
High risk rating	100% of course runs. 10% of learners. 20% of units.	100% of course runs. 20% of learners. 20% of units.	100% of course runs. 25% of learners. 25% of units.
New Provider risk rating	100% of course runs. 10% of learners. 20% of units.	100% of course runs. 20% of learners. 20% of units.	100% of course runs. 25% of learners. 25% of units.

Please note: The proportion of learners and units included in the sample may be reduced for larger qualifications or class sizes at the discretion of the QASA allocated to the provider. Sample sizes must be sufficient to allow for accurate judgements of assessment outcomes.



## New Providers

Each new Provider is subject to strict approval criteria in order to become an approved Provider. This generally includes a review of policies rather than delivery, assessment and internal quality assurance practices. Open Awards works in conjunction with the Provider to devise a Provider improvement action plan (PIAP). Progress towards the actions in this plan forms the basis of our external quality assurance activities for new Providers.

All newly approved Providers are given a New Provider risk rating which stays in place until they have received their first quality assurance activity, when their risk rating will be changed to Low, Medium or High as necessary. It is expected that Quality New Provider risk ratings be in place for a maximum of 12 months.

The Quality and Standards Adviser allocated to the new Provider will liaise with the Provider's quality assurance contact, providing advice and guidance as required and monitoring timely progress towards actions in Quality Improvement Action Plan on a quarterly basis (as a minimum). This support will normally be via email, phone calls or Teams meetings.

Key contacts at new Providers will be expected to attend Open Awards training and events as required.

## High Risk Providers

A high risk Provider is deemed to present a risk to the interests of learners, integrity of qualifications/units and confidence in Open Awards qualifications. This may include:

- Loss of integrity of assessment decisions/ examination practices
- Risk of invalid claims, or possibility of invalid claims, for certification
- Non-compliance with Provider Agreement or regulatory requirements

Any Provider with AIVs that becomes high risk will automatically have AIV status suspended. Depending on the detailed reasons for the Provider being high risk, and the likelihood of any issues recurring, this may be temporary suspension or complete removal of AIV status for one or more individual.

Providers becoming high risk will be subject to a sanction being placed on them. For more information, please refer to our Sanctions Policy which can be found on the Open Awards [Secure Portal](#).

Providers with high risk status will be subject to a detailed PIAP designed to address the issues considered to be responsible for their high risk status. Progress towards SMART actions will be monitored by their QASA on a monthly basis through remote and on-site support as required. Fees will apply in cases where multiple external quality assurance support interventions are required to help mitigate risks.

High risk Providers will not be allowed to register new learners without the prior approval of Open Awards. We will not accept AIV applications for high risk Providers. In some instances, Providers becoming high risk will have active learners for whom external quality assessment sampling and certification is still required.

Lack of timely progress against actions within the agreed action plan will result in Provider

approval being withdrawn.

## Medium Risk Providers

Medium risk Providers are those at which there may be some doubt over the integrity of assessment decisions/ examinations practices. They may be areas potential non-compliance with the Provider Agreement or regulatory requirements.

Providers that have not completed mandatory actions in a timely manner will also be considered to be medium risk (although in some cases, this may reflect a high risk Provider).

Sanctions will be placed on Providers in line with our Sanctions Policy which can be found on the Open Awards [Secure Portal](#).

We will not accept AIV applications for medium risk Providers. Any Provider with AIVs that becomes medium risk will automatically normally be able to continue with AIV status whilst they address the actions needed to reduce to low risk. If the Provider has not become low risk by the end of the academic year, AIV status will be removed.

The QASA will monitor the Provider's progress towards actions in their PIAP on a quarterly basis. The level of progress made may result in risk rating being changed.

## Low Risk Providers

Providers at which the integrity of assessment decisions/ examinations practices is considered to be sound are deemed to be Low Risk. There will be no known areas of potential non-compliance with the Provider Agreement or regulatory requirements.

All low risk Providers will be subject to a remote annual compliance review by the QASA and will receive at least one external quality assessment sampling activity per year. Progress towards actions in the PIAP will be monitored on a quarterly basis.

Low risk Providers may have AIVs. AIVs must meet set criteria to continue with AIV status. Failure to meet these criteria will result in Providers losing AIV status. The Provider's risk rating will become medium if AIV status is withdrawn across Provider.

## External Verification

Once you have submitted your results through the Portal (see Section 9), your allocated QASA will normally contact you within 5 days to arrange for the learners' work to be externally verified.

## Preparing for external verification

We will continue to mainly undertake remote external assessment sampling activities and will provide you with a list of all evidence needed. This will include:

- learner evidence for sample selected by Open Awards

- proof that learner work has been assessed, internally quality assured and recorded in line with Open Awards requirements
- Assessment and internal quality assurance strategy/ procedures
- Evidence of progress towards actions in your quality improvement action plan
- A link to your SharePoint folder where you can drop all electronic evidence into
- Other relevant information (where known in advance).

We are 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 an on-site visit is required, we 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 QASA prior to the meeting, so that they be included in the discussions on the day.

### ***Posting learner work***

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

Open Awards always securely package, label and distribute learner evidence and associated documentation/records to Providers by a secure, traceable postal service. Providers are expected to bear the cost of any postage incurred.

In the event of work being lost in the post, Open Awards will take the following action:

- Request that the Provider make the appropriate investigations with the carrier
- Request alternative evidence from the Provider upon which an assessment decision may be made. If alternative evidence is not available Open Awards may be unable to certificate.

### **External quality assessment sampling activities**

Through external quality assessment sampling we will review the assessment decisions made by assessors and the checks carried out by the internal quality assurers. We 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 assessors to ensure that evidence and records of assessment are both valid and authentic
- Reviewing procedures.

Sample sizes will vary according to the Provider's risk rating, track record of the Provider and appropriate staff, number of sites, the number of learners and the risk rating of qualifications being delivered (see table on page 49). 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 learners' evidence
- 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.

Open Awards reserves the right to change assessment decisions where there is insufficient evidence to support the decision made at the Provider.

## ***After the visit***

Where a Provider is giving cause for concern, the Provider's risk rating will be increased accordingly and sanctions placed as appropriate. Where additional quality assurance activities are required to resolve issues, charges may apply.

Within 5 working days of the external verification activity, the QASA allocated to the Provider will either confirm or reject the results. Where results are to be rejected, the QASA will advise Providers of the reasons for this decision beforehand. Where appropriate, Providers will be advised of any remedial actions they need to complete in order for results to be approved.

Following the external quality assurance sampling activity, we will produce a summative report which includes:

1. Provider overview
2. Review of provider improvement action plan (where previous actions have been placed)
3. Third party arrangements
4. Record of discussions with learners, assessors, IQAs (and AIVs, where appropriate)
5. Scope of external verification activity covered
6. Summary of Functional Skills delivery (where appropriate)
7. Quality review outcomes – including risk ratings
8. Provider improvement action plan (new actions placed)
9. External quality assurance sampling record

The report will normally be made available via the Portal within 10 working days of the external verification activity taking place. This will be visible to all individuals at the Provider with the following roles:

- Quality Assurance Contact
- Administration Contact

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 Provider needs to address.

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

In cases where a Provider is giving serious cause for concern, or actions are not completed within agreed timescales, sanctions may be imposed on the Provider as a whole or on a named individual at the Provider in line with the Open Awards Sanctions Policy which can be found on the Open Awards [Secure Portal](#).

## ***Helpful documents***

<b>External Quality Assurance Sampling Report</b>	This document is completed by the QASA/EQA to record outcomes from the visit
<b>Provider Improvement Action Plan (PIAP)</b>	This document is completed and reviewed by the QASA and outlines all actions and deadlines set by Open Awards against the Provider

## Annual Quality Compliance Reviews

All approved Providers must sign up and adhere to the Open Awards Provider Agreement which outlines our requirements in relation to the delivery, assessment and internal quality assurance of our qualifications and units. Providers are expected to adhere to these requirements on a daily basis and be able to evidence compliance at any time.

Annual quality compliance reviews undertaken by the QASA allocated to the Provider enable us to make a judgement on the Provider's ongoing compliance in the following areas:

- Policies and procedures
- Provider management
- Staffing and resources
- Delivery plans
- Provider self assessment
- Learner registration and certification
- Delivery arrangements
- Assessment arrangements
- Internal quality assurance arrangements
- Authorised internal verifier (AIV) arrangements (where applicable)
- Engagement with Open Awards

The QASA will review progress towards the Provider's quality improvement action plan and may incorporate external verification activities into the review.

Compliance reviews are mainly undertaken remotely for all Providers. On occasions, Providers may be subject to on-site reviews dependent on actions set within the PIAP.

### Before the review

Before the review takes place, you will need to review your Provider's practices to ensure they comply with the Open Awards Provider Agreement. If you are aware of any areas where you may not meet the requirements, please advise the QASA in advance of the review.

You should ensure that all your policies and procedures are up to date and being followed.

QASAs will need to review copies of all relevant paperwork that evidences compliance with the Provider Agreement.

Due to annual compliance reviews being undertaken remotely, the documents must be dropped into your SharePoint folder by the date requested by the QASA. Failure to meet this deadline may affect the Provider's risk rating.

## During the review

Open Awards needs to undertake a review of each Provider'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 Compliance Review will provide Open Awards' QASA with an up to date record of specific areas of compliance with the Provider Agreement.

The following documentation will be reviewed:

- Policies and procedures covering:
  - Maladministration and malpractice
  - Learner enquiries, complaints and appeals
  - Equality and diversity policy
  - Internal quality assurance and standardisation
  - Reasonable adjustments and special considerations
  - Distribution of certificates for learners
  - Recognition of prior learning
  - Quality assurance course review
  - Invigilation of controlled assessments (where applicable)
  - Student support
- Evidence that quality assurance policies and procedures are reviewed regularly
- Evidence that quality assurance policies and procedures are being followed
- Business policies and procedures covering:
  - Health and Safety
  - Safeguarding
  - Data Protection
  - Fire Evacuation
  - Risk assessments of specific risks your Organisation faces, e.g. violence at work, service users with challenging behaviours, visitors etc.
  - Policy on Checking for Criminal Records
  - Conflict of Interest Policy and Procedure
- Evidence that business policies and procedures are reviewed regularly
- Evidence that business policies and procedures are being followed.
- Staffing and resources
  - Staffing structure
  - Amended contacts list (if applicable)
  - CVs of any new staff involved in the delivery, assessment or internal quality assurance of Open Awards provision
  - Evidence of staff training and development activities (internal and external)
  - Evidence that the learning environment is appropriate for the units being assessed
  - Evidence of appropriate administrative record keeping

- Data management
  - Evidence of secure data and learner record storage

#### Internal quality assurance

- Evidence of pre-verification of courses
  - Evidence of sampling of assessment decisions
  - Evidence of internal standardisation (where appropriate)
  - Course resources
  - Portfolios with assessment and IQA paperwork
  - IQA sampling strategy
- Evidence of progress towards previously set actions

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

### Following the review

The report will normally be made available via the Portal within 10 working days of the annual compliance review taking place. This will be visible to all individuals at the Provider with the following roles:

- Quality Assurance Contact
- Administration Contact

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 Provider needs to address.

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

In cases where a Provider is giving serious cause for concern, or actions are not completed within agreed timescales, sanctions may be imposed on the Provider as a whole or on a named individual at the Provider in line with the Open Awards Sanctions Policy which can be found on the Open Awards [Secure Portal](#).

### Helpful documents

<b>Compliance Review Report</b>	This document is completed by the QASA to record the outcomes from the review
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## Open Awards External Standardisation

All approved Providers are strongly encouraged to participate in external standardisation events run by Open Awards throughout the year in various locations. Details of these events can be found on the Open Awards website.

These events are professional development opportunities for Provider staff with assessment and internal quality assurance responsibilities. Providers can participate in standardisation events in two ways:

- by attending standardisation activities
- by contributing redacted samples of learner work (and supporting documentation) for external standardisation activities

Where a member of the Open Awards quality assurance team has expressed concern over assessment practices and/or decisions, the Provider may be actioned to attend external standardisation. Failure to attend in a timely manner will result in sanctions being placed on the Provider as per the Sanctions Policy which can be found on the Open Awards [Secure Portal](#).

All individuals attending standardisation must bring evidence of assessment and internal quality assurance processes at their Provider, 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.

## 9. Award and Certification

### Recommending Learners for Credit

To safeguard the interest of learners and to ensure prompt certification, all results must be uploaded and verified via the Secure Portal within 3 months of the end date of the course. For courses with an Authorised Internal Verifier (AIV) the AIV report must be uploaded to the Secure Portal at the same time results are verified to complete the verification process. Where results and/or reports are not received within this timescale a late fee may be charged and Providers 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:

- Quality and Standards Adviser/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 [Secure Portal Guidance](#).

Tutors are responsible for ensuring that 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 Provider 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/Quality and Standards Adviser or an Authorised Internal Verifier (AIV) at the Provider.

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

If units have been identified as being exempt for a learner at the point of registration (see Open Awards Recognition of Prior Learning policy for more information) then any requests made by the Provider 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 evidence is included in the learner's portfolio.

If evidence is not present in the portfolio, this needs to be raised with the Tutor before authorisation can take place.

Further information on the assessment and quality assurance processes leading up to the recommendation for the award of credit can be found in the Internal and External Quality Assurance sections of this guide.

## Amending the Award of Credit

Before claiming award of credit, please check all information is accurate, including the spelling of learners' names. 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. **For Providers with AIV status Open Awards will not certificate learners unless and until the Provider submits an AIV Report for the relevant course run.**

Certificates include:

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

All certificates will be forwarded to your Provider, 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 'Providers' section 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 Providers 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. Training and consultancy services are available to approved Providers, with a number of training places included in the Provider's annual fee.

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

We offer a variety of training and development opportunities, including:

- Administration
- Authorised Internal Verifier
- Delivery and Assessment
- Quality Assurance
- Standardisation

Further information of our training is available on the Open Awards [website](#).

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

We offer Consultancy Services in:

- Business planning and development solutions
- Curriculum planning

Bespoke Provider 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 Providers

Open Awards acknowledges that our approved Providers 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 Providers.

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

### Maladministration and malpractice

Maladministration is defined as any activity, neglect, default or other practice that results in a Provider 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 Provider or any officer or employee
- Involves a failure by a Provider to investigate allegations of suspected malpractice in accordance with the requirements set out in this document also constitutes malpractice awarding organisation or Provider.

A Provider 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 Provider 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 Provider'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 Provider monitoring arrangements.

### ***Helpful documents***

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

## **Sanctions**

Open Awards reserves the right to place sanctions on its Providers 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 Providers, and/or the Provider as a whole. Sanctions may also be applied to learners.

Open Awards can impose a range of sanctions on a Provider depending on the seriousness of the situation, the level and track-record of the Provider'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 Provider'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 Providers 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 Provider, this will be at the Provider'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 Provider'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 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 Provider Agreement.



## 12. Provider Withdrawal/ Closure

If you wish to withdraw from Open Awards recognised Provider status or have ceased trading, Open Awards must be notified, in writing (by post or via email to [enquiries@openawards.org.uk](mailto: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 with unit/qualification achievement are submitted and externally quality assured by your Quality and Standards Adviser/External Quality Assurer
- Your Provider 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 Provider are removed from your website, social media platforms and all resources

Open Awards reserves the right to close a Provider if:

- A Provider fails to pay monies owing to Open Awards within the standard payment period outlined in our Invoicing Policy
- The Provider does not adhere to clauses in the Provider Agreement.

## POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

*Please click on the links below to access our corresponding policy documentation.*

<b>Documentation</b>
<a href="#"><u>Assessment Definitions</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Enquiries, Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedures</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Equality and Diversity Policy</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Invoicing Policy</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Level Descriptors</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Privacy Notice</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>XAMS User Guidance</u></a>

