

Regulated Qualifications and Unit Courses

2023/2024

Provider Handbook

Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Contents | 2 |
| Welcome and Introduction | 5 |
| Working with Open Awards | 6 |
| Your Dedicated Team | 7 |
| Opening Hours | 8 |
| Being an Open Awards Provider | 9 |
| How Much Does It cost? | 10 |
| What Staff and Resources Do I Need? | 10 |
| Provider Staff Requirements | 10 |
| Resources and Arrangements | 13 |
| Working with Third Parties, Partnerships, and Satellite Sites | 13 |
| Conflicts of Interest | 14 |
| Provider Policies and Procedures | 15 |
| Setting up your Course | 16 |
| What Do We Offer? | 17 |
| What is the Regulated Qualification Framework (RQF)? | 18 |
| Qualification Size | 18 |
| Qualification Level..... | 18 |
| Choosing a Qualification | 19 |
| Designing a Course Using Individual Units | 20 |
| Qualification and Unit Reviews | 21 |
| Feedback | 21 |
| Data Acquisition..... | 22 |
| How Do I Set Up a Qualification or Course? | 24 |
| What Will Learners Receive? | 25 |
| Rules of Combination | 25 |
| How Should I Promote or Market my Course? | 26 |
| Registering Learners | 28 |
| Online Registration | 28 |
| What is a Unique Learner Number (ULN)? | 28 |
| Fair Processing and Extended Privacy Notices..... | 29 |
| How do I Amend a Course Run/ Registration? | 30 |
| Withdrawing and Accounting for Learners | 30 |
| Recognition of Prior Learning | 31 |
| Delivering and Assessing | 32 |
| Assessment Planning..... | 32 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Assessment Methods | 34 |
| Devising Assessment Tasks | 35 |
| Evidence Requirements | 36 |
| Portfolios | 37 |
| E-Portfolios | 38 |
| Retention of Learner Evidence | 38 |
| Retention of Assessment and Internal Quality Assurance Records | 39 |
| External Assessment | 40 |
| Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations | 40 |
| Reasonable Adjustments | 40 |
| Special Considerations | 41 |
| Internal Quality Assurance | 44 |
| Stage of Internal Quality Assurance | 45 |
| Stage 1: Verification Plan | 45 |
| Stage 2: Pre-Course Verification | 46 |
| Stage 3: Verification of achievement | 47 |
| Authorised Internal Verifiers (AIVs) | 50 |
| Minimum Quality Criteria for AIV Status | 51 |
| Granting AIV status | 51 |
| Extending AIV status | 51 |
| Maintaining AIV Status | 52 |
| Responsibility of Providers | 52 |
| Stage 4: Internal Standardisation | 53 |
| Stage 5: Action Planning | 56 |
| External Quality Assurance | 57 |
| Risk-based Approach | 57 |
| New Providers | 60 |
| High Risk Providers | 60 |
| Medium Risk Providers | 61 |
| Low Risk Providers | 62 |
| External Quality Assurance of Learner Work | 62 |
| Preparing for External Verification | 62 |
| External Quality Assessment Sampling Activities | 63 |
| After the Review | 65 |
| Reviews | 66 |
| Before the Review | 67 |
| During the Review | 68 |
| High-Risk Qualifications | 69 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Medium-Risk Qualifications | 70 |
| Following the Review | 70 |
| Open Awards External Standardisation | 71 |
| Award and Certification..... | 72 |
| Recommending Learners for Credit | 72 |
| External Verification | 72 |
| Amending the Award of Credit | 73 |
| Issuing Certificates | 73 |
| Re-issue sand Replacement Certificates | 74 |
| Training and Consultancy | 75 |
| Issues or Non-compliance at Providers..... | 76 |
| Incident reports | 76 |
| Maladministration and Malpractice..... | 76 |
| Sanctions | 77 |
| Provider Withdrawal/ Closure | 79 |

Welcome and Introduction

Welcome to the Open Awards Provider Handbook.

This guidance is applicable to the delivery of qualifications regulated by Ofqual or Qualification Wales. It is also applicable to the delivery of unit courses and non-regulated courses.

It 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 and curriculum managers)
- Internal Verifiers
- Tutors/Assessors

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

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

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 customer service team on 0151 494 2072 or email customerservices@openawards.org.uk

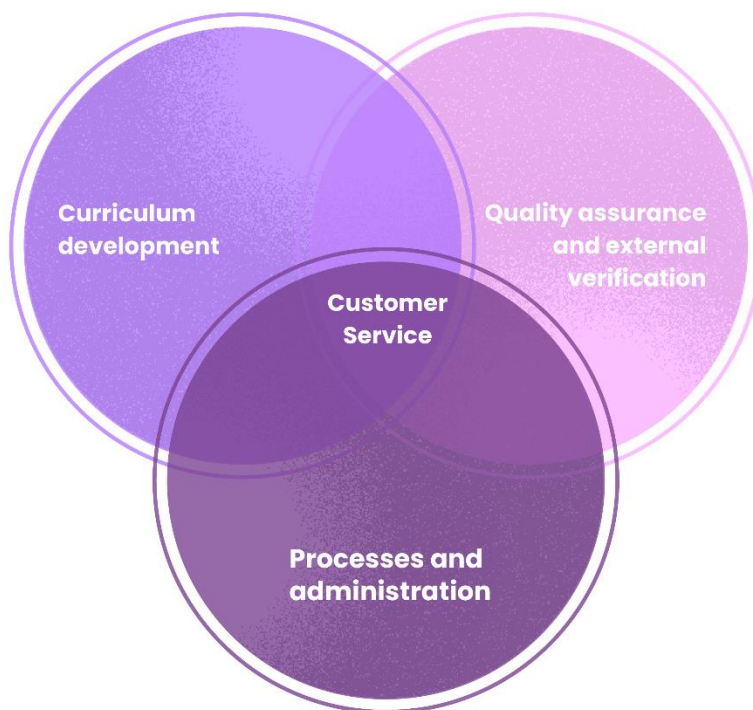
Working with Open Awards



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. |
| Processes and Administration | Supporting you through registrations and award processes and offering ongoing support. |

Opening Hours

The Open Awards team are available to provide support Monday – Saturday.

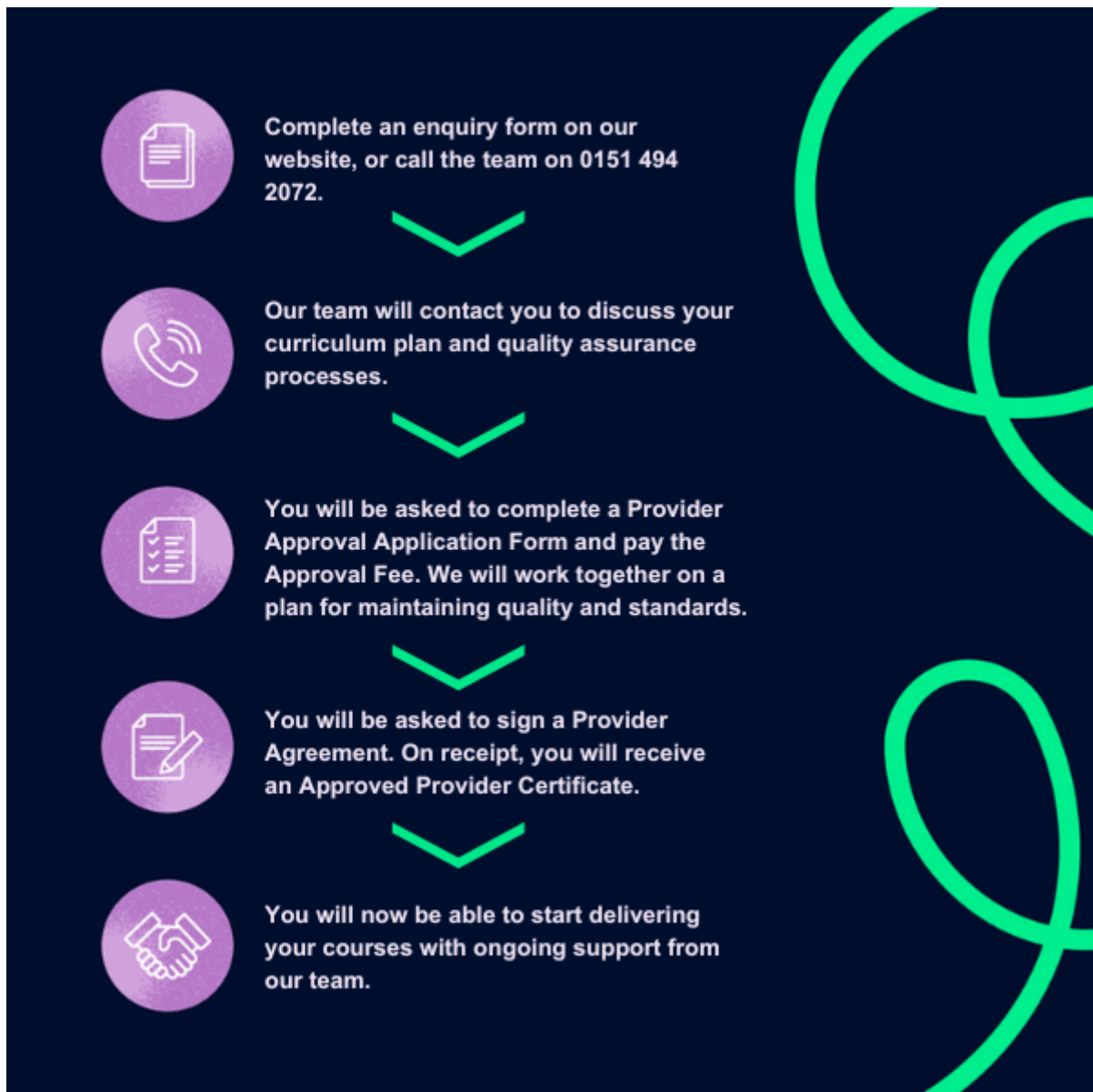
| | |
|-------------------|---------------|
| Monday – Thursday | 8am – 6pm |
| Friday | 8am – 5pm |
| Saturday | 9am – 12.30pm |
| Sunday | Closed |

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 customerservices@openawards.org.uk.

Being an Open Awards Provider

You must be an approved provider before you start to deliver Open Awards qualifications or units. If you are not already approved, please visit our [website](#) to submit a New Business Enquiry Form or contact a member of the team on 0151 494 2072 or enquiries@openawards.org.uk.



How Much Does It cost?

Open Awards publish pricing information annually from 1st August. This can be found on our [website](#). A hard copy of all pricing information is also available on request from Open Awards.

Please refer to our [Invoicing Policy](#) for details of how and when you 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. Open Awards require named contacts for the following functions:

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Head of Organisation | The head of the organisation, e.g., Chief Executive. This person will: <ul style="list-style-type: none">act as the ultimate point of accountability for the delivery of Open Awards qualifications |
| Provider Contact | This person will be the key contact between the Provider and Open Qualifications. They will: <ul style="list-style-type: none">be authorised to sign the Provider Agreementcommit resources on behalf of the Provider |
| Administration Contact | This person is responsible for: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Ensuring accurate and prompt completion of administrative forms/ processesApplying for new qualificationsRegistering learners within specified time framesLiaising with Open Awards staffEnsuring other Provider staff have access to necessary documents.Maintaining accurate records of all course and learner registrationsEnsuring complete and accurate records are retained in accordance with the Provider AgreementEntering results with specified timeframesEnsuring the distribution of certificates to learnersMonitoring administrative processes and addressing any issue arisingKeeping the password for the portal secure |

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Assessment Administrator | <p>Functional Skills Providers only. Responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessing entry level mark schemes • Accessing SLC documentation <p>Assessment Administrators can also register learners.</p> |
| Quality Assurance Contact | <p>This person is responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maintaining assessment and internal quality assurance processes including internal standardisation • liaising with Quality and Standards Advisers and External Quality Assurers as required • ensuring the training and updating of staff involved with internal quality systems • ensuring the regulations for qualifications are met • ensuring that the Provider abides by the Open Awards Provider Agreement and associated aspects of regulatory compliance • ensuring the Provider engages in external standardisation |
| Curriculum Development Contact | <p>The person with overall responsibility for curriculum planning and development within your Provider. This person will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that qualifications submitted to Open Awards for approval have been through an internal approval process • liaise with the designated Business Development Consultant to develop the curriculum at the Provider |
| Finance Contact | <p>Person responsible for ensuring timely payment of invoices</p> |
| Safeguarding Contact | <p>Person responsible for ensuring that the Provider safeguards the interests of learners and staff</p> |

A named individual may perform more than one of the functions listed, although we discourage all functions being undertaken by the same one or two individuals. Where an individual is performing multiple roles, we will require information about how any potential or actual conflicts of interest are managed.

Providers are responsible for notifying Open Awards of staff changes. This can be done through the “Contact Manager” section of the Portal as soon as a change is known, by the Administration Contact. A Changes to Provider Details Request Form can be used to request a change of Administration Contact or registered address, or where the Administration Contact may be unavailable.

Please check your “Contact Manager” regularly to ensure your contacts are up to date.

Open Awards do not always specify the experience or qualifications individuals need to deliver its units/qualifications but expect that Providers have appropriate occupationally competent staff with relevant sector and teaching/ assessment/ internal quality assurance experience for their role in delivery. Best practice would be for:

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

Please be aware that some qualifications have specific staff and/ or other specialist requirements. This information can be found in the appropriate qualification guide(s).

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

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

Resources and Arrangements

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

- All resources (including buildings, equipment, systems, and materials) enable it to undertake the delivery of the qualification effectively and efficiently 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 several factors, depending on the type of Provider and qualification(s) being offered.

Open Awards do permit Providers to work with other organisations in delivering high-quality provision. However, you must 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 external 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 approval that a 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

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

Helpful Documents

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

Provider Policies and Procedures

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

Setting up your Course

Step 01

Plan Your Course

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

Choose the qualification you want to deliver. Remember to check that the units you choose meet the rules of combination (ROC). Request approval through the Portal.

Step 03

Register Your Learners

Register your learners through the Portal.

Check the guidance for registration timescales for short and long courses to avoid late charges.

Step 02

Plan Your Delivery and Assessment

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

Complete internal pre-course verification checks prior to delivery.

Complete your induction and IAG sessions and start delivering your programme.

Step 04

Assess and Verify Learners Work

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

Complete internal verification checks (both during programme and at end of the programme).

Arrange for Open Awards quality assurance activity to confirm completion and achievement or complete Authorised Internal Verification activity.

Complete the Direct Entry of Results (DER) to confirm achievement via the Portal.

Step 05

Certification

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

What Do We Offer?

At Open Awards, we are committed to flexibility and creativity. With this in mind, we have several types of accreditation to suit different learner needs and outcomes. An overview of our accreditation solutions is below.

| | Regulated Qualifications | Qualification Units | Badge of Excellence | Quality Endorsed Units |
|---|---|---|--|--|
| | Qualifications on the Ofqual register or Access to HE Diplomas regulated by QAA | Units that sit within a regulated qualification that can be counted towards a regulated qualification | Quality mark accrediting your education/training against Open Awards Standards of Excellence | Bespoke units that do not form part of a regulated qualification |
| Externally regulated (Ofqual or QAA) | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| 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 5.

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 can use the Education and Skills Funding Agency's '[Find a Learning Aim](#)' tool.

Designing a Course Using Individual Units

Open Awards offers different types of units:

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

You can search for and view all units available to be used in individual unit courses via our Unit Bank on our [website](#). The unit content template includes the unit type.

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 can use ESFA's ['Find a Learning Aim'](#) tool.

Qualification and Unit Reviews

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

Validation ensures that all Open Awards qualifications have a clear purpose and are effective in meeting this purpose. Delivery and assessment of qualifications must provide sufficient evidence that those who achieve them have met the aim or purpose of that particular qualification. Qualifications made available by Open Awards must align with the Open Awards vision to support educational achievement for all.

The validation criteria for Open Awards are that each qualification made available:

- Reflects regulatory obligations and requirements.
- Is financially viable to enable high quality delivery, assessment and quality assurance.
- Has robust evidence of support from appropriate stakeholders including employers, Higher Education Institutions, education providers, and other authorities.
- Has robust evidence of demand for the qualification from a defined target market.
- Is sufficiently flexible to ensure we can respond successfully to the needs of employers and learners across the sectors we support over the course of their lifecycle.
- Is accessible to learners, employers, and education providers with sufficient information and resources to support effective delivery and assessment.
- Has an assessment approach which is consistent with the agreed purpose of the qualification, and that all associated assessments align with Open Awards assessment principles.
- Has robust quality assurance arrangements that ensure the requirements of the qualification are met by our providers and learners.

Feedback

To ensure qualifications and assessments remain fit for purpose throughout their life cycle it is vital to facilitate ongoing stakeholder engagement. Feedback is generated via:

- Open Awards website.
- Written or verbal communication from our stakeholders.
- Questionnaires and surveys.
- External Quality Assurance visits.
- Internal and external events.

Qualification specific questionnaires and/ or stakeholder review meetings, are planned and used to encourage feedback as part of the (re)validation process. Open Awards collates and uses this feedback to review and improve the portfolio over time as part of operational business planning.

Any feedback received during the life cycle of a qualification, will be fed into the revalidation process to determine whether an earlier than scheduled review of the qualification is required. If it is agreed that an earlier review is not required, the feedback will be saved and contribute to the scheduled review of that qualification.

It is important to us that we can 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.

Data Acquisition

Data acquisition is utilised to support robust decisions as part of initial qualification development processes, and subsequent reviews of their performance.

Data will be collated to review the following:

- Qualification
- Units
- Delivery modes
- Assessment methods

Data is pulled together from a variety of sources including:

- Registration, achievement, retention and destination/ progression data
- Registration and certification data held by regulators
- Labour market intelligence
- Employers and/ employer group data

During the lifecycle of the qualification ongoing data acquisition will be used to determine the ongoing viability of the qualification at specified review points, and its performance against its purpose.

The specific requirements for the analysis of each qualification is outlined in the relevant assessment strategy. As a minimum this is every five years and in line with the validated review date.

Analysis will consider some or all of the following indicators:

| Quantitative indicators (This data will be collated from the database) | Qualitative indicators (This will be collated from provider, learner and EQA feedback) |
|--|--|
| Performance by unit, including achievement data | Ordering of unit delivery |
| Performance by Provider, including achievement data | Demographics of learners (including learner types) |
| Number of non-completers | Types of Provider |
| Performance by mode of delivery | Feedback from Providers, learners, employers, and patients |
| Performance by subject area | Assessment methods |

Overall achievement data will include:

- Overarching pass rates
- Pass rates by learner type
- Pass rates by Provider type

Whilst we will review quantitative data regarding the performance of the qualification, we recognise that a range of qualitative factors (listed above) may have an impact on learner achievement. These considerations will be included and recorded within the review.

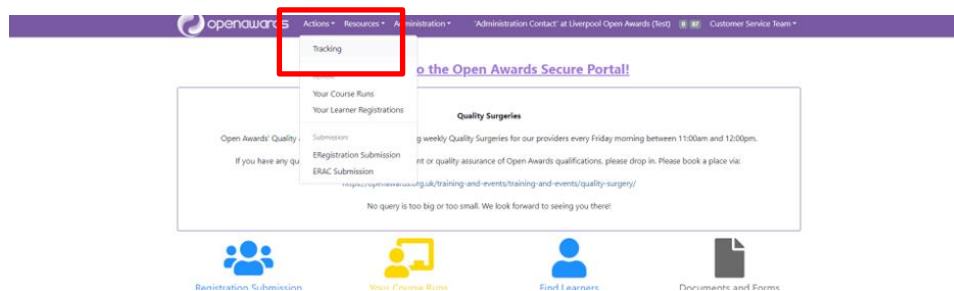
You can find information on when the qualification or unit you are using is due for review in the individual qualification guide.

Please note, you will be able to register learners up to and include the day of the review or operational end date for a qualification. The certification end date will tell you how long you have to complete the delivery and assessment of any learners registered to the course before the operational end date of the qualification.

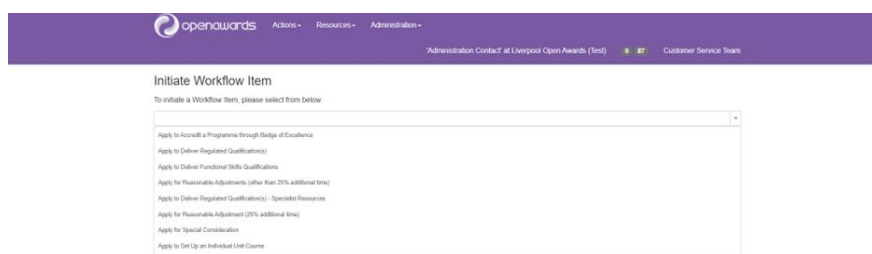
How Do I Set Up a Qualification or Course?

To set up a new qualification or course, you will be required to submit an application via the Portal. This can be completed by the Administration Contact.

The process is initiated by clicking on “Actions” and “Tracking”.



Click on “Initiate Workflow Item” and you will be able to see the range of qualification types to chose from:



| | |
|--|---|
| Apply to Deliver Regulated Qualifications | The majority of our Ofqual Regulated can be applied for using this option, including the Skills for Further Learning and Employment Suite. |
| Apply to Deliver Functional Skills Qualifications | This option will allow you to apply to deliver of Functional Skills Suite |
| Apply to Deliver a Regulated Qualification Specialist Resources | This option will allow you to apply to deliver our qualifications where we require further information to be submitted at the time of application and/or a review by our Quality Assurance team is needed prior to approval. A list of these qualifications can be found below. |
| Apply to Deliver an Individual Unit Course | This options allows to select individuals units from our unit bank to create a bespoke course |
| Apply to add an Apprenticeship Standard | Available to EPA Administrators to add an apprenticeship standard for end-point assessment |

Full details on how to apply for any of the above can be found on the screens as you progress with your application. A guidance document '**Qualification and Course Approval Guidance**', is located under the Provider Guidance section of the "Documents and Forms" area of the Portal.

What happens when I have submitted a qualification approval request?

Open Awards processes these requests within 5 working days of receipt. If the application is successful, you will be automatically notified via email and will then be able to register learners against the qualifications(s). Where additional information is required to progress your application, the details will be shared via email.

You can view the progress of your application and any time of the "Tracking" screen of the Portal.

What Will Learners Receive?

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Qualification | <p>Upon successful completion of the rules of combination, learners will be awarded the full qualification for which they were registered and a certificate listing the units achieved.</p> <p>Where learners are registered for a qualification and do not achieve the full qualification a unit transcript will be issued for all achievement entered and verified. Where the verified achievement meets the rules of combination for a smaller qualification, i.e. the registration is for a Diploma, which isn't achieved, but the Rules of Combination for an Award are met; certification will automatically take place for this smaller qualification.</p> |
| Course | <p>Upon successful completion of a course, learners will be awarded a course certificate listing the course name and units achieved.</p> |

Rules of Combination

To achieve a regulated qualification, a learner must meet the rules of combination (ROC). The rules of combination is included in the individual qualification guide and will clearly explain how many mandatory or optional units, are required to achieve the full qualification. 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, or they will be issued with a unit transcript.

How Should I Promote or Market my Course?

We are committed to supporting you with your marketing and communications. Once you are a Provider, you may use our logo to support the marketing of our Open Awards programme(s) and course(s).

When marketing your course(s), 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 the 'Marketing your Course' guidance on the Portal, or contact customerservices@openawards.org.uk or 0151 494 2072.

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

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Case Studies and News Stories | We are always happy to share best practice case studies on our website, 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 |
| Events and Celebrations | <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 enquiries@openawards.org.uk</p> <p>We are happy to share details of your events and celebrations via our social media channels.</p> |
| Video Content | If you would like to work with us to create an animation or video of your learners or programmes, please contact the |
| Social Media | Twitter YouTube LinkedIn Facebook Instagram |
| Feedback and Feedforward | <p>We welcome 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, compliance meetings and curriculum support meetings/events. You can make use of your External Verification 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> |

Registering Learners

How do I Register my Learners?

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

| | |
|---|---|
| Short courses (less than 15 weeks) | Register learners within 25 working days of the start date of the course |
| Long courses (15 weeks duration or more) | Register learners within 60 working days of the start date of the course |
| End-Point Assessment | Register apprentices within 24 weeks of their anticipated gateway passage date. |

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 Portal. Learners must be registered to the units they are undertaking on the course run. For full guidance on this process refer to the [Secure Portal Guidance](#).

What is a Unique Learner Number (ULN)?

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

ULNs are mandatory for learners funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency. ULNs must also be provided for learners registered to a Functional Skills qualification.

We request ULNs at the point of registration to enable us to upload achievement data to the learner's Personal Learning Record (PLR) for qualifications and qualification units achieved.

All ULNs provided are automatically checked against the LRS and must match the learner details provided.

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/ Registration?

After registrations have been submitted, the Administration Contact should contact the Open Awards team to discuss any requests for changes to your course/run on customerservices@openawards.org.uk or 0151 494 2072.

Once the course run has been submitted, you may register additional learners within the registration timescales. Any registrations made outside of these timescales will be liable for late registrations charges. (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.

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

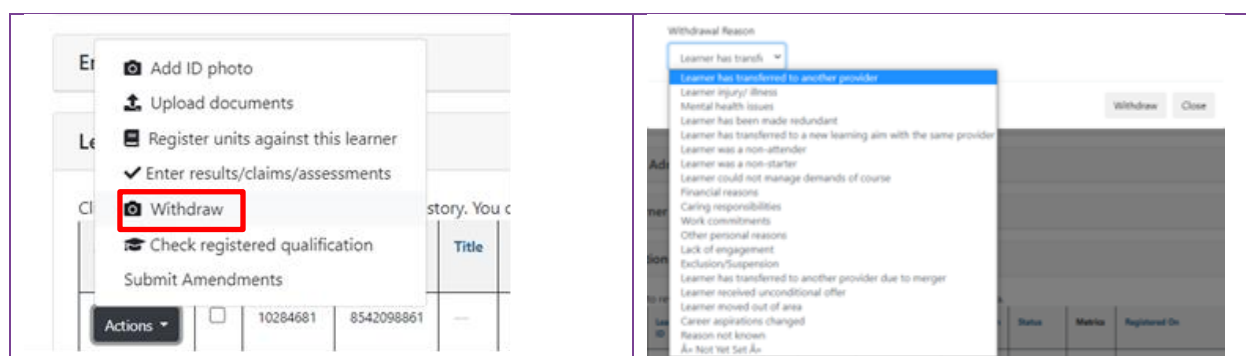
Withdrawing and Accounting for Learners

At the end of a course run all learners must be accounted for within 12 weeks of the course run end date. This is via either entering achievement or withdrawing the learner. Where a learner who has been registered is no longer continuing, should you wish to withdraw a learner, Open Awards must be informed of this via the Portal. Please refer to our [Secure Portal Guidance](#) for this.

Learners who choose to leave their course of study prior to completion are known as 'withdrawn learners'. Learners should be withdrawn via the Portal. Learners should be 'withdrawn' as soon as this becomes known, and a reason given for that withdrawal.

Withdrawing learners can be completed under the learner record on the **'Your Course Runs'** Screen.

Click the **'Actions'** tab beside the relevant learner. Click 'withdraw' and then select the relevant reason.



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.

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 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. |

Delivering and Assessing

Assessment Planning

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

Once learners have been registered on a course run, Open Awards will request a Qualification Assessment Plan which the Provider must upload to the Portal. This document will inform the Quality and Standards Advisor or EQA when units are to be delivered, assessed and IQA'd and will enable us to forward plan external quality assurance activities for each qualification.

For Medium and High-risk qualifications where pre-verification of assignment briefs is required, the Provider must also upload copies of all assignment briefs to the Portal.

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

| | |
|--|---|
| Assessment Planning Sheet | This document allows you to record planned activities for a unit and ensure that all Assessment Criteria can be met and evidenced. |
| Qualification Assessment Plan | This document allows you to record planned dates for completion of assessment and IQA of each unit within a qualification or course run. |
| Assessment Activity Front Sheet | This document template allows Providers to outline the scope of each specific assessment activity, allowing tutors / assessors to detail tasks and list resources needed. |

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

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Qualification guides | Each qualification guide includes a recommended assessment method section. These documents should be reviewed to check for any mandatory or barred methods. |
| Assessment Planning Sheet | This document allows you to record planned activities for a unit and ensure that all Assessment Criteria can be met and evidenced. |

Devising Assessment Tasks

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

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

It is not necessary to design an assessment task to assess each assessment criterion separately. An assessment task can be used synoptically to meet more than one assessment criterion. Each assessment task must be mapped to the Assessment Criteria that it is intended to meet. This will allow 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.

For specific High/Medium-Risk Qualifications, please also refer to the relevant sections of this document.

Helpful Documents

| | |
|--|--|
| Pre-Course Verification Form | This document can be used to enable tutors/assessors and internal verifiers to explore assessment planning and design before the course starts |
| Assessment Activity Front Sheet | This document template allows Providers to outline the scope of a specific assessment activity, allowing tutors / assessors to detail tasks and list resources needed. |
| Assessment Planning Sheet | 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 most of the 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 – 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 – 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:

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

Portfolios

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 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 to prove that the learner has completed the qualification/ unit.

Helpful Documents

| | |
|--|--|
| Portfolio Front Sheet | 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. |
| Assessment Evidence Tracking Sheet | 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. |
| Learner Evidence Authenticity Statement | This form is completed by the learner to confirm that the work/evidence they have submitted is their own work and has been created by the learner. It also confirms that the learner understands that their results may be invalidated if they have submitted evidence that does not belong to them. |
| Assessment Feedback Form | 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. |
| Group Progress Record | 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 (including assessment decisions and evidence of internal quality assurance) for external quality assurance purposes.

If you are unsure whether an e-portfolio system meets our requirements, please contact your Quality and Standards Adviser on quality@openawards.org.uk

Retention of Learner Evidence

A portfolio of evidence is the property of the learner. For Open Awards purposes, the Provider should retain all learner work until the course run has been external quality assured. Providers are advised to check that they retain records in a manner that complies with the relevant funding rules for publicly funded learners.

Following an external quality assurance review, original evidence must be returned to learners. For Providers with AIV status, the completion of the AIV Report is deemed to be equivalent to an 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 are requested to upload any requested samples of electronic copies of learner evidence to the Provider's folder on Open Awards' SharePoint. The provider must upload files to the specific location requested by the QASA/EQA to avoid delays in work being reviewed. When requested, 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).

Open Awards will retain copies of learner evidence up to one year after certification and may use fully redacted examples for standardisation purposes.

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 are 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 qualifications (e.g., Functional Skills Qualifications), learners must complete assessments set by Open Awards. Providers must ensure that these assessments are carried out in controlled conditions to minimise the potential for plagiarism. 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 or someone with a vested 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 learners' requirements 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 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.

All applications for Reasonable Adjustment and supporting evidence will need to be submitted for approval. Reasonable Adjustment requests must be submitted via the Open Awards Portal **at least 20 working days** prior to before the assessment is due to be taken. Supporting evidence 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.

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 (where 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 must 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 apply for Special Consideration via the 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

| | |
|---|---|
| Open Awards Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy | This document sets out the principles which should be followed when making decisions about adjustments to assessment. It outlines Open Awards' reasonable steps to ensure it avoids disadvantage (directly or indirectly) in line with the requirements of The Equality Act 2010 (Disability) Regulations 2010. |
| Applying for reasonable adjustment guidance | This guidance can be used by providers to understand how to request that Open Awards consider allowing a reasonable adjustment – in accordance with the relevant permissions as outlined in the policy. |
| Applying for Special Consideration guidance | This guidance can be used by providers to understand how to request that Open Awards consider allowing a special consideration. |

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. All providers must have a named quality contact who oversees the IQA of all delivery of Open Awards qualifications and units.

It is the Provider's responsibility to inform Open Awards immediately of any changes to Key Contacts including changes to Internal Quality Assurers.

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. Everyone 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

Stage 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

Helpful Documents

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| IQA Sampling Plan | This document is designed to allow the IQA to plan IQA activity for the whole qualification. |
|--------------------------|--|

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

For specific High/Medium-Risk Qualifications, please also refer to the relevant sections of this document.

Helpful Documents

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| IQA of Assessment Form | This document is designed to allow the IQA to pre-verify the planned assessment activities to make sure they are valid and robust. |
|-------------------------------|--|

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
- Results submissions (DER) 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 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 consider 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

he IQA must sample a minimum of 3 or 10% (whichever is the greatest) of portfolios from a single cohort of learners. 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 initialing 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

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| IQA Sampling Record | A summary of the learners, units and assessors included in the IQA sample, including a rationale for the size and content of the sample selected. |
|----------------------------|---|

Authorised Internal Verifiers (AIVs)

Open Awards is committed to ensuring that all providers approved to deliver our qualifications comply with regulatory requirements.

Where Providers are considered low risk by demonstrating robust internal quality systems over a period of time, and deliver low risk qualifications and units, we ask providers to designate named individual(s) to become Authorised Internal Verifiers (AIVs).

An AIV will be required to verify assessment decisions that have undergone internal quality assurance and submit results for claim certificates from Open Awards without the need for results to be externally quality assured for each course run.

AIV Status is normally only allowed for low-risk qualifications being delivered and assessed at low-risk providers.

Under no circumstances will AIV status be given to:

- **New providers**
- **High-risk providers or**
- **Medium-risk providers**

If a low-risk provider's risk rating is increased, AIV status will be suspended until the relevant actions have been addressed in agreed timescales and the risk rating returned to low.

Under no circumstances will AIVs be allowed to submit results to claim certificates for:

- **Functional Skills Qualifications**
- **Access to HE Diplomas**
- **High-risk qualifications**

AIV status does not normally apply for medium-risk qualifications. However, where the provider has a strong track record of high-quality delivery, assessment and IQA, the QASA allocated to that provider may award AIV status **by exception**.

The accuracy of AIV decisions made for medium-risk qualifications will be sampled at least twice a year (depending on learner numbers) to ensure ongoing validity and accuracy of assessment decisions.

Minimum Quality Criteria for AIV Status

Open Awards is committed to timely and effective learner certification. Providers with a strong track record of high-quality delivery of Open Awards qualifications and units are able to benefit from AIV Status.

The following criteria must be met before AIV Status can be bestowed on a low-risk provider for the assessment of low-risk qualifications

- The provider must be considered to be Low Risk
- The provider has implemented robust internal quality assurance systems.
- The provider demonstrates consistently high standards of assessment and internal quality assurance practice.
- The provider has not been subject to any high-level sanctions from Open Awards within the last 12 months

Granting AIV status

Where minimum quality criteria have been met, the QASA will contact the provider with a list of qualifications and programmes/ courses they deliver in scope for AIV designation. The provider needs to nominate an AIV for each qualification/ programme.

Open Awards will update its database to allocate each individual to the qualifications and programmes to which they need to be allocated. There is no limit to the number of AIVs that can be allocated to each qualification or programme.

It is the provider's responsibility to ensure that the AIV does not authorise results of a unit for which they are the assessor.

Extending AIV status

New qualifications

All low-risk qualifications will be subject to EQA for a minimum of six months from the date of first assessment. AIV status will not be granted until the qualification has been subject to two EQA sampling activities without issue.

AIV status may be granted to the new qualification on successful outcomes of EQA sampling activity. The provider will be asked to nominate an AIV for the new programme and Open Awards will allocate the AIV to the qualification.

Additional staff being given AIV role

The provider may request that additional staff be given AIV status at any point. See [Granting AIV status](#) above.

Maintaining AIV Status

AIV status is a mark of confidence by Open Awards in the assessment judgements and internal quality assurance practices at a Provider. In order to maintain AIV status, the following conditions must be met:

- The provider's delivery, assessment and internal quality assurance procedures and practices continue to be at a high standard
- The provider's overall risk rating must remain at low at all times
- All actions relating to delivery, assessment and internal quality assurance must be completed in a timely manner
- Staff at the provider must actively engage in Open Awards training and/or standardisation as required to conduct their roles effectively
- The provider must actively engage with a compliance review including external sampling within 12 months.
- The provider must not have been found to have committed malpractice in relation to delivery, assessment and/or internal quality assurance

If IQA 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. This is outlined in the Open Awards Sanctions Policy which can be found on our Portal.

Where AIV status is suspended, actions will be added to their Provider Improvement Action Plan (PIAP) detailing where improvements need to be made and clear deadlines for completion. Where improvements have been implemented, Open Awards reserves the right to decide whether to remove or extend the period of AIV Status suspension. Where improvements have not been fully implemented, Open Awards will withdraw AIV Status and all learners yet to receive results will be externally quality assured by Open Awards. We reserve the right to charge a fee for such activities.

Responsibility of Providers

The provider should ensure that all staff involved in the management of the delivery, assessment and internal quality assurance functions of Open Awards qualifications are fully aware of the contents of this strategy. In particular, it should ensure that the Provider Contact, Quality Assurance Contact, AIVs and their managers are aware of the responsibilities assumed under AIV Status.

By authorising claims for credit, the provider is providing assurances that the qualification and/or unit criteria have been met and the assessment and internal verification processes have been completed to a high standard.

The provider is responsible for ensuring that all results submitted for certification are based on valid, sufficient, authentic and reliable evidence for each learner.

The provider must retain all assessment evidence for learners whose results are claimed by an AIV in line with our Provider record keeping requirements.

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

Helpful Documents

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| AIV Handbook | This handbook gives more detailed overview of the role of the AIV, the application and approval process. |
|---------------------|--|

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 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

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 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:

- Robust evidence of achievement
- Weak evidence of achievement and the reason for that judgement
- Evidence not sufficient to demonstrate achievement of all assessment criteria
- The use of an innovative assessment strategy or 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
- 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 Providers. Open Awards may mandate attendance at these events if there are concerns over your Provider's quality assurance processes.

Helpful Documents

| | |
|---|---|
| Standardisation Policy and Procedures | This document sets out our approach to standardisation and our expectations of Providers to maintain the validity, quality and consistency of our qualifications. |
| Provider Internal Standardisation Template | 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.

Helpful Documents

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| IQA of assessment form | This document is for by the IQA (or AIV) to record outcomes from their sampling activities and provide feedback to the tutor/assessor. |
| IQA Sampling Plan | A plan of proposed internal quality assurance activity which is developed before delivery begins. |

External Quality Assurance

Open Awards work closely with each 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 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. This will include (but not is not limited to):

- Standards of internal quality assurance
- Robustness of internal quality processes
- Changes in key contacts
- Substantial increase/decrease of learners
- Number of incidents/errors
- Administrative accuracy

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.

Providers are allocated one of four risk ratings:

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

All our qualifications are allocated one of three risk ratings:

- High Risk
- Medium Risk
- Low Risk

The following RAG rating matrix provides an indicator of risk levels which Open Awards addresses and their impact on the number of quality activities we undertake per year as a result:

| Provider Risk Rating | Qualification Risk Rating | | |
|----------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| | Low risk qualification (1) | Medium risk qualification (2) | High risk qualification (3) |
| Low risk (1) | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Medium risk (2) | 2 | 4 | 6 |
| High risk (3) | 3 | 6 | 9 |
| New Provider (3) | 3 | 6 | 9 |

When undertaking External Quality Assurance the following minimum sample sizes apply at each sampling activity:

| Learners registered per qualification suite ¹ | Minimum sample size |
|--|---------------------|
| 1-15 | 3 |
| 16-50 | 5 |
| 51-250 | 7 |
| 251+ | 10 |

| Units covered per qualification suite sampled | Minimum sample size |
|---|---------------------|
| 1-5 | 1 |
| 6-10 | 2 |
| 10+ | 3 |
| 25+ | 10 |

For smaller providers, samples will include a minimum of 3 learners (where fewer than 3 learners have been registered, all learners must be sampled).

Sampling activities must take place in a timely manner throughout the year to provide ongoing feedback to providers and allow for improvement actions to be set and monitored without disadvantaging learners.

On occasions the EQA may need to increase sample sizes where they are unable to agree assessment decisions from the initial sample. If concerns are raised with the standard of assessment or IQA processes appropriate actions will be discussed and added to the provider's Provider Improvement Action Plan (PIAP). This could result in an increased risk rating for specific qualifications and will affect future EQA sample sizes. In extreme cases, sanctions will be placed on the Provider. Any changes to Providers risk ratings for individual qualifications will be added to the PIAP and only decrease once Open Awards is satisfied that sufficient evidence has been shared against any action set.

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.

¹ A qualification suite refers to qualifications with the same generic title but differing size and/or level. For example, the Education and Training suite comprises of Open Awards Level 3 Award in Education and Training and Level 4 Certificate in Education and Training.

New Providers

Each new Provider is subject to strict approval criteria to become an approved Provider. This 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 will 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 via the Provider 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.

For Quality purposes New Providers are deemed to be High-Risk due to the fact that we have no record of quality activity at the provider. Once an accurate rating can be ascertained from their track record a low, medium or high risk status will then be conferred on the Provider. See below for EQA of High-Risk providers.

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 Portal.

Providers with high-risk status will be subject to a detailed PIAP designed to address the reasons 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 needed 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. Open Awards will undertake external quality assurance sampling and certification for high-risk providers with active learners. This may incur additional costs to the provider.

Lack of timely progress against actions within the agreed action plan will result in Provider approval being withdrawn.

All course runs of high-risk qualifications must be sampled, regardless of the Provider's risk rating. Interim sampling activity will take place throughout the year in line with the provider's delivery and assessment plans.

The indicative number of sampling activities per year for a high-risk qualification is dependent on the provider's overall risk rating:

| Provider Risk Rating for the high-risk qualification | Minimum sampling requirements | | | |
|--|----------------------------------|-------------|----------|-------|
| | EQA sampling activities per year | Course runs | Learners | Units |
| Low risk | 2 | 100% | 10% | 10% |
| Medium risk | 3 | 100% | 20% | 50% |
| High risk | 4 | 100% | 20% | 100% |
| New Provider | 4 | 100% | 20% | 100% |

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 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 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 Quality Assurance of Learner Work

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

Preparing for External Verification

We continue to undertake remote external quality assurance 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 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. 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 Review

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 EQA sampling being completed, the QASA allocated to the Provider will either confirm or reject the results. Where results are to be rejected, the QASA will advise the Provider of the reasons for this beforehand. Where appropriate, Providers will be advised of any remedial actions they need to complete for results to be approved.

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

- Provider overview
- Review of provider improvement action plan
- Third party arrangements
- Record of discussions with learners, assessors, IQAs (and AIVs, where appropriate)
- Scope of external verification activity covered
- Summary of Functional Skills delivery (where appropriate)
- Quality review outcomes – including risk ratings
- Provider improvement action plan (new actions placed)
- 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 those 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 later that the Provider needs to address.

Where a Provider is giving cause for concern, additional visits may be necessary for which Open Awards may impose additional charges. The Provider's risk rating may 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 organisation or a named individual at the Provider in line with the Open Awards Sanctions Policy.

Helpful Documents

| | |
|---|--|
| External Quality Assurance Sampling Report | This document is completed by the QASA/EQA to record outcomes from the visit |
| Provider Improvement Action Plan (PIAP) | Actions will be placed against individuals on which can be viewed through the Portal |

Reviews

All Providers must sign up to and adhere to the 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 and be able to evidence compliance at all times.

Compliance reviews are in-depth review to ensure that each provider remains compliant with the terms of the Provider Agreement. They are normally undertaken by the QASA allocated to the provider (although low risk provider delivering low risk qualifications may be reviewed by an EQA). The compliance review cover 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/EQA will also review progress against the Provider Improvement Action Plan and may incorporate external quality assurance of learner work into the review.

The frequency of in-depth compliance reviews is dependent on the Provider's overall risk rating and the risk ratings of the qualifications they deliver:

| Provider Risk Rating | Frequency of compliance reviews* | | |
|----------------------|---|---|--|
| | Delivering low risk qualifications | Delivering medium risk qualifications | Delivering high risk qualifications (including Functional Skills) |
| Low risk rating | At least once every three years | At least once every two years | Annually |
| Medium risk rating | At least once every two years | At least once every two years | Annually |
| High risk rating | Annually | Annually | Annually |
| New Providers | Once during the first year after approval | Once during the first year after approval | Annually |

*If, at any point, Open Awards has reason to believe that the terms of the Provider Agreement are not being met, we may undertake a short notice compliance review to investigate further.

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 internal 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/EQA 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 evidence compliance with the Provider Agreement.

Due to compliance reviews being undertaken remotely, the documents must be dropped into your SharePoint folder by the date requested by the QASA/EQA. 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 Compliance Review will provide Open Awards 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 compliance review will be scheduled to allow for external quality assurance of learners' work at the same time.

High-Risk Qualifications

For all High-Risk Qualification there will be additional external quality assurance. The risk rating of the qualification can be viewed in the relevant Qualification Guide.

On application for approval to deliver a High-Risk qualification the Provider will be allocated a specialist EQA. The EQA will undertake all external quality assurance activities for each course run delivered.

The EQA will undertake a Pre-verification activity where all assessment plans, assignment briefs and specific qualification requirements will be reviewed. A feedback session will be arranged to discuss all findings and Providers will receive a written report within ten working days of the feedback session. Actions will be added to the Provider Improvement Action Plan (PIAP) in the same timeline.

Following Pre-verification activity, the EQA will review the Delivery and Assessment Planner and arrange mutually convenient dates for additional EQA activities for either the duration of the course or over the academic year, whichever is the longer. During these EQA visits there will be additional scrutiny including:

- Evidence of specialist staffing and resources
- Evidence of any specific training / CPD required for the delivery of the qualification
- Evidence of advice and guidance, recruitment strategies to ensure correct entry requirements for learners
- Management of delivery, assessment and invigilation (if applicable)
- Ongoing support for learners

Following each EQA activity the provider feedback sessions will be arranged to discuss all findings and Providers will receive a written report within ten working days of the feedback session. Actions will be added to the Provider Improvement Action Plan (PIAP) in the same timeline.

Medium-Risk Qualifications

For Medium-Risk Qualifications requiring pre-verification, once learners are registered onto the programme with open awards, the EQA will request evidence of assessment plans, assignment briefs and specific qualification requirements . However, some Medium-Risk qualifications do not require a specialist EQA and in these cases the pre-verification and subsequent EQA activities may be undertaken by the QASA.

Following the Review

The report will normally be made available via the Portal within 10 working days of the 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 Portal.

Helpful Documents

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Compliance Review Report | This document is completed by the QASA to record the outcomes from the review |
|---------------------------------|---|

Open Awards External Standardisation

All Providers are strongly encouraged to participate in external standardisation events run by Open Awards throughout the year, most of these events will continue to be online. 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 Portal.

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.

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 Portal within 12 weeks of the end date of the course. For courses with an Authorised Internal Verifier (AIV), the results should also be verified within this timescale. Where results are not received within this timescale, a late fee may be charged and preventative actions will be agreed with the Provider.

All results received outside of the timescale may be charged in accordance with our published charge. Please refer to the 'Pricing Information' section of our [website](#).

All learners must be accounted for when entering results for a course run, with either achievement entered, or the learner being withdrawn.

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 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.

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. Open Awards will liaise with you to feedback when this is required.

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), 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 certificates in both electronic and paper form. Your certification preferences can be amended by contacting the Customer Service Team.

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. Paper certificates will be dispatched to your registered address with Open Awards for the attention of the Administration Contact.

E-certificates will also be available to view and download from the Portal for all providers who have requested e-certification. Administration Contacts will receive an email when certificates are available to download. PDF versions of certificates will be available for distribution to your learners through secure electronic means.

All endorsed qualification certificates (e-certificates and hard copies) have unique Authentiqua (QR) codes embedded, scanning the QR code provides secure authentication of the certificate.

Certificates for the completion of End-point assessment will sent to the apprentice's employer directly by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education following an application from Open Awards.

Certificates include:

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

All certificates will be sent via recorded delivery, or courier, 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 Portal. For full guidance on this process please refer to the [Secure Portal Guidance](#).

Re-issue and Replacement Certificates

A replacement certificate will be issued within 10 working days of receipt of all authenticated claims and payment. 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 our [website](#) and upload this to Open Awards via the Portal.

Training and Consultancy

Open Awards believes 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 required to deliver Open Awards qualifications and courses effectively is included in the Provider's annual fee. Additional training courses (not directly relevant to the delivery of Open Awards' qualifications and courses) can be purchased at an additional charge.

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 on training courses are available on the Open Awards [website](#).

Online courses can be access via our [Online Shop](#).

Our Quality and Curriculum Development teams are also able 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.

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

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

Please contact enquiries@openawards.org.uk or 0151 494 2072 to speak to a member of the Business Development Team about your training needs.

Issues or Non-compliance at Providers

Open Awards acknowledges that our 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

| | |
|--|---|
| Maladministration and malpractice policy and procedures | 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 |
| Report of Suspected Malpractice (Form M1) | 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.

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.

Helpful Documents

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| 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. |
|-------------------------|---|

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, providing a brief summary of your reasons for withdrawal (by post or via email to customerservices@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