



Support handbook

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Introduction

This handbook contains supporting information that relates to NCFE and CACHE qualifications and will assist in planning, delivery and assessment. It must be used alongside the mandatory qualification specification linked on the NCFE website which contains specific information about individual qualifications.

The qualification specification contains details of all the units and assessments required to complete the qualification.

Centres must ensure they are using the most up-to-date version of the qualification specification; the version number and date can be found within the qualification specification.

If the qualification is advertised using a different or shortened name, it is important to ensure that learners are aware that their final certificate will state the full regulated qualification title.

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- the resources and materials used in the delivery of the qualifications must be age-appropriate and due consideration should be given to the wellbeing and safeguarding of learners in line with the centre's safeguarding policy when developing or selecting delivery materials

Guided learning hours (GLH)

Guided learning is the activity of a learner being taught or instructed by – or otherwise participating in education or training under the immediate guidance or supervision of – a lecturer, supervisor, tutor or other appropriate provider of education or training.

For these purposes, the activity of 'participating in education or training' shall be treated as including the activity of being assessed if the assessment takes place under the immediate guidance or supervision of a lecturer, supervisor, tutor or other appropriate provider of education or training.

Total qualification time (TQT)

Total qualification time is the number of notional hours which represents an estimate of the total amount of time that could reasonably be expected to be required in order for a learner to achieve and demonstrate the achievement of the level of attainment necessary for the award of a qualification.

Total qualification time comprises:

- the guided learning hours for the qualification
- an estimate of the number of hours a learner will reasonably be likely to spend in preparation, study or any other form of participation in education or training, including assessment, which takes place as directed by – but not under the immediate guidance or supervision of – a lecturer, supervisor, tutor or other appropriate provider of education or training

Essential skills

While completing a qualification, learners may develop the knowledge, understanding and essential skills employers look for in employees. These range from familiar 'key skills', such as team working, independent learning and problem solving, to more tricky-to-measure skills, such as:

- an appreciation for appropriate behaviour and dress
- appropriate interpersonal skills
- communicating with professional colleagues/peers and/or hierarchical seniors
- supporting other aspiring employees
- personal manners
- understanding work practices and how different roles and departments function within an organisation

Mapping to national occupational standards

National occupational standards (NOS) are owned by a sector skills council (SSC) or standard-setting body (SSB) and describe the skills, knowledge and understanding needed to undertake a particular task or job at different levels of competence.

Recognition of prior learning (RPL)

Centres may recognise prior learning at their discretion if they are satisfied that the evidence provided meets the requirements of a qualification. Where RPL is to be used extensively (for a whole unit or more), advice must be given by a qualified RPL advisor.

For more information, please refer to the recognition of prior learning (RPL) credit accumulation and transfer (CAT) policy on the policies and documents page the NCFE website.

Direct claim status

To encourage best practice, we offer a system called direct claim status (DCS). Achievement of DCS allows centres to claim learner certificates without needing authorisation from an external quality assurer (EQA).

DCS is awarded for an individual qualification and is based on quality criteria that are measured and reported on through the external quality assurance visits carried out by your external quality assurer

(EQA). DCS is available for most of NCFE's regulated qualifications once a centre has met the criteria to be awarded DCS.

For more information about direct claim status, please contact our customer support team.

Work/industry placement/experience requirements

Some qualifications may require learners to complete a placement or work experience. Please refer to the qualification specification for more information.

There are specific requirements for centres and employers relating to the insurance of learners in the workplace. Further information about insurance can be found at www.abi.org.uk or www.hse.gov.uk/youngpeople/index.htm.

Qualifications with simulation and assessment in a realistic work environment (RWE)

Where the assessment strategy, guidance or requirements for a unit/qualification allow, it is essential that organisations wishing to operate a RWE do so in an environment which reflects a real work setting and replicates the key characteristics of the workplace in which the skill to be assessed is normally employed. This will ensure that any competence achieved in this way will be sustained in real employment.

Qualification dates

Regulated qualifications have operational end dates and certification end dates.

NCFE review qualifications regularly, working with sector representatives, vocational experts and stakeholders to make any changes necessary to meet sector needs and to reflect recent developments.

If a decision is made to withdraw a qualification, NCFE will set an operational end date and provide reasonable notice to centres taking reasonable steps to protect the interest of learners.

An operational end date will only show on the regulator's qualification database and the NCFE website if a decision has been made to withdraw a qualification. After this date, learner registrations can no longer be accepted. However, certification is allowed until the certification end date so that learners have time to complete any programmes of study. The certification end date will only show once an operational end date has been set. After this date, certification claims can no longer be processed.

Where a qualification has an external assessment, this can only be taken up to the last assessment date set by NCFE. No external assessments will be permitted after this date so learners will need to be entered in sufficient time. Visit the NCFE website for more information.

Staffing requirements

Centres delivering any of NCFE's qualifications must:

- have a sufficient number of appropriately qualified/experienced assessors to assess the volume of learners they intend to register
- have a sufficient number of appropriately qualified/experienced internal quality assurers to internally quality assure the anticipated number of assessors and learners
- ensure that all staff involved in assessment and internal quality assurance are provided with appropriate training and undertake meaningful and relevant continuing professional development
- implement effective internal quality assurance systems and processes to ensure all assessment decisions are reliable, valid, authentic, sufficient and current. This should include standardisation to ensure consistency of assessment
- provide all staff involved in the assessment process with sufficient time and resources to carry out their roles effectively

Refer to the staffing requirements section within the qualification specification for more information.

Staff involved in the assessment and internal quality assurance of the qualification must be able to demonstrate that they have (or are working towards) the relevant occupational knowledge and/or occupational competence at the same level or higher as the units being assessed and internally quality assured. This may be gained through experience and/or qualifications.

Supervision of learners and the role of the internal assessor

Guidance on how to administer the internal assessment and the support provided to learners can be found on the NCFE website.

Feedback to learners

Guidance on providing feedback during teaching and learning and each stage of the assessment can be found on the NCFE website.

Quality assurance

Internal quality assurance

Internal quality assurance is the process of ensuring that everyone who assesses a particular unit in a centre is assessing to the same standards. It is the responsibility of internal quality assurers to ensure that assessors' decisions are sampled and monitored to ensure consistency and fairness. Internal quality assurers are also responsible for supporting assessors by offering advice and guidance.

The internal quality assurer will follow the centre's own sampling strategy in selecting the sample to be internally quality assured. See the guidance on sampling on the NCFE website.

The internal quality assurer provides the vital link between the assessors and the external quality assurer and acts as the centre's quality assurance agent.

External quality assurance

External quality assurance monitors the IQA activity of the centre. External quality assurance of internal assessments is carried out at least once a year to ensure that assessment and grading decisions are in line with required standards. External quality assurance is carried out by external quality assurers who are appointed, trained and monitored by NCFE. External quality assurers are responsible for monitoring and sampling learners' evidence to ensure that internal assessment decisions are valid, reliable, fair and consistent with national standards. Centres are notified of their external quality assurer's contact details on registration of learners with us.

Presenting evidence

Written

Where appropriate, written evidence may be presented in word-processed or handwritten form. Audio-visual content (videos, pictures, drawings, audio) may also be used.

Tables, graphs and spreadsheets may be produced using appropriate ICT.

Any referenced material must be suitably acknowledged, and quotations must be clearly marked and a reference provided wherever possible to ensure that learner work can be authenticated.

Recorded

Where appropriate, audio-visual evidence of multiple learners may be used. Centres must ensure that each learner being assessed is clearly visible and can be identified by the examiner/quality assurer.

The recorded evidence should allow the learner to demonstrate the learning outcomes clearly but should only show work relevant to what is being assessed. For example, if a performance/participation is done as part of a group, the examiner/quality assurer will need to be able to see how each learner being assessed has contributed and met the learning outcomes.

To help NCFE's examiners and quality assurers identify clearly when a particular learner is performing/participating, it is recommended to include the following information:

- the exact start and finish times so that the examiner/quality assurer can go straight to that spot on the tape/recording
- a running order list and a description of each learner
- information about where the performance/recorded evidence took place
- what type of audience they were performing to (if applicable)

Centres must also ensure that the camera and microphone are set up in a suitable place to ensure good-quality audio. This will allow the examiner/quality assurer to hear both the learners and the assessor (if applicable).

Submitting unit grades

Where a qualification is graded, each internally assessed unit within the portfolio of evidence must be assessed and graded by assessors in the centre.

Learner work must then be checked in line with IQA processes by an internal quality assurer to ensure consistency and for standardisation.

Learners may revise and redraft work up until it is submitted to the assessor for end-of-unit assessment and grading. Once the work has been assessed, graded and internally quality assured, the grades should be submitted to us.

Following the external quality assurance visit, the unit grades will either be accepted and banked by NCFE's external quality assurer or, if they disagree with the grades, they will be rejected. If the grades are rejected, the work cannot be given back to the learner. If a grade is rejected, centres must reassess, re-grade and internally quality assure the work, and resubmit the new unit grade.

Once the grades for the internally assessed units of the qualification have been accepted and banked by your external quality assurer, learners are permitted one opportunity to revise and redraft their work. The additional work will need to be assessed, graded and internally quality assured again, and the centre will be required to resubmit the updated grade to NCFE for further external quality assurance. Learners are only permitted one resubmission of internally assessed work.

Why would the unit grades be rejected by an external quality assurer?

This would occur if the external quality assurer did not agree with the grades the centre had submitted. It may be that the centre had been grading too harshly, too leniently, or inconsistently from one learner to the next. In this situation, the centre would be required to assess, grade and internally quality assure all learners' work again.

Late submissions

Tutors and assessors should encourage learners to understand the importance of deadlines and when they need to submit their internal assessments, if required.

Learners may only be given extra time for legitimate reasons such as illness. If centres accept a late submission, they should follow the usual assessment process.

Grades should not be reduced as a result of late submission.

Support

There are a number of supporting documents available to help with the delivery of NCFE's qualifications. These are available to download from the policies and documents page on the NCFE website, or can be requested from the customer support team.

Learner's evidence tracking log (LETL)

The LETL covers the mandatory units of a qualification and it can help learners keep track of their work. This document can be downloaded free of charge from the qualifications page on the NCFE website. Centres may use their own evidence tracking documentation, or use the LETL provided.

Evidence and grading tracker

The evidence and grading tracker covers the mandatory units in a qualification and it can help learners keep track of their work. This document can be downloaded free of charge from the qualifications page on the NCFE website. Centres may use their own evidence tracking documentation, or use the evidence and grading tracker provided.

Learning resources

We offer a wide range of learning resources and materials to support the delivery of NCFE qualifications. Please check the qualifications page on the NCFE website for more information and to see what is available for NCFE qualifications.

Resource considerations

Resources and materials used in the delivery of this qualification, must be age-appropriate and due consideration should be given to the wellbeing and safeguarding of learners in line with your Institute's safeguarding policy when developing or selecting delivery materials

Qualification factsheet

This document outlines the key qualification information for the centre, learner and employer.

Progression maps

NCFE provide a suite of progression maps which showcase qualifications available within each sector and how they connect to each other. They demonstrate how centres can plot progression routes for learners at different levels from entry level right through to higher education or the workforce, with supporting qualifications along the way. The progression maps can be found on the routes to success page on the NCFE website.

Customer support team

NCFE's customer support team will support centres with approvals, registrations, external quality assurance, external assessment, results and certification.

Fees and pricing

The current fees and pricing guide is available on the policies and documents page on the NCFE website.

Nested suites

Learners can progress between qualifications in the suite, for example, from an award to a certificate or diploma to extended diploma. In this case, a conversion fee will apply:

- if the new qualification is more expensive than the original, the difference in price will be charged, plus a top up fee
- if the new qualification is the same price or lower than the original qualification, the only additional cost is the top up fee

If the learner has already achieved the external assessment on the original qualification, they will be charged the difference between the original and the topped-up qualification.

Please check the current fees and pricing guide on the policies and documents page on the NCFE website for more information.

Training and support

NCFE can provide training sessions for assessors and internal quality assurers. Bespoke subject-specific training is also available. For further information, please contact the quality assurance team.

Equal opportunities

We fully support the principle of equal opportunities and oppose all unlawful or unfair discrimination on the grounds of ability, age, colour, culture, disability, domestic circumstances, employment status, gender, marital status, nationality, political orientation, racial origin, religious beliefs, sexual orientation and social background. We aim to ensure that equality of opportunity is promoted and that unlawful or unfair discrimination, whether direct or indirect, is eliminated both in our employment practices and in access to qualifications. A copy of our diversity and equality policy is available on request.

Diversity, access and inclusion

Our qualifications and associated assessments are designed to be accessible, inclusive and non-discriminatory. We regularly evaluate and monitor the 6 diversity strands (gender, age, race, disability, religion, sexual orientation) throughout the development process as well as throughout the delivery, external quality assurance and external assessment processes of live qualifications. This ensures that positive attitudes and good relations are promoted, discriminatory language is not used and our assessment procedures are fully inclusive.

Reasonable adjustments and special considerations policy

This policy is aimed at anyone who uses our products and services and who submits requests for reasonable adjustments and special considerations. Learners who require reasonable adjustments or special consideration should discuss their requirements with their tutor.

For more information on the reasonable adjustments and special considerations policy, please visit the policies and documents page on the NCFE website.

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**** To continue to improve our levels of customer service, telephone calls may be recorded for training and quality purposes.***