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# **GUIDE TO GQA QUALIFICATIONS**

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## **GQA Qualifications**

[www.gqaqualifications.com](http://www.gqaqualifications.com)

GQA Qualifications is an awarding body approved nationally for vocational qualifications and is subject to the external auditing procedures of the relevant regulatory authorities.

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# Introduction

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This guide provides information and guidance for organisations that wish to attain, and maintain, approval by GQA Qualifications (GQA) to offer its qualifications.

GQA is responsible for assuring the quality of all qualifications offered in its name and is subject to close scrutiny by the relevant regulatory authorities.

GQA Qualifications are available for a number of occupational roles across a number of sectors and information on these can be found on the GQA website [www.gqaqualifications.com](http://www.gqaqualifications.com)

## **GQA Contacts**

To make suggestions, complaints or to request further information please contact your GQA External Verifier, GQA Chief Executive or the GQA Office Manager at:

GQA Qualifications  
Unit 1, 12 O'clock Court,  
Attercliffe Road,  
Sheffield,  
S4 7WW  
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F: 0114 276 8466  
Email: [info@gqaqualifications.com](mailto:info@gqaqualifications.com)  
Web: [www.gqaqualifications.com](http://www.gqaqualifications.com)

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## SECTION 1 – Approval to Offer GQA Qualifications

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1. **Contact GQA for information.** We will send you details about the qualifications we offer and what you need to do to get approval to deliver them. Information is also available at [www.gqaqualifications.com](http://www.gqaqualifications.com)
2. **Centre approval documentation.** Review GQA's centre approval documentation, including the GQA Centre Recognition Application Form (GQA 228) and complete before submitting this to GQA as a formal application for centre approval. GQA staff can offer guidance as required. See Appendix A for the GQA Qualifications Approved Centre Criteria (with guidance).
3. **Consider centre type.** Centres can take a number of different forms, please refer to the example models in Appendix B.
4. **Key personnel.** In order to achieve approved centre status, a potential centre must identify and appoint appropriate personnel. They will be responsible for others likely to be involved in the assessment process and for ensuring the quality and consistency of the delivery of GQA qualifications. Suitable training must be given. Personnel will include:
  - The Accountable Person
  - The Centre Coordinator
  - Internal Verifier/s
  - Assessor/s
  - Candidate/s

More information about these roles and relevant qualifications is included in Appendix C – Key Roles in the Delivery of GQA Qualifications.
5. **Centre coordinator is expected to read and understand this guide** as he/she is the main point of contact between the centre and GQA. GQA staff will offer guidance as required.
6. **The approval visit** – all potential centres requesting an approval visit will be visited by a GQA EV. The EV will discuss the prior completed GQA 228 with centre personnel, reviewing policies, procedures and proposed implementation plans prior to making a decision on the application. Key personnel should be available to the EV on the Approval visit.

**GQA issues all approved centres with an Approved Centre Certificate.**

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## SECTION 2 – Implementation Requirements

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**All Assessors and Internal Verifiers must be licensed by GQA.** Further information about GQA licensing procedures is in Appendix D – GQA licensing Procedures.

**All candidates must be registered** using GQA registration documentation/arrangements. The centre must maintain appropriate candidate personal details for external audit purposes etc.

The centre will provide candidates with advice and guidance on how to prepare for assessment and allocate an Assessor who will assess candidate ability to meet the requirements of the relevant qualifications/unit of credit. It is the candidate's responsibility to demonstrate competence and to do this they must:

- prove they can consistently meet all the qualifications and/or unit of credit criteria
- provide evidence from work that they can perform competently in all the contexts specified in the qualification/unit of credit requirements
- prove that they have the knowledge and understanding required to perform competently, even where they have not provided evidence from the workplace

It is therefore critical that quality evidence is provided in a format to allow the Assessor to make a decision and for the Internal Verifier to audit/verify his/her decision.

### Evidence

A qualification and/or credit is awarded when a person has achieved the necessary outcomes of the qualification and/or unit of credit. The specific combination of units necessary to achieve a qualification is detailed in the qualification structure.

Certificates of Unit Credit can be awarded when candidates achieve any one, or more, units from the qualification.

The evidence the candidate brings forward will be evidence of performance and/or knowledge. The assessment criteria/qualification requirements are described within the qualification and/or unit of credit itself and can incorporate practical skills and knowledge.

The Assessor's role is to judge each relevant item of evidence. Each must be judged against the qualification and/or unit of credit requirements. It is not sensible to collect evidence against individual criteria. Nor is it effective. If items of evidence were collected for each of the criteria, the candidate may have to produce many items of evidence, well above the number actually required.

### GQA recommend holistic assessment

When judging each item of evidence, the Assessor is deciding whether the evidence:

- is authentic – i.e. actually produced by the candidate
- meets the criteria
- relates as appropriate to a context defined within the qualification and/or unit of credit
- confirms that the candidate has the required underpinning knowledge

When the Assessor makes a decision about the candidate's competence, he or she examines all the evidence available to determine:

- if the evidence, as a whole, covers all the evidence of achievement
- whether the evidence indicates consistency in competent performance
- whether there is enough evidence on which to base an inference of competence

Taking the above into account, the outcome can only be one of the following:

- yes (the candidate is competent)
- no (the candidate is not yet competent)
- there is insufficient evidence to make a decision

Consistency means that the individual is likely to achieve the standard in their work role, in the different activities defined in the qualification and/or unit of credit over time and range of work. The Assessor must judge how long a time period is sufficient to be confident that the candidate can perform reliably to the standard. Unsupported evidence i.e. based on a single assessment/visit will not normally prove consistency.

## Performance evidence

Performance evidence can be what the individual actually produces, or the way the individual achieves the standard. One is called product evidence and the other process evidence.

Product evidence is tangible – you can look at it and feel it. Products can be inspected and the candidate can be asked questions about them.

In order to make a fair and objective assessment, the Assessor must be able to answer the question: Is there sufficient evidence that the candidate can consistently meet the requirements of the qualification and/or unit of credit?

Process evidence describes the way the candidate has achieved an outcome – how they went about it. This may be, for example, the way the quality of products is checked or the way customer complaints are handled.

This usually means observing the candidate in action.

Performance evidence may cover a number of outcomes. It makes sense to plan evidence collection so that what the candidate does, in the normal course of their job, can be related to different outcomes and units. The activities that clearly link to the qualification and/or unit of credit requirements are the things to concentrate on when planning evidence collection and assessment and when monitoring the candidate's progress. Look for opportunities in the candidate's job when evidence can be collected against a number of units at the same time.

Performance evidence can be:

- naturally occurring – evidence produced in the normal course of work. Evidence of this sort is usually of high quality and reliable. It is also cost effective to collect naturally occurring evidence
- taken from previous achievements – the candidate may be able to bring forward evidence from previous work experience to show that they are still competent to the standard. Evidence of prior achievement can be used when it can be shown to support a judgement that the candidate can still achieve the standard. So, the Assessor must be satisfied that the evidence of prior achievement is sufficiently reliable to justify saying that the candidate is currently competent.
- simulated – from circumstances specially designed to enable the candidate's performance to be assessed

Simulation is generally not acceptable. The exceptions, for which EV approval must be obtained, are:

- dealing with emergencies
- dealing with accidents
- certain pre-approved real time simulators
- limited other procedures that cannot be practically performed in the workplace, and for which sufficient evidence cannot be collected through other means

NB: It is not always possible or feasible to collect naturally occurring evidence. It is likely that some simulation may be needed, when it may take too long to wait for the evidence to arise e.g. it may be an aspect of performance which occurs infrequently. An example of this may be evidence of how to deal with emergencies i.e. it makes sense to look for evidence from sources other than naturally occurring ones, rather than for, say, waiting for the building to burn down. **Centres must obtain GQA EV approval prior to the use of simulation.**

## Knowledge evidence

Being able to achieve a standard requires the ability to put knowledge to work. The qualification and/or unit of credit indicates the knowledge each person should use if they are to perform competently.

It should not be necessary to test all of the candidate's knowledge separately; however, any exception to this would be detailed in the relevant assessment strategy. Performance evidence could show that the candidate knows what he or she is doing. When this is not the case, or if the Assessor is not convinced from the performance evidence, it may be necessary to check the individual's knowledge separately.

Oral or written assessments must clearly provide a suitable means of checking the breadth and depth of an individual's knowledge. Assessors will need to judge the best mix of knowledge evidence according to individual circumstances. Knowledge evidence is useful when deciding the quality of performance evidence, but must not be used in isolation to judge competence or as an alternative to performance evidence. Care must be taken that candidate evidence is auditable and verifiable.

**The appropriate assessment strategy must be utilised.** All standards setting bodies provide an assessment strategy that is contributory to the qualification implementation process. Contact GQA for information on the appropriate assessment strategy.

## **Unit/Credit certification**

Achievement of units from within GQA qualifications can be recognised by the issue of certificates of unit credit. A centre may apply for approval to offer a selection of units or one individual unit. **Roles, responsibilities and procedures do not differ from when full qualifications are being delivered.**

Accrediting unit achievement in this way is termed 'unit certification'.

For example, a potential centre may wish to assess candidates against a specific unit of competence, such as health and safety, and would apply for approved centre status in relation to that particular unit.

Alternatively, a candidate may have registered on a full GQA qualification and for a variety of reasons may have only been successfully assessed and verified on one or two units, e.g. the candidate may change occupational roles or leave the company/centre. In such circumstances, the centre is expected to request the awarding of a Certificate of Unit Credit.

**GQA approved centres are responsible for ensuring candidates are aware of the value and availability of unit certification and cost (as GQA issue one certificate as part of the candidate fee – extra certificates are available at an extra cost).**

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## SECTION 3 – Ongoing Quality Assurance

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Centres are responsible for:

1. Continuing to meet the GQA Qualifications Approved Centre Criteria (Appendix A).
2. Meeting any entries on the action plan.
3. Understanding the Tariff of Sanctions (see Appendix E).
4. Ensuring that assessment of GQA Qualification candidates conforms to the assessment guidance set out in GQA Qualification standards.
5. Registering all GQA Qualification candidates with GQA as early as possible. Centres must inform candidates of their registration status.
6. Making candidates aware of the value and availability of unit certification.
7. Ensuring that each registered GQA Qualification candidate has a personal copy of the relevant GQA standard.
8. Providing sufficient competent Assessors and Internal Verifiers.
9. Internally verifying/auditing the quality and consistency of assessment practices and decisions within the centre.
10. Maintaining records of:
  - all candidates, including candidate name, date of birth, contact address, workplace address and contact details, Assessor(s) name, Internal Verifier(s) name and the date of the confirmed registration with GQA
  - assessment records (Assessor, dates, the assessment decision, and assessment methods)
  - internal verification activity detailing who verified what and when, details of the sample selected and its rationale, records of standardisation/centre meetings
  - all certificates claimed
  - reasonable adjustment requests and monitoring documentation/records
  - assessment and verification team records (eg CVs, appropriate qualifications/licences, minutes of meetings, training records, CPD records)
11. Ensuring all records are:
  - accurate
  - legible
  - up to date
  - securely stored and not disclosed to any unauthorised persons
  - made available for external verification and auditing by relevant regulatory authorities and that they allow for candidate achievements to be monitored and reviewed in relation to the centre's equal opportunities policy
  - retained for a minimum of three years
12. Identifying candidates who may require reasonable adjustments to the assessment process and applying to GQA for authorisation to implement special assessment arrangements.
13. For a period of three years, retaining assessment materials and representative samples of candidates' work sufficient to monitor provision over time.
14. Complying with any requests by GQA External Verifiers for access to premises, records, information, candidates and staff as requested for the purposes of external verification. Where a centre fails to provide such access, GQA must take appropriate remedial action in line with the requirements of the tariff of sanctions and penalties specified in Appendix E.
15. Holding standardisation meetings, including review of centre paperwork, assessment decisions, use of assessment methods and candidate evidence. The GQA EV reserves the right to attend such meetings.

16. Reporting any suspected malpractice to GQA.
17. Informing GQA of any changes that affect their ability to meet all the centre approval criteria, in particular staff turnover that results in the loss of Assessor/s and/or Internal Verifiers. Without appropriately qualified people, a centre's candidates cannot be awarded qualifications or certificates of unit credit.
18. Ensuring that all members of the team are proficient in the use of any e-portfolio systems. NOTE: the centre is also responsible for ensuring that the GQA EV has full access and working knowledge of any e-portfolio system.
19. Ensure centre team carry out CPD activities (Assessor/IV and occupational) and keep a reflective record that is available for EV review.

## **Standardisation**

To ensure accurate and consistent assessment, Internal Verifiers are expected to ensure effective standardisation. This can be done through:

- carrying out standardisation exercises with a group of Assessors which may include the following:
  - selecting specific/problem units
  - focusing on types/sources of evidence and assessment methods used
  - comparing the requirements between old and new/revised qualification requirements
  - considering alternative forms of evidence
- holding regular standardisation meetings with the assessment team, including satellite site assessment teams (where applicable). These meetings should include matters concerning:
  - access to fair assessment
  - health and safety
  - qualification, last registration and last certification dates
  - issues arising from internal verification
  - issues arising from external verification
  - candidate achievement – difficulties
  - changes in qualification requirements
  - resources
  - workplace practice
  - difficulties in interpretation of qualification requirements
  - alternative assessment methods
  - qualification specific updates from GQA
  - Assessor workload, including candidate to Assessor ratios

## **Centre conduct during external verification visits**

Whilst the GQA External Verifier's aim is to advise, support and guide in a fair and appropriate manner, there may be instances when they make recommendations that you may not agree with. All GQA centres are encouraged to seek clarification of decisions/recommendations in a professional and courteous manner.

Should any inappropriate behaviour towards a GQA External Verifier take place, the GQA EV will terminate the visit, recording the reasons for this on the GQA report form and then report this to both GQA and the centre.

This will then be followed up by the GQA Lead External Verifier or Chief Executive as appropriate, who will contact the centre coordinator to discuss. Whilst GQA would seek to resolve the issue informally, we will instigate formal procedures if we believe that our External Verifiers have been subjected to unacceptable behaviour. The centre will be aware of the Complaints procedure against decisions taken by GQA and will have the right to use this procedure.

## **Approved Centre file content**

Centres must develop an approved centre file that contains the following:

- Organisation chart/team responsibilities
- CPD records for assessment team
- Assessment team qualification certificates, CVs, proof of occupational competence and GQA licences
- Centre approval report (GQA 228)
- EV reports (GQA 215/GQA 233)
- Records of certification and licence requests and EV sampling
- Relevant assessment strategies
- Assessment methodology
- IV policy/strategy
- IV sampling plans and records (including observation records)
- Access to fair assessment policy
- Equal opportunities policy
- Appeals procedure
- Guidance to centre approval
- Reasonable adjustment policy/procedure and related records
- Qualification induction material
- Awarding body communication
- List/records of partner organisations
- Mandatory assessment questions and example answers
- Standardisation/team meeting minutes
- GQA terms of business
- Centre remit (qualifications approved to offer)

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## SECTION 4 – GQA Responsibilities

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GQA is responsible for:

- Approving and monitoring all centres approved to offer GQA qualifications. GQA External Verifiers visit centres to monitor their operation and inform centres immediately at the end of a centre approval/monitoring visit whether all approved centre criteria are met.
- Ensuring that all GQA approved centres are visited on a regular basis by a licensed GQA External Verifier. Where a centre cancels a pre-arranged external verification visit at short notice, GQA must be satisfied that there is a legitimate reason for this. Where this cannot be established, GQA reserves the right to withhold any claims for certification until a monitoring visit has been completed. Centres should also be aware that GQA, and the regulatory authorities, reserve the right to perform such visits at short notice or without prior notification in order to minimise the risk of unsubstantiated claims for certification.
  - Centre visit frequency - external verification visits will normally take place a minimum of twice annually for single site centres. Multi-site centres or centres with multiple partners will normally be subject to a minimum of four visits annually. GQA External Verifiers can recommend a change (reduction or increase) in the number of required visits to a centre, taking into account the following considerations:
    - Number of qualifications centre is approved to offer
    - Type of qualifications/occupational roles
    - Size of the assessment team
    - Number of current candidates
    - Nature/types of candidates (apprentices/experienced workers/ESOL)
    - Number of centre locations
    - Number of partners (employers)
    - Centre consistency/history in meeting approved centre criteria
    - Financial issues
- Providing feedback to centres at the end of each visit. This is followed by a written report issued within one working day of the end of the visit. This includes:
  - records the date of the visit
  - details the monitoring and verification activities undertaken, including information on the sample, any audits conducted and who was interviewed during the visit
  - details any changes in centre staff or their competence since the last visit
  - provides explicit feedback to the centre on the quality and consistency of the assessment process and the effectiveness of its internal verification arrangements
  - highlights areas of good practice against the requirements of the approved centre criteria
  - specifies any actions to be taken by the centre where its performance does not meet the requirements of the approved centre criteria along with timescales for their implementation and the names of those individuals responsible for their implementation
- Providing feedback to centres where centre approval is withdrawn: GQA gives centres full and clear feedback on the grounds for withdrawing approved centre status.
- Taking appropriate action in line with the sanctions and penalties (specified in Appendix E) when a centre is consistently failing to meet the requirements of the approved centre criteria or has not implemented previously agreed action points.
- Investigating alleged malpractice: GQA has a formal malpractice procedure and publishes current guidance about its malpractice arrangements on the GQA web site.
- Ensuring that there are no unnecessary barriers to assessment that prevent candidates from effectively demonstrating their attainment. GQA has a formal procedure for authorising special assessment arrangements for those candidates with identified particular assessment requirements and publishes current guidance about this on its web site.
- Ensuring that arrangements are in place for appeals to be made against assessment decisions and, where appropriate, other decisions affecting centres and individual candidates. GQA monitors its approved centres to ensure that appropriate appeals procedures are in place.
- Ensuring that all written and verbal enquiries are responded to within five working days.
- Ensuring that all satisfactorily completed and authorised GQA qualification registration forms are actioned within two working weeks.
- Ensuring that certificate requests are actioned within two working weeks of receipt of correctly completed and authorised certification claim forms.
- Respond to all complaints and suggestions within five working days.

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## **SECTION 5 – Equality of Opportunity**

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Provision of equality of opportunity should be regardless of a candidate's gender, age, racial origin, religious persuasion, sexual orientation or special needs' requirements imposed by disability. GQA Qualifications aims to overcome any inequality of opportunity in respect of:

- candidates entered for assessment under the provision of its schemes
- the communication and marketing of its schemes
- the preparation and production of its guidelines and materials
- the monitoring of approved centres and providing bodies' practices, procedures and data
- guidance and training regarding Assessor and Verifier/auditor selection
- all External Verifier activity

A copy of GQA Qualifications' equal opportunities policy is available on request. GQA Qualifications is an equal opportunities organisation.

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## SECTION 6 – Complaints/Appeals

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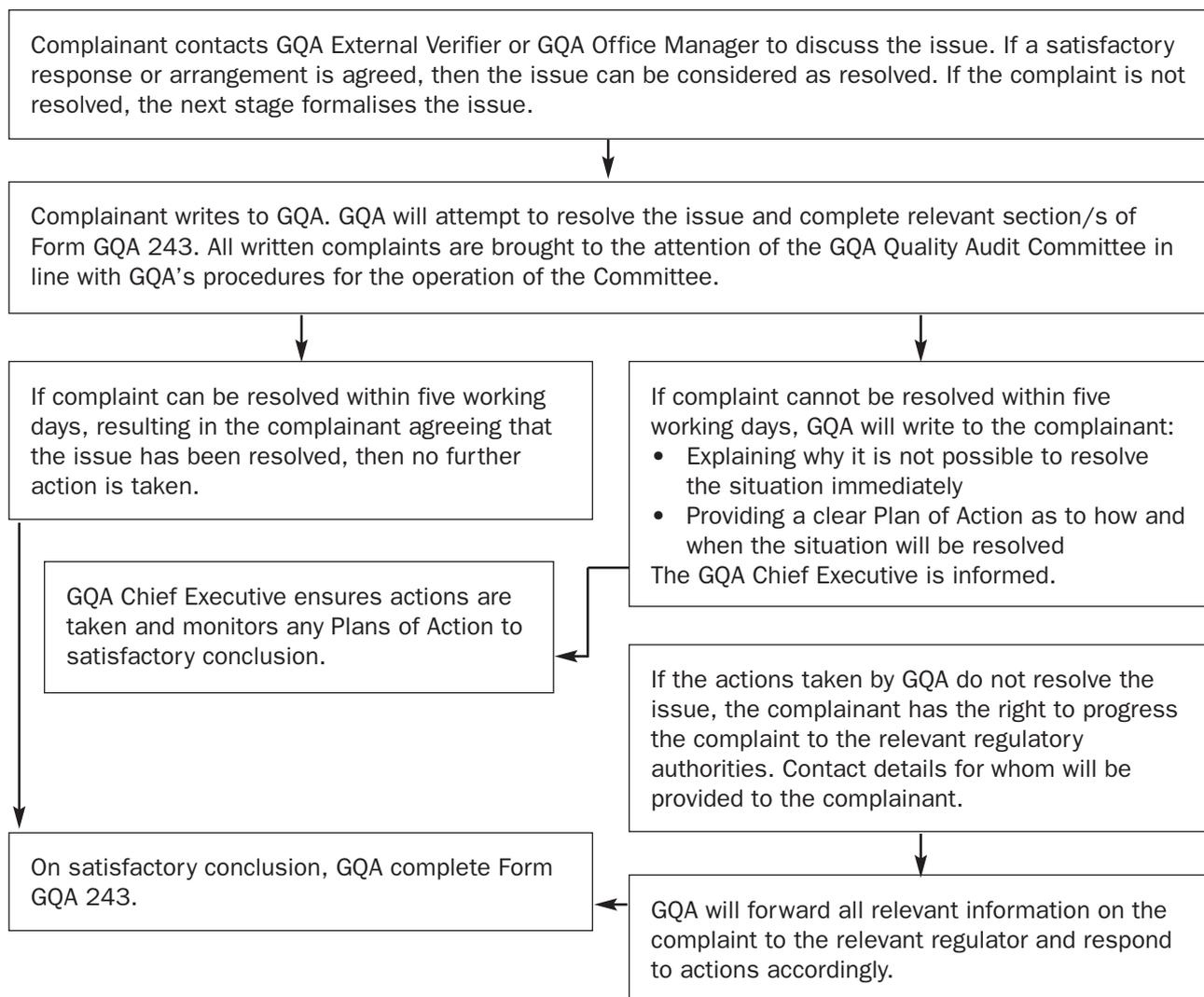
### Complaints against GQA

GQA has a formal complaints procedure. Individuals who have a complaint they wish to make against GQA can instigate this. Current guidance about the complaints procedure is published on the GQA web site. Web link to <http://www.gqaqualifications.com/downloads.html>

Individuals can also request information about GQA's complaints procedure from their normal GQA contact or the GQA office.

### Appeals against GQA decisions

The complaints procedure is for people who wish to make a complaint about the Awarding Body. This does not necessarily involve a decision that GQA has taken (current guidance can be found on the GQA web site)



GQA Office Manager maintains a complaints file and ensures Form GQA 243 is completed satisfactorily in respect of each written complaint.

GQA Office Manager ensures that the contents of the complaints file are brought to the attention of the GQA Chief Executive.

NB: All documentation is stored securely, made available for auditing purposes and used to improve GQA's service to its customers. Where appropriate, GQA will take action to prevent the occurrence of similar complaints.

## APPENDIX A - GQA Approved Centre Criteria

Potential centres must meet the approved centre criteria as laid out below: this criteria is in line with the requirements of both SQA and Ofqual. All approved Centres will subsequently be monitored against the criteria annually. Any issues highlighted as part of EV monitoring will be agreed and recorded in a GQA Action Plan.

Approved centre criteria	Potential sources of evidence
1 The centre's aims and policies in relation to qualifications and plans for their achievement are supported by senior management and understood by the assessment team.	<i>Documented quality procedures. Progress reports and staff updates. Centre meeting minutes.</i>
2 The centre's access and fair assessment policy and practice is understood and complied with by candidates and assessors.	<i>Documented policies and procedures. Centre meeting minutes. Progress reports and staff updates.</i>
3 Guidance for the assessment team must be clearly and appropriately allocated and new centre staff have access to induction.	<i>Organisational chart. Job descriptions. Responsibilities chart. In-company guidance.</i>
4 The roles, responsibilities and authorities of the assessment and verification team across all assessment sites are clearly defined, allocated and understood.	<i>Documented quality assurance procedures. Organisational chart and records of updating. Documented and signed agreements of lines of responsibility and accountability with partner organisations. Job descriptions for assessment team. Records of all assessment sites and personnel.</i>
5 Internal verification procedures and activities are clearly documented consistent with national requirements and ensure the quality and consistency of assessment (sampling plan to be provided).	<i>IV plans and reports. Sampling strategy and schedule of activity.</i>
6 There is effective communication within the assessment team and with the awarding body.	<i>Staff handbooks and updates. Centre meeting minutes. Records of communication with the AB/AO.</i>
7 Resource needs are correctly and accurately identified in relation to the specific award/s and made available.	<i>Records of resource availability. Centre diary. Evidence of additional resources obtained.</i>
8 Equipment and accommodation used for the purposes of assessment comply with the requirements of relevant health and safety legislation (risk assessment of assessment location).	<i>Public liability certificate. Health and Safety policy. Risk assessment of the assessment location/employer.</i>
9 There are sufficient competent and qualified Assessors and Internal Verifiers to meet the demand for assessment and verification activity.	<i>Assessment team CVs. Assessment team report. Assessor – candidate ratios/workload.</i>
10 A staff development and CPD programme is established for the assessment team in line with identified need and its effectiveness reviewed.	<i>Staff induction and guidance materials. Records of briefings, meetings, updates. Reflective CPD records. Appraisal/performance review records. Individual action plans.</i>
11 Assessors and Internal Verifiers have sufficient time, resources and authority to perform their roles and meet their responsibilities effectively.	<i>Assessor – candidate ratios/workload. IV sampling plan. Assessment team interview.</i>

Approved centre criteria	Potential sources of evidence
12 Awarding bodies are notified of any changes which may affect the centre's ability to meet the approved criteria.	<i>Notification of changes to the assessment team. Notification of changes to locations/resources.</i>
13 Information, advice and guidance about qualification procedures and practices are made available to candidates and potential candidates.	<i>Candidate guidance and induction materials. Details of support services. Appeals procedures. Confirmation by candidates.</i>
14 Candidates' development needs are matched against the requirements of the relevant awards and agreed individual assessment plans are established.	<i>Initial assessment procedures. Candidate induction records. Candidate assessment plans. Learner/Trainee contracts.</i>
15 Candidates have regular opportunities to review their progress and goals and to revise their assessment plans accordingly.	<i>Candidate assessment plans. Frequency of review meetings. Examples of revisions to assessment plans. Candidate confirmation within portfolio.</i>
16 Particular assessment requirements of candidates are identified and met where possible (reasonable adjustments must be identified prior to assessment).	<i>Materials/equipment/facilities to support candidates with particular assessment requirements. Reasonable adjustment requests and monitoring documentation. GQA advised of special or particular requirements.</i>
17 There is an established appeals procedure which is appropriate, documented and made available to candidates.	<i>Documented appeals procedure. Candidate acceptance of appeals procedure. Records of centre appeals.</i>
18 Pre-exit guidance should be provided to support progression from achievement status.	<i>Procedure of pre-exit. Future options list.</i>
19 Access to assessment is encouraged through the use of a range of valid assessment methods.	<i>Assessment plans and candidate assessment records. Standardisation meeting minutes.</i>
20 Queries about qualifications' specification, assessment guidance or related awarding body material are resolved and recorded.	<i>Records of queries raised. EV visit reports. Centre team meeting minutes.</i>
21 Assessment is conducted by qualified and occupationally expert staff who understand the qualifications being delivered.	<i>EV observation of Assessors. Reflective CPD records. Standardisation meeting minutes. Assessor CVs. Details of authorising candidate/new Assessor decisions. Copies of appropriate qualification/update certificates for Assessors.</i>
22 Assessment decisions and practice are regularly sampled and findings acted upon to ensure consistency and fairness against the relevant national standards.	<i>Sampled assessments (covering portfolio and observations). IV plans and records. Records of assessment sampling strategies. Records of networking/CPD events. Minutes of assessment team meetings.</i>

Approved centre criteria	Potential sources of evidence
23 Internal verification is conducted by appropriately qualified and experienced staff (including as appropriate any IV qualification update).	<i>EV observation of IVs. Reflective CPD records. Standardisation meeting minutes. IV CVs. Details of authorising candidate/new IV decisions. Copies of appropriate qualification/update certificates for IVs.</i>
24 Requests are complied with for access to premises records, information, candidates and staff for the purposes of external verification.	<i>Data and information management systems. Candidate tracking systems. Assessment and IV records.</i>
25 Unit certification/credit transfer is made available to candidates (and when appropriate, guidance is provided on how the units can contribute to future development).	<i>Records of units registered, claimed and/or awarded. Induction materials. Pre-exit guidance document.</i>
26 The requirements of the relevant assessment strategy and enhanced external verification requirements are understood and complied with.	<i>Mandatory assessment questions and example answers. Candidate portfolios. CVs. Reflective CPD records.</i>
27 Records of candidate details and achievements are complete, up to date, stored securely in line with awarding body requirements and made available for audit purposes.	<i>Candidate registration report. ULN/SCN details. Candidate assessment records. Evidence files/portfolios. Security and access arrangements.</i>
28 Records of internal verification activity are maintained, current and made available for audit purposes.	<i>IV plan and sampling records. Assessment team meeting minutes.</i>
29 Information supplied to the awarding body for the purposes of registration and certification is complete and accurate.	<i>Records of candidate registration and certification requests.</i>
30 Information and recording systems enable candidates' achievements to be monitored and reviewed in relation to the centre's equal opportunities policy.	<i>Achievement records. Statistical information on achievement against equal opportunities and access to fair assessment.</i>
31 Actions identified by external verification visits are disseminated to appropriate staff and corrective measures are implemented.	<i>EV reports. Centre meeting minutes. Action plans.</i>
32 The effectiveness of the internal verification strategy is reviewed against national requirements and corrective measures are implemented.	<i>EV reports. Internal reviews of sampling strategies. Evidence of corrective action taken. Assessment team meeting minutes.</i>
33 Candidate, employer and other feedback is used to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of qualification provision against the centre's stated aims and policies, leading to continual improvement.	<i>Centre meeting minutes. Evaluation forms. EV observation reports. User's charter/customer service statements. EV candidate/employer interview.</i>
34 The centre's achievement against its plan is monitored and reviewed and used to inform future centre qualification development activity.	<i>Internal audit reports. Self assessment reports. Records of findings against the approved centre criteria. Evidence of corrective actions taken. Minutes of meetings.</i>

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## APPENDIX B – Types of Centres

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An approved centre can be one organisation, a partnership of a collection of several. Centres may also be spread over several sites. For example, one site may provide the majority of administrative functions while another may be chiefly concerned with delivering GQA qualification assessment.

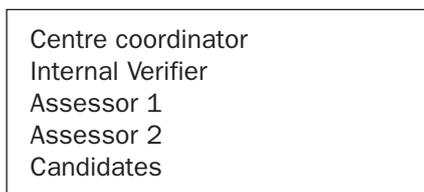
### Examples of possible models

The diagrams below show possible centre models; not all possibilities are illustrated as combinations of roles vary to suit different organisations' needs.

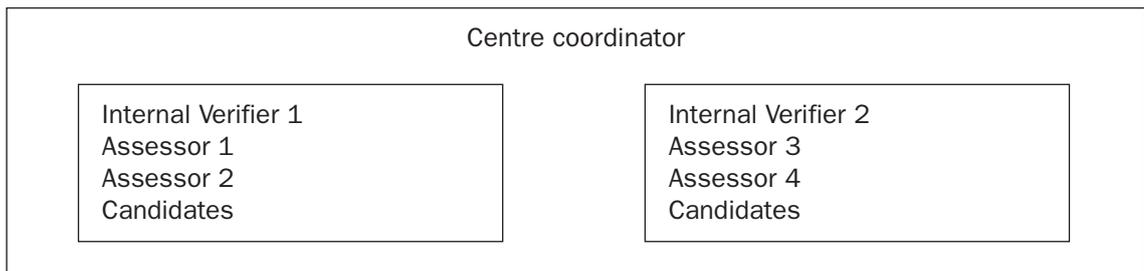
#### SINGLE SITE CENTRES

(Typically an employer-based centre)

##### Model A



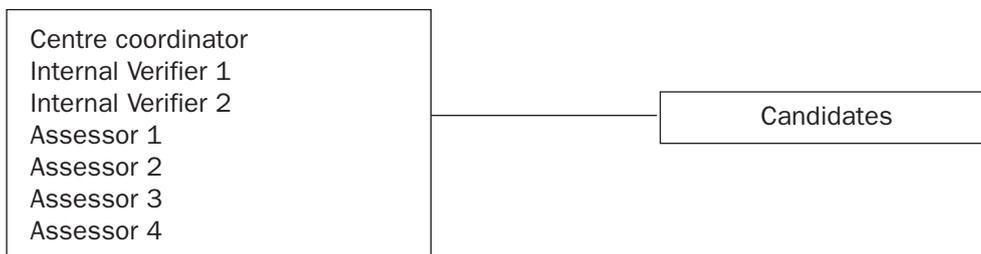
##### Model B



#### PARTNERSHIP CENTRE

(Typically, a college, national employer organisation or training provider)

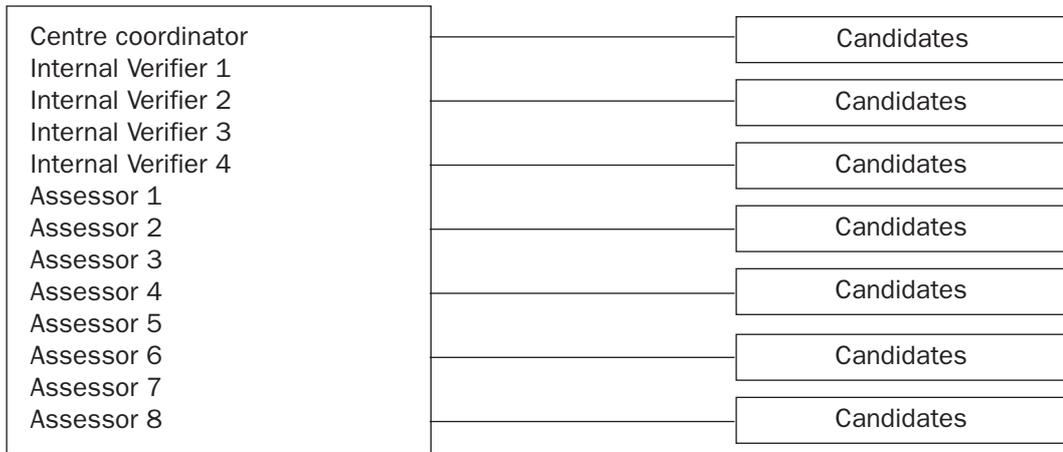
##### Model C



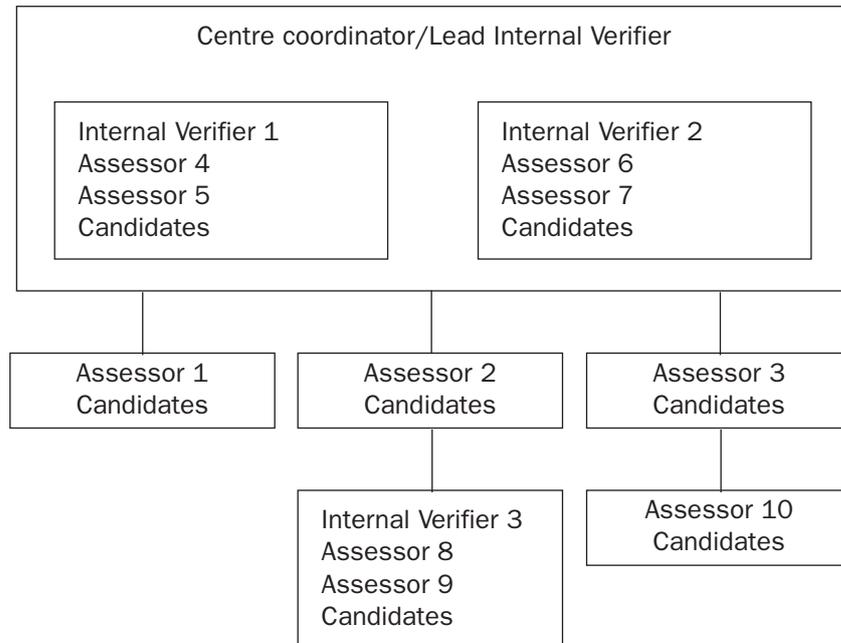
**MULTI-SITE CENTRES**

(Model D – typically, a college, national employer organisation or training provider  
 Model E – typically a multi-site employer)

**Model D**



**Model E**



Assessors and Internal Verifiers do not need to be based within an assessment location and may operate on a mobile basis. It is not a requirement for centres to employ members of the assessment team.

**Where a centre applying for approval is a partnership/multi-site arrangement between organisations, respective roles, responsibilities and accountabilities must be clearly documented in relation to the assessment, quality assurance and administration of the award and clear lines of communication between all partners must be established.**

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## APPENDIX C – Key Roles in the Delivery of GQA Qualifications

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<b>Candidate</b>	Works towards a GQA qualification e.g. an Award, Certificate or Diploma (QCF), an SVQ/SCQF or specific qualification units, and provides evidence of their competence.
<b>Assessor</b>	Makes judgements about candidate competence by assessing performance and/or knowledge.
<b>Internal Verifier</b>	Ensures that candidates and Assessors clearly understand what is required by the relevant standards and that all Assessors' judgements are fair, reliable, valid and consistent. Must authorise all Certificate requests.
<b>Centre Coordinator</b>	Coordinates the assessment process and practices within a centre and liaises with GQA and the GQA External Verifier.
<b>Accountable Person</b>	Normally the business owner, or a director with financial responsibilities, this person is the single named point of accountability for the overall financial viability of the centre and its continuing compliance with GQA requirements. This person is required to sign the GQA 228, Centre Recognition Application and also the GQA Terms of Business.
<b>External Verifier</b>	Appointed by GQA. An External Verifier approves assessment centres and regularly monitors their operation; she, or he, is the quality assurance link between the approved centre and the awarding body.

### Candidate

Candidates are actively involved in the assessment process and are responsible for identifying and collecting evidence for assessment. At Level 2 it is not unusual for candidates to do this with support from Assessors. The role includes:

- identifying evidence which may prove existing competence (identifying where prior experience has current relevance)
- agreeing, usually with an Assessor, a plan of action for assessment and identifying any training needs
- gathering evidence to satisfy qualification requirements

Assessors and candidates must provide a written declaration that all evidence is authentic and that the assessment was conducted under the specified conditions or context as indicated within the qualification requirements.

### Assessor

The best way to judge whether someone is competent in a particular area of work is to watch them doing it. An individual may produce a report on how to carry out a specific part of their job and produce job-sheets which show that the person has carried out the activity – and this would be good evidence – but the clearest way of telling if someone is competent is to observe them actually carrying out the task.

An observer must be able to make accurate judgements about a candidate's performance: **assessors must be occupationally competent in the area they are assessing and must fully understand the relevant qualification requirements.**

Assessors are responsible and accountable for:

- managing the system of assessment planning
- making and recording assessment decisions
- assessing evidence of candidate competence against the relevant qualification requirements
- ensuring the validity, authenticity and sufficiency of evidence produced by candidates
- maintaining accurate and verifiable candidate assessment and achievement records
- meeting CPD requirements

The role includes:

- explaining the requirements of the relevant qualification requirements
- guiding candidates about their responsibilities in the assessment process
- identifying opportunities for candidates to collect evidence and demonstrate competence
- working out a plan of action with each candidate
- advising candidates on suitable evidence to present for assessment
- making accurate, fair, reliable and valid judgements about the evidence that candidates present for assessment and providing them with full and clear feedback
- advising candidates where evidence does not fully meet the criteria in the qualification requirements
- making sure assessments are conducted so that they are fair, reliable, valid and consistent
- keeping accurate records of candidates' progress and achievement
- liaising with other people involved in the assessment and accreditation process

Usually the centre coordinator and/or Internal Verifier/auditor will identify appropriate people to become Assessors.

Centres must:

- provide appropriate training and development opportunities to enable Assessors to meet the requirements of the role and to ensure that they have a common understanding of relevant standards and any other assessment requirements that apply
- keep relevant records of such activity (for example, staff development and CPD records) as evidence
- provide Assessors with information and guidance which ensures that they understand their responsibilities in relation to the assessment requirements of the qualification
- ensure Assessors have access to specialist advice and guidance on the assessment of GQA qualifications
- ensure that all Assessors maintain a reflective continued professional development record with at least two significant entries per year (both occupational and assessment)

## National qualifications for Assessors

All Assessors must hold a national qualification approved by the regulatory authorities that qualifies them to assess. GQA requires that all Assessors who are not qualified:

- receive formal training on how to achieve the appropriate qualification
- register on the qualification via an approved centre with an approved awarding body and work towards its achievement

All assessment decisions of candidate-Assessors must be authenticated and validated by an Assessor who is qualified and fully licensed by GQA.

**Practising Assessors must demonstrate that they are assessing according to the criteria of the current Assessor qualification. A and D unit qualified Assessors do not need to achieve the current qualification but GQA monitors assessment practice to ensure that it adheres to current principles.**

## Internal Verifier

This role is important in the quality assurance of GQA qualifications. Centres may have several different Assessors working with a variety of qualifications. In all situations, it is vital that assessment is consistent and reliable and conforms to the national principles of assessment.

The Internal Verifier is responsible for ensuring that:

- all staff have undergone relevant training, including becoming accredited with the relevant national award for Assessors
- Assessors are given the necessary support and guidance to ensure effective assessment
- the quality of assessment is monitored on a regular basis
- Assessors have access to the necessary resources as required by the relevant GQA qualifications

In large, or multi-site centres, there may be more than one Internal Verifier; they must communicate effectively to ensure that assessment decisions are consistent. Internal Verifiers provide the main link between Assessors and External Verifiers (who represent GQA) and can often undertake the job of centre coordinator.

Internal Verifiers can also act as Assessors. **However, it is not acceptable for one person to act as Assessor and Internal Verifier for the same candidate: an Internal Verifier cannot internally verify his/her, own assessment activity.**

Internal verification must ensure:

- the accuracy and consistency of assessment decisions between Assessors operating within the centre
- that Assessors are consistent in their interpretation and application of the assessment criteria of the GQA qualifications being assessed

Internal Verifiers are responsible for:

- regularly sampling evidence of assessment decisions made by all Assessors across all aspects of GQA qualification assessment in order to monitor and ensure consistency in the interpretation and application of standards within the centre. Sampling must include direct observation of the assessment practice
- maintaining up-to-date records of internal verification and sampling activity and ensuring that these are available for the purposes of external verification
- establishing procedures to develop a common interpretation of the GQA standards between Assessors
- facilitating appropriate staff development and training for Assessors
- providing feedback to the External Verifier on the effectiveness of assessment
- ensuring that any corrective actions required by the awarding body are implemented within agreed timescales
- identifying development needs of Assessors within their team
- meeting CPD requirements

The role includes:

- coordinating the provision of the qualification/s within the centre
- ensuring the centre's quality assurance mechanisms are operating effectively by internally verifying/auditing the assessment process
- observing the assessment process and providing timely feedback to Assessors
- monitoring the centre's equal opportunities practice with regard to open access to assessment and in relation to the centre's own published equal opportunities policy
- ensuring that any particular assessment requirements/reasonable adjustments are identified and discussed with the GQA EV
- ensuring that Assessor duties are allocated clearly
- ensuring that the recording of achievement is carried out accurately and that assessment and verification records are kept in accordance with an approved centre's responsibilities

The Internal Verifier also has responsibility for each candidate in ensuring that:

- responsibilities with regard to their own assessment are understood
- encouragement is provided to develop competence in the required elements of competence relevant to the chosen GQA qualification
- appeals are dealt with fairly, promptly and follow agreed procedures

An Internal Verifier must be sufficiently knowledgeable about:

- the relevant occupational area
- the requirements of the relevant GQA qualification

So that the performance of Assessors can be accurately judged GQA recommends that Internal Verifiers also hold the national award for Assessors.

Centres must:

- provide appropriate training and development opportunities to enable Internal Verifiers to meet the requirements of the role and to ensure that they have a common understanding of relevant standards
- keep relevant records of such activity (for example, staff development and CPD records) as evidence
- provide Internal Verifiers with information and guidance which ensures that they understand their responsibilities in relation to the verification requirements of the qualification
- ensure Internal Verifiers have access to specialist advice and guidance on the internal verification of GQA qualifications
- ensure that all Internal Verifiers maintain a reflective continued professional development record with at least two significant entries per year (both occupational and verification)

The External Verifier will expect to see recorded evidence that the Internal Verifier has observed the assessment activities of each Assessor over a period of time. Evidence should demonstrate that the Internal Verifier has witnessed a number of different Assessors, each judging evidence against the same evidence requirements.

Where a centre has more than one Internal Verifier, benchmarking or standardisation exercises must be extended to include all Internal Verifiers so that consistency of verification judgements is monitored across all team members.

## Internal Verifier sampling:

The sampling strategy for each centre will vary according to the needs of the centre and the particular qualification programme, but in *all* cases must be agreed with the External Verifier. In defining the sampling strategy all the following should be taken into account:

- size of sample needed to ensure reliability
- assessment methods used by centre (this may vary between awards)
- Assessors – number, experience, workload and location
- range (if any) of assessment sites, satellites
- the GQA qualifications – particularly if new/revised
- all units and particularly focusing on any problem unit(s)
- issues highlighted by GQA EVs

## National qualifications for Internal Verifiers

All Internal Verifiers must hold a national award approved by the regulatory authorities that qualifies them to internally verify and audit the assessment process.

GQA requires that all Internal Verifiers who are not qualified:

- receive formal training on how to achieve the current qualification
- register on the qualification via an approved centre with an approved awarding body and work towards its achievement

All verification decisions of candidate-Internal Verifiers must be authenticated and validated by an Internal Verifier who is qualified and fully licensed by GQA.

V1 and D34 are still valid as Internal Verifier qualifications. **However, practising Internal Verifiers must demonstrate that they are verifying according to the criteria of the current Internal Verifier qualification. V and D unit qualified Internal Verifiers do not need to achieve the current qualification but GQA monitors verification practice to ensure that it adheres to current principles.**

## Centre coordinator

The centre coordinator is the single named point of accountability for the overall quality assurance, management and administration of GQA qualifications. An Internal Verifier often, but not exclusively, undertakes this role.

The centre coordinator coordinates the provision of all GQA qualifications within a centre by:

- ensuring that internal verification/auditing is effective and objective
- ensuring that procedures/action points agreed with GQA are implemented effectively and promptly
- ensuring that all appropriate documentation, records, evidence and personnel are available at the centre for the External Verifier visit
- liaising effectively with the assessment and verification team
- ensuring that all GQA documentation and materials are disseminated to appropriate personnel
- making sure that GQA requirements for financial and administrative arrangements are carried out effectively
- acting as the centre's formal point of contact for GQA

Centre coordinators do not need to be occupationally competent in the relevant areas of the national standards being delivered.

## Accountable person

This person is the single named point of accountability within the centre and is responsible for ensuring the approved centre's compliance with GQA requirements. The accountable person must sign the GQA 228, centre recognition application and also the GQA terms of business.

## GQA External Verifier

As GQA qualifications are part of national qualification frameworks (QCF and SCQF), it is necessary to monitor quality and consistency at a national level. This is done through a network of External Verifiers appointed by GQA.

The External Verifier role involves visiting approved centres and monitoring assessment and verification activity to ensure that it is being carried out in accordance with GQA requirements.

As the External Verifier is the main link between approved centres and GQA, s/he, is also the person who can give guidance and support with queries, e.g. on the acceptability of evidence, the interpretation of assessment criteria and advice on the requirements of candidates with reasonable adjustment requirements.

External Verifiers are responsible for:

- providing pre-visit agenda/information to centres
- visiting centres to monitor the quality and consistency of assessment practices and procedures against requirements of the qualifications
- providing feedback to the awarding body on the performance of its centres in maintaining the consistent application of the requirements of the qualifications
- providing assurance to the awarding body that approved centres are continuing to operate in accordance with the requirements of the approved centre criteria
- recommending to the awarding body the imposition of an appropriate sanction or penalty, as specified in Appendix E, in cases where a centre is failing to comply with the requirements of the approved centre criteria or terms of business
- meeting CPD requirements

This is done by:

- confirming that centres continue to meet the requirements of the approved centre criteria
- confirming that assessments are conducted by appropriately qualified and occupationally expert assessors
- sampling assessment decisions to confirm that they are authentic, valid and that the national standards are being consistently maintained
- confirming that assessment decisions are regularly sampled through internal verification to ensure the accuracy of assessment decisions against the national standards
- checking claims for certification to ensure that they are authentic, valid and supported by auditable records
- confirming that centres have implemented any corrective actions required by the awarding body
- advising centres on the interpretation of national standards
- advising centres on awarding body requirements and procedures, including access to fair assessment and appeals against awarding body decisions
- providing centres with up-to-date information and advice in line with awarding body and regulatory authority guidance and requirements

GQA appoints and licenses its External Verifiers, all of whom are subject to GQA's recruitment, training and continuing professional development procedures. GQA ensures that all of its External Verifiers hold the appropriate national award for external verification and that all external verification practice adheres to the principles of the current qualification for external verification.

### **The GQA Qualifications quality assurance chain**



If a centre is in receipt of government funding to implement nationally recognised qualifications, it may also be subject to the auditing regulations and procedures of the funding organisation/s.

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## APPENDIX D – GQA Licensing Procedures

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GQA operates a licensing system for all Assessors, Internal Verifiers and External Verifiers. This helps to ensure that qualified, competent practitioners conduct the assessment and verification process. Licences run for 12 months and can either be provisional or full. Provisional licences are issued to Assessors and Verifiers who are:

- Candidate Assessors/Verifiers until such time as they have achieved their qualification and the EV is satisfied that they are operating within GQA requirements and the approved centre systems.
- Assessors/Verifiers who are new to a centre.
- Assessors/Verifiers that have been downgraded as a result of sanctions placed.

Licence requests must comply with the GQA criteria as follows:

- Assessors, IVs and EVs hold a relevant qualification (e.g. A1, V1 or V2 or equivalent). Equivalent qualifications could include 'D' units. In the case of individuals holding 'old style' qualifications, evidence of updated knowledge to the current qualifications must be obtained.
- Assessor has conducted at least two assessments during the past year.
- Verifiers have conducted verification activity at least twice during the past year.
- Assessors and Verifiers must comply with the occupational competence requirements of the relevant assessment strategy. This is through either achievement of the relevant occupational qualification or two of the following:
  - Proof of experience: CV and testimony from previous employer/partner company on activities and experience
  - Proof of Knowledge: a method statement related to the specific qualification role developed by the proposed Assessor
  - Proof of updating CPD: should show recent updating of practical and underpinning knowledge with, for example, a local company
  - Currently working within the industry
- Appropriate CPD is carried out, reflected on and evidence of this available to the EV/Awarding Body.

All licences specify which GQA qualifications a practitioner is licensed to assess/internally verify. GQA requires centres to record licence numbers against candidate details when claiming certificates and does not award qualifications to candidates unless they have been assessed and internally verified by personnel who are fully licensed against the relevant qualification.

GQA licences are renewed on an annual basis, provided that a GQA External Verifier is satisfied that practitioners continue to conduct their role satisfactorily. It is expected that a candidate Assessor/Internal Verifier/auditor achieves the relevant national qualification and becomes fully conversant with GQA procedures and standards within the life of the one year provisional licence.

A candidate Assessor/Internal Verifier/auditor licence can be upgraded to full status as soon as full licence criteria are satisfied.

Centres must retain on record, and make available to the GQA External Verifier, documentation (CV/job history) that clearly shows the related experience of all Assessors/Internal Verifiers/auditors.

GQA External Verifiers will develop an observation plan with Centre Coordinators/Internal Verifiers that will ensure each member of the assessment team will be regularly observed complying with qualification, approved centre and GQA requirements for delivery of qualifications.

Approved centre assessment team licences may only be authorised by a *fully* licenced GQA External Verifier.

## APPENDIX E – Tariff of Sanctions

This tariff of sanctions is for dealing with approved centres whose management, assessment and quality assurance systems fail to meet the approved centre criteria. Based directly upon the approved centre criteria the tariff is designed to ensure a transparent, fair and consistent response across GQA approved centres

Non-compliance	Sanction	Rationale
<p><b>1.1</b> Centre's aims, policies and assessment practices, and responsibilities of personnel are not clear or well understood by the assessment team</p> <p><b>1.2</b> Internal verification procedures and activities not clearly documented</p> <p><b>1.3</b> Communication within the assessment team and with the awarding body is ineffective</p> <p><b>1.4</b> Equipment and accommodation do not comply with health and safety acts</p> <p><b>1.5</b> Insufficient qualified assessors</p> <p><b>1.6</b> Assessors/internal verifiers do not have adequate development plans</p> <p><b>1.7</b> Candidates are not aware of their rights and responsibilities, e.g. no appeals procedure for candidates</p> <p><b>1.8</b> There is inadequate assessment planning with candidates</p> <p><b>1.9</b> Queries are not resolved or recorded</p> <p><b>1.10</b> Range of assessment methods is insufficient to encourage access</p> <p><b>1.11</b> Changes to personnel of the assessment and verification team are not notified to the awarding body</p> <p><b>1.12</b> Unit certification is not made available to candidates</p> <p><b>1.13</b> There is inadequate monitoring or review of procedures</p>	<p><b>Level 1</b></p> <p>Entry in action plan</p>	<p>Non-compliance with approved centre criteria but no threat to the integrity of assessment decisions</p>
<p><b>2.1</b> Assessors have insufficient time, resources or authority to perform their role</p> <p><b>2.2</b> Decisions of unqualified Assessors have not been authorised by a qualified Assessor</p> <p><b>2.3</b> Assessment decisions are not consistent</p> <p><b>2.4</b> Insufficient qualified Internal Verifiers</p> <p><b>2.5</b> Decisions of unqualified Internal Verifier have not been authorised by qualified Internal Verifier</p> <p><b>2.6</b> Records are insufficient to allow audit of assessment</p> <p><b>2.7</b> Previously agreed corrective measures relating to a Level 1 sanction are not implemented</p>	<p><b>Level 2</b></p> <p>Removal of direct claims status/ certificates between visits</p>	<p>Close scrutiny of the integrity of assessment decisions required</p>
<p><b>3A.1</b> Assessment process disadvantages candidates</p> <p><b>3A.2</b> Assessment decisions are unfair</p> <p><b>3B.1</b> No qualified Internal Verifier</p> <p><b>3B.2</b> Assessment does not meet national standards</p> <p><b>3B.3</b> The centre fails to provide access to requested records, information, candidates and staff</p> <p><b>3B.4</b> Assessed evidence is not the authentic work of candidates</p> <p><b>3B.5</b> Records of assessment show serious anomalies</p> <p><b>3B.6</b> Certification claims made before all the requirements of assessment are satisfied</p> <p><b>3B.7</b> Previously agreed corrective measures relating to a Level 2 sanction are not implemented</p> <p><b>3C.1</b> Non-compliance with the GQA terms of business or subsequently agreed payment plans</p>	<p><b>Level 3A/3B/3C</b></p> <p>Suspension of Registration/ Certification</p>	<p>3A – threat to candidates</p> <p>3B – loss of the integrity of assessment decisions – danger of invalid claims for certification</p> <p>3C – financial viability</p>

<b>Non-compliance</b>	<b>Sanction</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
<p><b>4.1</b> Significant faults in the management and quality assurance of the qualification which result in an ongoing failure to meet the core requirements for the conduct of assessment.</p> <p><b>4.2</b> Previously agreed corrective measures relating to a Level 3 noncompliance have not been implemented</p>	<p><b>Level 4</b></p> <p>Withdrawal of centre approval for specific NVQs/SVQs</p>	<p>Irretrievable breakdown in management and quality assurance of specific GQA qualifications</p>
<p><b>5.1</b> Significant faults in the management and quality assurance of all qualification</p> <p><b>5.2</b> Previously agreed corrective measures relating to a Level 4 sanction have not been implemented</p>	<p><b>Level 5</b></p> <p>Withdrawal of centre approval for all GQA Qualifications</p>	<p>Irretrievable breakdown in management and quality</p>

### **Guidance on interpretation**

The above sanctions represent a minimum tariff of response to identified non-compliances, but there may be circumstances in which GQA may judge that a higher level of tariff is appropriate and justified.

### **Combinations**

A combination of non-compliances at a particular tariff might call for a more serious response. A judgement should be made against the rationale of the sanction. Thus a combination of infringements at tariff 2 could be such as to give rise to a loss of integrity of assessment decisions and thus merit a response at tariff 3.

### **Persistence**

A failure to implement action plan requests at tariff level 1 should invoke a tariff level 2 record. Similarly a failure to rectify faults that have given rise to a level 2 sanction must invoke a tariff level 3 record.

### **Recurrence**

A centre may temporarily rectify non-compliances in response to action plans (or higher level sanctions) only to display the same weakness again at a later date. GQA will take into account the track record of a centre in considering whether to impose a higher level sanction.

### **Malpractice**

Where the circumstances and nature of non-compliance indicate that fraudulence is involved, the procedures for dealing with malpractice will be invoked.

**GQA centres** should familiarise themselves with the approved centre criteria and the tariff of sanctions. GQA External Verifiers monitor centres against the approved centre criteria and will recommend sanctions to GQA if required.

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## APPENDIX F – Frequently Asked Questions

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### *How long does it take to gain approval?*

This depends on how much needs to be done for a potential centre to satisfy the Approved Centre Criteria and how quickly any necessary measures are implemented. A GQA External Verifier will visit a potential centre to monitor approval criteria and this usually takes one day. The initial visit with a GQA EV can be arranged as soon as requested by the potential centre and the relevant documentation has been received at GQA.

### *What happens if we don't meet all the approval criteria during a centre approval visit?*

Your External Verifier will advise you on future action and will need to visit you again to grant approval.

It is not expected that a new centre will fully satisfy all criteria. For example, candidate-Assessors may have been identified but not yet trained and qualified. Where a centre does not fully meet requirements, the External Verifier can approve the centre and provide an agreed action plan that will be monitored. An initial visit may be regarded as a support visit for the potential centre to help staff prepare a formal application.

### *How long does approval last?*

Centre approval is subject to continued satisfactory External Verifier reports.

### *What if a candidate disagrees with a decision made by an assessor?*

The centre must implement its appeals procedures. GQA External Verifier can advise on this. All approved centres must have formal appeals procedures in place and they must be documented and promoted to candidates.

### *Are GQA approved centres audited by any other organisations?*

Yes. The Regulatory Bodies audit GQA and this involves visits to a random selection of GQA approved centres. These visits can occur at short notice – this is to minimise the risk of unsubstantiated claims for GQA qualification certificates. Centres in receipt of government funding to deliver GQA qualifications may also be subject to audits by the funding organisations.

### *Does GQA charge for its services?*

Yes. A current price list can be provided on request or can be accessed at GQA's web site. GQA External Verifier can also forecast estimated costs involved in the delivery of GQA qualifications and provide tailored estimates as required.

### *What is the ten week rule?*

A centre cannot claim certificates for candidates who have been registered for less than ten weeks with GQA (within ten weeks of the confirmed GQA database registration date). This is to help combat any unsubstantiated claims for certification.

### *What documentation is available from GQA?*

GQA has a variety of literature available to help centres operate smoothly. As this is regularly updated, GQA publishes information about its documentation on its web site to ensure that GQA stakeholders can access current and valid information. Support materials are available for centres, Assessors and Internal Verifiers.

### *Are the assessment decisions of candidate-Assessors/provisionally licenced Assessors valid?*

They are valid only as long as they are checked, authenticated and authorised by an Assessor who is recognised and fully licenced by GQA. Internal Verifiers must sample an increased ratio of assessment decisions by candidate-Assessors and must be responsible, and accountable, for arranging the checking and authorisation process.

The same applies for candidate-Internal Verifiers: all centres must ensure that the decisions of candidate-Internal Verifiers/provisionally licenced Internal Verifiers are checked, authenticated and authorised by an Internal Verifier who is recognised and fully licenced by GQA.

## NOTES

## NOTES



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