FDQ Centre Handbook

Contents

Introduction

FDQ Limited (hereafter referred to as FDQ) is a leading Awarding Organisation (AO) and End-point Assessment Organisation (EPAO) specialising in food and drink supply chain qualifications and End-point Assessment Services. FDQ is a wholly owned subsidiary to the Food and Drink Training and Education Council (FTC) a skills Charity established in 2001.

This Handbook is specific to our role as an Awarding Organisation. We have powers to develop and award vocational qualifications, and are recognised and regulated by the following qualifications regulators:

• Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) in England

• Qualifications Wales (QW) in Wales

• Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) in Northern Ireland

In our role as an End-point Assessment Organisation we are recognised by the following organisations:

- Institute for Apprentices and Technical Education (Ifate)
- Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

We also work closely with a range of professional, trade and membership bodies across the food industry.

Meeting skills needs

Our team of qualification and industry experts develop, quality assure and award qualifications to meet the skills needs of the food and drink industry. FDQ is committed to working in partnership with both food businesses and training providers, to drive up skill levels of those working in the industry, as well as those intending to enter the industry. The result of this commitment is increased productivity, innovation and profitability across the food supply chain.

We are always happy to hear from food sector and education and training businesses interested in working with us; either to explain how our products can help you to develop your learners, staff and business or discuss your ideas for developing new products. We offer a range of accreditation; technical and End-point Assessment services so please do not hesitate to contact our friendly team.

Tel: 0113 859 1266

General email: fdq@fdq.or.uk

Supply chain portfolio

The FDQ portfolio of qualifications is very broad and covers the food supply chain. It includes:

- Proficiency or competence-based qualifications for a wide range of food industry skills and related areas like management and cleaning
- Professional qualifications in craft areas like bakery and butchery
- Compliance qualifications in areas like food safety, HACCP and health and safety
- Qualifications mandated in apprenticeship Standards (in England)
- EPA qualifications, like the FDQ End-point Assessment for Fishmonger ST0194
- Professional Standard qualifications (which may be mandatory for specific occupational roles) in areas like Meat Inspection and Welfare of Animals at Time of Killing (WATOK)

Further details about our qualifications are available at www.fdq.org.uk

FDQ Limited is a company limited by guarantee without share capital. FDQ is a wholly owned subsidiary of The Food and Drink Training and Education Council Ltd (ftc). The council also owns the Institute of Meat (IoM) and the Meat Training Council (MTC) and has partnership arrangements for collaboration with a wide range of employers, trade and professional organisations across the food and drink industry.

FDQ Centre Handbook copyright

FDQ holds the copyright to this Centre Handbook and all of its contents. It may not be copied, reproduced or distributed without prior written consent.

Copyright exemptions

Centres with current approval to offer FDQ qualifications and their learners registered for FDQ qualifications, are permitted to copy this document without charge. Centres are permitted to hold a PDF version of this handbook on their internal communications systems or intranets subject to the following:

- our handbook can be copied in part or in whole by centres for the teaching, learning, assessment and administration of registered learners, working towards FDQ qualifications

- our handbook can be copied in part or in whole by registered learners for their personal use when working towards FDQ qualifications.

FDQ equality of opportunity and diversity policy

FDQ fully supports the principles of equal opportunity and diversity and is committed to promoting these principles in all its activities and in its published materials. In partnership with its centres FDQ will ensure that all of its learners have equal and open access to FDQ assessments and qualifications.

Our equality and diversity policy is available at www.fdq.org.uk and within FDQAwards, which is the secure centre management system for FDQ approved centres.

FDQ publications

The information contained in this handbook is correct at the time of publication. FDQ does not accept liability for loss or damage arising from the use of information in this handbook.

FDQ publications are subject to change to comply with any changes to regulatory requirements and in the interest of continuous improvement. Consequently, FDQ reserves the right to make amendments to update and improve its publications from time to time. The version number and date of FDQ publications are noted in the document footer.

FDQ publications specifically for our approved centres are available from our secure centre management system FDQAwards. FDQ advises the Main Centre Contact to obtain, read and share the following publications with centre staff as applicable to their role:

- User Guide to FDQAssess (FDQAssess is our secure web-based examination platform)
- FDQAwards User Guide (FDQAwards is our secure web-based centre management system)
- FDQ Guide to Invigilation
- FDQ Centre Agreement

Public facing documents (such as polices and qualification specifications) are available from our website www.fdq.org.uk.

Document history

This is version v12 of FDQ's Centre Handbook issued in April 2023. This document replaces all previous versions. The Centre Handbook is subject to regular revision and is maintained and version controlled electronically.

The change log summarises changes to the document from January 2019 onwards. Previous changes were recorded separately and are held by the Quality and Operational Assurance Director.

Section	Change
January 2019 General amends	• Added reference to enforceable centre agreement signed by authorised and accountable person at FDQ centre • Added when signing the enforceable centre agreement the centre commits to FDQ and regulatory requirements etc • Added links to FDQ policies published on the FDQ website rather than including the full version in this document • Emphasised, in light of recent amends to GDPR legislation: centre's agreement to provide data to support FDQ and regulatory requirements including EQA, moderation etc and FDQ's responsibility to keep in contact with, and inform centres, as required.
Centre policies	Added (appendix 5) a list of the policies that centres should have in place and make available at EQA, if requested.
Jan 2021	• Change in Branding

Date	Version	Section	Change
2/08/2021	10	All	General updates: new FDQ contact numbers, job titles, emails, document date/version, website links New introductory page.
		3.1 & 6.6	Added centre requirement to accept EQA reports within 5 days
		3.4	New section on Minimum Spend Requirements
		4	Expanded Advice list to include appeals/complaints
		5.2 & 8.4	Updated to include invigilation
		5.3 & 6	Updated to note centre responsibility for withdrawing learners
		6.5	New section on Centre Assessed Standard Scrutiny (CASS) requirements
		6.6	Added note of cancellation fee
		6.8	New section on Invigilation requirements
		6.9	Updated to include CASS
		Appx 4	Form updated
18/08/2021	10	6.3.3	Added unannounced visit statement

13/04/2023	12	All	General updates: FDQ job titles, web links, references to FDQ tutorials, section numbering
		3.4	Updated Minimum Spend statement
		5.1	New section on requirements for staff delivering, assessing and providing IQA for FDQ's qualifications
		5.3	Amended inactive centre information
		6.2	Updated transfer and backfill section Added new information about requests for registration and certification due to learner name change.
		6.5	Expanded requirements for monitoring and maintaining learner records
		6.9	Updated JCQ web address

Section 1: Using this centre handbook

Purpose

The purpose of this centre handbook is to ensure that our approved centres

- understand and adhere to FDQ's policies and procedures
- promote and uphold high standards in the provision of FDQ qualifications, through quality, accuracy, fairness and consistency in the awarding process.

This centre handbook provides our centres with a comprehensive overview of policies, procedures and customer service arrangements for the provision of FDQ qualifications. It provides links to the full policies on FDQ's website, which centres must access, read and adhere to www.fdq.org.uk/fdqpolicies

The handbook sets out the principles for quality assurance and control requirements, which centres must implement and embed, as the basis for securing high, fair, reliable and compliant standards in qualification provision. Centres must read, understand and commit to the shared values which are outlined in this centre handbook and the relevant qualification handbooks, which provide the detailed requirements for the provision of specific qualifications.

FDQ's enforceable centre agreement, which is signed by an authorised and accountable member of staff at the centre, confirms this commitment. Appendix 5 details the policies all FDQ Approved Centres should have in place; the policies should be up to date and their operational application ensured.

This centre handbook ensures that all requirements from the regulatory authorities are covered. These include: The Statutory Regulation of External Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland; the regulatory arrangements for Qualifications Frameworks and current awarding General Conditions of Recognition.

Availability to centre staff

This centre handbook is available free of charge to all FDQ approved centres, upon confirmation of their centre approval. It can be downloaded from the FDQAwards - FDQ's secure centre management system. FDQAwards is accessed via www.fdq.org.uk. See Section 2 for details about FDQAwards.

The handbook should be made available to all centre staff involved in providing FDQ qualifications. This includes management and administrative staff, tutors, trainers, invigilators, examiners, assessors and internal quality assurance staff. Where centres have active satellite sites, staff at all sites must also be provided with a copy of this centre handbook.

All staff (at main and satellite sites) must read, understand and commit to the shared values in the centre handbook, so that they properly discharge their responsibilities in the provision of FDQ qualifications.

Centres are responsible for maintaining access to the most up to date version of this centre handbook, and the policies it provides links to on the FDQ website, for all relevant centre staff. The contents of the centre handbook are essential to the compliant and successful provision of FDQ qualifications.

FDQ welcomes feedback from centres on the use and improvement of this centre handbook. A feedback form is located at **appendix 1.**

Section 2: FDQ contacts

FDQ contacts	
General queries	Tel: 0113 859 1266 General email: fdq@fdq.or.uk
FDQ head office contact details	Tel: 0113 859 1266 General email: fdq@fdq.org.uk Accounts email: accounts@fdq.org.uk
FDQ address	FDQ Pure Offices 4100 Park Approach Thorpe Park Leeds LS15 8GB
Website	www.fdq.org.uk
Secure centre management system for FDQ - FDQAwards	To access FDQAwards visit www.fdq.org.uk Click on the blue centre login button in the top right of the screen. This will take you to the log in page.

FDQAwards: FDQ's centre management system

FDQAwards is the name of FDQ's secure centre management system. FDQAwards is the means by which centres manage all centre activity and FDQ learners. At the time of centre approval, the main centre contact is provided with a username/password to access FDQAwards. The centre contact must nominate at least one other named FDQAwards user in their centre and provide them with password access.

To access FDQAwards the centre contact should visit www.fdq.org.uk and click on the centre login button. This will take them to a login screen.

FDQAwards contains the essential functionality to manage FDQ centre activity and learners including:

- learner registration and certification

- assessors and internal quality assurers

- satellite sites

- external quality assurance activities

- centre and qualification quality rating

- qualification registration and certification fees

- download centre handbook and core policy documentation

- access to examinations, mark schemes and qualification handbooks

- invoice and certificate pdf store.

FDQ Tutorial Videos provide help with using FDQAwards. Visit the landing page of our website www.fdq.org.uk and scroll down to the videos.

Password protected users of FDQAwards

The main centre contact can provide password access to other FDQAwards users in their centre via FDQAwards. The main centre contact may provide passwords and access to FDQAwards to several members of staff if required to suit level of activity within the centre.

FDQAwards Summary of Access for centre staff	
Role	Access
Main centre contact	Has access to all functionality in FDQAwards with the exception of examinations and this user has unique access to the external quality assurance section of the system.
FDQAwards user	Access to all functionality with the exception of access to examinations and external quality assurance.
FDQAwards examination reader	One person in each centre will be nominated as Examination Reader, with authority to access password protected documentation downloads. Examinations and mark schemes can be downloaded from FDQAwards for relevant qualifications.

Section 3: FDQ's Code of Conduct

FDQ's mission is to drive excellence through qualifications in the food supply chain. This is done by challenging what is possible in the qualifications arena and delivering pioneering, effective and quality products and services. FDQ's code of conduct is based upon strong values; these values underpin FDQ's mission.

3.1 Shared values

We place our values at the heart of our service and expect our centres to share and sign the Centre Agreement to commit to these values as we work in partnership together. The FDQ statement of customer service sets out the service standards we have set for ourselves: please see Section 4 for details.

FDQ External Quality Assurance Consultant (EQAC) Team

Our carefully recruited team of EQACs

- comply with the FDQ statement of customer service and this code of conduct
- provide good practice service standards compliant with the EQAC handbook
- maintain high standards of professional conduct and courtesy in all aspects of work with FDQ and with centres.

FDQ centres

Centres will ensure that all staff involved in delivery of FDQ's qualifications

- comply with this code of conduct in all work with FDQ and our EQACs
- nominate a named main centre contact and an alternate named centre contact to FDQ
- maintain high standards of professional conduct and courtesy in all communications and work with FDQ
- uphold standards in qualification provision
- use FDQAwards effectively to manage centre and learner activity
- comply with FDQ and regulatory requirements.

FDQ centre conduct for external quality assurance

Centres will

- maintain good relationships and communication to ensure quality assurance activities can be carried out effectively

- facilitate and support open access, observation of practice, interviewing, sampling and other monitoring activities

- provide timely and representative evidence that supports accurate reporting, and which minimises bureaucracy and disruption

- take necessary action to provide FDQ representatives with a healthy and safe environment in centres

- raise with FDQ any concerns about activity, reporting or recommendations professionally and promptly

- ensure that the authorised person reads, signs and accepts EQAC reports in accordance with requirements set out in the centre agreement.

Centre failure to adhere to this code of conduct may affect a centre's quality rating: see section 6 and appendix 2.

3.2 Equality of opportunity and diversity policy

FDQ fully supports the principles of equal opportunity and diversity and is committed to promoting these principles in all its activities and in its published materials. In partnership with its centres, FDQ will ensure that all its learners have equal and open access to FDQ qualifications. This policy universally covers equality and diversity in:

- the development of units, qualifications, learning materials, internal/external quality assurance, development workshops

- the fair treatment, assessment and achievement of learners in the provision of FDQ qualifications.

Centres are required to provide FDQ with a copy of their own equality and diversity policy and ensure that any changes to this policy are notified to FDQ. If a centre is found not to have implemented its own equality and diversity policy or if equality issues arise at centres, the matter will be discussed during quality assurance visits and rectified via agreed actions. If necessary, FDQ will enforce the relevant stages of its Sanctions Policy.

FDQ's Equality and Diversity policy, is available in the policies section of our website: www.fdq.org.uk.

3.3 Data protection

FDQ is required to manage records, data and information to fulfil and comply with its duties as a regulated Awarding Organisation (AO). FDQ is required to collect and maintain data from its centres to fulfil these duties and to share this information with regulators and funding authorities. Signing the enforceable centre agreement commits the centre to providing the data, information and records that FDQ needs to discharge its duties. In most cases, FDQ will review centre data, information and records during routine and scheduled external quality assurance monitoring and moderation activities.

However, in some cases, FDQ and/or regulatory authorities may require access to centre premises, records, information and data at other unscheduled (and unannounced) intervals, which the centre must consent to.

FDQ collects, manages and stores all records, data and information in accordance with the principles set out in the Data Protection Act (1998) and General Data Protection Regulation (2018). We process data fairly and lawfully and have policies and procedures in place to secure protect personal data, and to deal with any data breaches.

FDQ requires centres to provide personal data from staff (eg CVs and occupational competence records) and learners (eg name, date of birth, gender, assessment progress records). When such personal information is provided, FDQ will only use this confidentially and in our role as an AO and EPAO. See Section 6.1 for further details.

FDQ undertakes to provide its centres with information and updates (eg newsletters and policies on website) required to ensure the effective operation of its qualifications, assessment services and products. The updates may also include news of changes imposed by regulatory or funding authorities. Signing the centre agreement, confirms that the centre's consent for FDQ to provide such information and occasional promotional/marketing materials.

FDQ is a registered organisation with the Information Commissioner's Office.

3.4 Minimum Spend Requirement

FDQ requires all of its centres to meet our annual minimum spend requirement (MSR) threshold. The MSR ensures FDQ can continue to provide dedicated quality assurance services to all of our centres. Where centres fail to meet the minimum threshold an annual top-up invoice will be issued to cover the cost of ongoing centre support.

The MSR is calculated from fees paid to FDQ in our financial year and includes purchases such as qualification registrations, transfers, reprints. The centre can also request their annual EQA visit fee can be charged towards the MSR.

Further details of the annual MSR are set out in the enforceable centre agreement.

Section 4: Statement of customer service

The FDQ statement of customer service sets out the service standards, which are in place. FDQ will work effectively to achieve and maintain these standards in all aspects of work with approved centres. Every effort will be made to respond to and resolve enquiries/ issues promptly, and to provide a high standard of professional and courteous service.

Service standards to centres

1. Enquiries:

*   verbal enquiries will be responded to within 2 working days

*   email enquiries will be responded to within 2 working days

*   letter enquiries will be responded to within 10 working days

*   FDQ aims to resolve all enquiries within 5 working days.

2. Approval applications:

*   qualification approval applications for FDQ centres which provide the necessary supporting documentary evidence will be processed within 10 working days.

3. Centre details, learner registrations and certification:

*   centre details can be uploaded and amended by accessing FDQAwards

*   learner registrations, amendments, leavers, transfers and claims for certification can be made by accessing FDQAwards

*   certificate claims processed and despatched within 10 working days, where centres have green or double amber qualification quality rating.

4. External quality assurance (EQA):

- confirmation of centre visit/activity provided within 25 working days of activity

- plan of visit/activity provided within 15 days of activity

- EQA report sent to centre within 10 working days of visit/activity for acceptance or rejection within 5 working days by centre.

Advice, support and guidance contacts for centres

Centres may contact

- FDQ Quality and Operational Assurance Director for issues concerning approval applications, acceptance of EQA reports and centre monitoring, appeals and complaints by email to fdq@fdq.org.uk

- FDQ EQAC for issues concerning external quality assurance monitoring, actions and reporting using FDQAwards or relevant EQAC email address

- FDQ Quality Team at the head office for issues concerning approval status, registrations, certification, account enquiries, newsletter, website and use of FDQAwards by email to fdq@fdq.org.uk

4.1 Enquiry policy and procedures for centres and learners

Verbal, written or email enquiries from centres and learners are welcomed. These should be directed in the first instance via either the general FDQ email address fdq@fdq.org.uk or the main head office number: 0113 859 1266.

- telephone enquiries will be answered promptly and then directed to the most appropriate FDQ contact

- email enquiries to fdq@fdq.org.uk will be directed to the most appropriate FDQ contact

- letters should be addressed to the Leeds head office (see section 2), they will then be directed to the most appropriate contact.

Some of the main reasons for a centre to make an enquiry to FDQ include:

- qualification approval enquiry regarding documentation or progress

- change of main centre contact

- external quality assurance report or action plan enquiry

- invoice or payment enquiry using the accounst@fdq.org.uk email

- information regarding the provision of a new qualification.

Some of the main reasons for a learner to make an enquiry to FDQ include:

- confirmation of registration or claim for certification

- order replacement certificates.

The enquiry procedures are monitored on an on-going basis in conjunction with the FDQ statement of customer service.

Should any response or proposed resolution to an enquiry be considered unsatisfactory or fall short of expected standards in any way, then the matter should be raised verbally in the first instance with the FDQ Quality and Operational Assurance Director. Where the matter is unable to be satisfactorily resolved then a formal written complaint may be made. Should a centre wish to make a formal complaint, they should follow the complaints policy available in the policies section of FDQ's website www.fdq.org.uk.

4.2 Complaints policy and procedures

FDQ wishes to provide the highest levels of service to its customers. It aims to answer accurately and within published timescales any complaints received from users of its services as a regulated Awarding Organisation (AO). Complaints may also relate to its products including its qualifications and assessment materials.

FDQ has established and maintains and has published a robust policy and procedures for dealing with complaints. FDQ's Complaints policy, is available on its website: www.fdq.org.uk. The policy ensures:

- complaints are dealt with in a fair and timely manner

- the specific needs and interests of learners are considered and protected

- complainants are kept informed of progress

- complainants are notified of the outcome reached and, where appropriate, any further action that is to be taken

- complaints are monitored to identify trends and to ensure continuous improvement

- every endeavour is made to ensure compliance with relevant legislation and in particular the handling of sensitive data in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations (2018)

Section 5: Centre and qualification approval

5.1 Maintaining centre approval

Only organisations that FDQ confirms as 'approved centres' (hereafter centres) can offer FDQ qualifications. To gain and maintain approval, centres must demonstrate that they can meet and ensure ongoing compliance with FDQ's quality criteria and arrangements which ensure that FDQ qualifications can be provided to consistently high and compliant standards.

This includes complying with FDQ's requirements for staff teaching and assessing different types of FDQ qualifications set out in the following table. The table should be read in conjunction with the subject specific guidance published in our qualification handbooks.

Type of FDQ qualification	Assessor requirements	Internal Quality Assurer (IQA) requirements	Learning delivery staff requirements
Proficiency Designed to confirm workplace competence. Must be assessed in the workplace Eg FDQ Level 2 Diploma for Proficiency in Food Industry Team Leading (Wales)	• Must hold or be working towards a relevant workplace assessment qualification **and** • Have relevant and recent sector experience at the same or higher level than units they assess	• Hold, or be working towards, a relevant IQA qualification **and** • Ideally, have relevant and recent sector experience or sector qualification	• Teaching qualification as set by centre **and** • Relevant and recent sector experience **or** sector qualification
Professional Designed to confirm sector skills and knowledge. May be assessed in a learning environment. Eg FDQ Level 2 Certificate in Professional Bakery	• Must hold or be working towards a relevant vocational achievement assessment qualification **and** • Relevant sector experience **or** a relevant sector qualification at the same or higher level	• Hold, or be working towards, a relevant IQA qualification **and** • Ideally, have relevant and recent sector experience or sector qualification	• Teaching qualification as set by centre **and** • Relevant sector experience **or** a relevant sector qualification at the same or higher level than units they assess.

	than units they assess.		
Compliance Designed to assess sector knowledge in compliance subjects. May be assessed on or off the job. Eg FDQ Level 3 Award in HACCP for Food Manufacturing	• Have relevant experience for their centre role (eg assessing or marking written exam papers) • NB when assessment is via FDQAssess, and not conducted by centres staff do not need assessor experience or qualification	• Hold, or be working towards, a relevant IQA qualification	• Teaching qualification as set by centre **and** • Relevant sector experience **or** a relevant sector qualification at the same or higher level than units they assess **and** • Adhere to the requirements of FDQ's Guide to Invigilation.

Evidence of staff qualifications and experience

It is FDQ's policy to demonstrate that assessment for all of our qualifications is fit for purpose. FDQ expects, and supports our centres, to maintain the integrity, credibility and value of our qualifications and meet high standards in assessment practice. We expect all staff involved in the delivery of learning and assessment to hold suitable qualifications. New staff should complete the relevant qualification within one year of starting their assessor, IQA or teaching role.

Centres must provide evidence of staff qualifications (eg certificates) and experience (CVs) at centre approval and for External Quality Assurance. New Assessor details must be added to FDQAwards and centres must clarify which staff are in-training and who is fully qualified.

Examples of assessor qualifications

FDQ does not prescribe which assessment qualifications assessors must hold. There are a range of qualifications available that focus entirely on assessment such as and not limited to:

- Level 3 Award in Assessing Competence in the Work Environment

- Level 3 Award in Assessing Vocationally Related Achievement
- Level 3 Certificate in Assessing Vocational Achievement.

Centre staff may hold forerunner assessor qualifications such as the A1 Assessor Award and D33 Assessor: Assess candidate using different sources of evidence.

FDQ also recognise that many broader teaching and education courses, include principles and practice of assessment, and may be equivalent to the type of Assessor Awards listed above.

Examples of internal quality assurer (IQA) qualifications

FDQ does not prescribe which assessment qualifications IQAs must hold. There are a range of qualifications available that focus entirely on assessment such as and not limited to:

- Level 4 Award in Understanding the Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice (theory only)
- Level 4 Award in the Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice
- Level 4 Certificate in Leading the Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice.

Centre staff may hold forerunner assessor qualifications such as the V1 Internally Verify the Assessment Process Award and D34 Internally Verify the Assessment Process.

FDQ also recognise that many broader teaching and education courses, include principles and practice of assessment, and may be equivalent to the type of IQA Awards listed above.

Examples of teaching qualifications

FDQ does not prescribe which teaching qualifications a centre requires its delivery staff to hold. We recognise there are a wide range of teaching qualifications that centres may decide are appropriate for different teaching and learning delivery roles in centres such as not limited to:

- a postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE)
- Level 3 Award in Education and Training

- Level 5 Diploma in Education and Training

Centre staff may hold forerunner teaching qualifications such as.

- Level 3 Award in Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (PTLLs)
- Level 5 Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (DTLLs)

FDQ will take all reasonable steps to ensure that the interests of learners are protected and that the delivery and assessment of FDQ qualifications and/or units is undertaken in accordance with FDQ published centre approval criteria, the enforceable centre agreement, and other requirements relating to the delivery of individual qualifications and/or units.

Prior to gaining centre and qualification approval, centres are rigorously assessed to ensure their compliance with FDQ requirements. On achieving FDQ centre status, centres enter into a contract with FDQ regarding the provision of FDQ qualifications. The signed and enforceable centre agreement constitutes a contract between FDQ and the centre in the areas declared at signature. FDQ will ensure that arrangements in place between it and its centres are formalised in a written and enforceable centre agreement. The agreement must be signed by an accountable and authorised person at the centre.

FDQ continually monitors its centres against Centre Monitoring Criteria, to ensure they continue to comply with all FDQ requirements and in particular, those requirements that are set out in the centre/qualification approval agreements, and enforceable centre agreement. The Centre Monitoring Criteria are set out in appendix 3.

The outcome of any monitoring activity is an overall Centre Quality Rating (CQR), rated from 'very low' to 'high' based on the extent to which centres comply with the Centre Monitoring Criteria and in accordance with the Centre Quality Rating Tariff. The Centre Quality Rating Tariff is set out in appendix 2. The CQR is approved by FDQ based on External Quality Assurance reports and FDQAwards is updated accordingly. Depending on the CQR applied, different levels of controls and sanctions will be imposed on centres.

Within a centre, the delivery of each qualification is also performance monitored and given a Qualification Quality Rating (QQR). Through this means FDQ can apply differential sanctions within a centre depending on the performance of the centre in the delivery of each qualification. This rating allows each individual qualification's registration and certification rights to be controlled.

Where non-compliance issues have been identified as a result of monitoring activity, sanctions will be imposed on centres and/or specific qualifications within the centre. The level of sanction will be dependent on the CQR and/or the QQR and will be proportionate to the seriousness of the non-compliance, the risk it poses to the integrity of assessment and/or other aspects of qualification provision and any adverse effect it could have on learners. The details of the circumstances that will lead to a particular level of sanction are given in the Centre Quality Rating Tariff: see appendix 2.

Where a centre has attempted to rectify a fault leading to a sanction but has been unable to do so for reasons that can be justified, FDQ will take this into account when deciding whether to impose a higher-level sanction. Where a centre has temporarily rectified non-compliances, only to display the same non-compliances again at a later date, FDQ will take into account the track record of the centre in considering whether to impose a higher-level sanction.

FDQ reserves the right to request information and data and carry out unannounced visits to centres at any reasonable time.

Main centre contact and alternate contact

The main centre contact, as named in the centre approval application, is the single point of accountability and communication with FDQ. The contact must be familiar at all times with centre activity. If the centre contact is absent for any reason, a nominated second contact will be held accountable in their absence. If the main centre contact is absent for any extended period of time (eg maternity leave or holiday) the centre must inform FDQ of the

absence. The nominated second contact must deal with, and be accountable for, FDQ activity during the period of absence.

A separate contact can be named in respect of financial matters.

5.2 Qualification approval

Details of FDQ qualifications can be sourced from the Qualifications section of our website www.fdq.org.uk.

In addition to gaining centre approval, FDQ centres must apply for and gain approval for each FDQ qualification they wish to offer. Centre approval information also applies to each qualification the centre is approved to offer. Centres must demonstrate that they have the specific expertise and resources (human and physical) to meet each qualification's requirements including, where appropriate, the ability to offer examinations, invigilation, and provide suitable arrangement for the confidentiality and security of examination materials.

 The terms and conditions of the enforceable centre agreement, signed by an accountable and authorised person at time of centre approval, apply to all FDQ qualification approvals. The centre agreement will also apply to any qualification approvals the centre may apply to deliver in future.

The application forms and additional guidance (including fees) for qualification approval can be downloaded from FDQ's website: www.fdq.org.uk.

Centres must provide evidence of physical and human resources, satellite sites, CVs/CPD records and any other information set out in qualification handbook in support of any qualification approval application. This evidence can normally be provided by email/post to FDQ for a desktop review.

Qualification approval will either be considered as part of the centre approval process if applying for the first time or as a separate application where existing centres wish to offer

additional qualifications. Qualification approval applications from centres which provide the necessary documentary evidence will be processed within 2 weeks.

On achieving qualification approval, centres will receive a letter of confirmation from FDQ which will specify the:

- qualification(s) for which approval is granted
- name and contact details of the allocated EQAC, in the case where a new or additional EQAC is allocated.

The duration for which approval is granted is dependent upon the qualification accreditation period and is subject to satisfactory FDQ external quality assurance.

Centres can check their current approval for our qualifications by logging onto FDQAwards and checking the approved list of 'your qualifications'. FDQAwards also provides a visual indication of the current status (QQR) for registration and certification for the approved qualifications. This status aligns to the outcomes of a recent approval or external quality assurance activity report.

The assessment of FDQ learners must not be carried out until qualification approval has been granted and learners are registered onto an FDQ qualification or components of a qualification.

FDQ reserves the right to withdraw centre approval and/or qualification approval for reasons of

- debt, malpractice, maladministration or non-compliance with FDQ requirements
- non-compliance with qualification regulations
- any reason that may be detrimental to the on-going maintenance of authentic, reliable and valid qualifications or that may prejudice the name of FDQ.

5.3 Policy and procedures for inactive centres

The term 'inactive centre' means that a centre is no longer active in the provision of FDQ qualifications. A centre becomes inactive when it is no longer active in offering FDQ qualifications, i.e. the centre has ceased carrying out any assessment or internal quality assurance activity for registered learners and all previously registered learners have been certificated or withdrawn. A centre is deemed inactive two years after the last claim date for certification and where there are no other learners registered for FDQ qualification(s) within the centre.

The term inactive is removed from a centre when the centre re-commences the registration of learners with FDQ within a two-year period of inactivity. A centre may become inactive for any one of the following reasons:

- change of assessment/internal quality assurance staff
- qualification funding changes
- learners registered through an alternative centre
- ceased to provide FDQ qualifications.

FDQ requires its centres to withdraw inactive learners from FDQAwards to maintain accurate centre records. Where centres do not withdraw learners from qualifications, for example if learners have left learning and do not expect to achieve the qualification, the learner will be automatically be withdrawn at the certification expiry date.

A centre is therefore deemed inactive on the date following the last claim for certification where there are no other learners registered with the centre.

The following procedures will apply for up to two years from date of centre inactivity:

1. After 12 months FDQ contacts the centre to inform centre staff of the centre's status and gauge intelligence, offer help and support to recommence qualification provision.

2. By agreement with the centre, and if appropriate, low level EQAC contact will be maintained with an inactive centre to establish any likelihood of future activity. The EQAC, on behalf of FDQ, will offer the centre support to re-commence qualification provision and inform the FDQ Chief Executive of any potential need for support.

3. Where the EQAC has been unsuccessful in liaising with a centre, then FDQ staff will follow up to ascertain information about the centre's planned activity.

4. Where an inactive centre has indicated that they plan to re-commence qualification provision then centre status will remain inactive, and they will be kept up to date with FDQ communications and access to FDQAwards for up to two years.

5. After eighteen months of inactivity the centre will default to red CQR and QQRs.

6. If an inactive centre confirms they have no intention of continuing to provide FDQ qualifications, then centre approval can be mutually withdrawn and communication and access to FDQAwards will cease.

7. If after two full years, a centre continues to be inactive they will be advised that their centre approval status will be withdrawn. If the inactive centre advises within 5 working days that they will be re-commencing activity within one month, then inactive centre approval status may be extended for this period.

Where an inactive centre approval status is withdrawn, the centre will be required to submit an application for both centre and qualification approval should it wish to re-commence FDQ qualification provision. The withdrawn centre will be eligible for the normal levels of FDQ assistance in the approval application process.

5.4 Withdrawal of FDQ centres from centre and/or qualification approval

Prior to gaining approval to become a FDQ centre, as part of the approval process, centres must provide FDQ with their own policy for withdrawing from centre approval or delivering a qualification. The policy should document the steps to be taken, by the centre, if they intend to withdraw from FDQ centre and/or qualification approval. The centre policy should ensure learners are adequately protected if the centre takes the decision to withdraw from centre and/or qualification approval.

To protect the interests of learners, centres should have disaster recovery and business continuity plans in place – this is a requirement of the enforceable centre agreement.

If a centre chooses to withdraw or is forced to withdraw from centre and/or qualification approval it must inform FDQ as soon as possible. FDQ will contact the centre and discuss the proposed withdrawal to ensure that learners are protected. The adequacy with which registered learners are protected is determined by FDQ and appropriate action will be taken to support learners in the achievement of their qualification.

In the event of a planned or unplanned withdrawal from centre and/or qualification approval the centre must inform learners and stakeholders (eg employers, assessors, etc).

FDQ must be informed and provided with the withdrawal plan that includes following information:

- reason for withdrawal
- number of learners affected and how their interests will be protected during and after the withdrawal process
- timelines for withdrawal, including dates for claiming final certificates
- any risks associated with the withdrawal and how they will be mitigated.

If a centre decides to withdraw completely from centre approval, FDQ will remove access to FDQAwards where no learners are affected. This action disables any access to the password-protected areas of FDQAwards, specifically disabling registration of new learners on any previously approved qualification.

If a centre decides to withdraw from individual qualifications, the qualifications will be removed from FDQAwards where no learners are affected. This action prevents the registration of learners on the specific withdrawn qualifications and access to additional information including qualification handbooks.

5.5 Centre support services

FDQ's secure centre management system FDQAwards, is accessible using a username and password provided to the main centre contact at time of centre approval. Once a centre has access, additional authorised users can be identified and provided with access by the main

centre contact, as outlined in section 2. Essentially the system provides a platform for centres to manage their business with FDQ including:

- registration of learners on qualifications or qualification components

- making a name change for registered learners

- withdrawal of learners from registration as leavers

- transfer of learners to alternative qualifications

- claiming certificates and replacement certificates

- updating centre details e.g. contacts, assessors, IQAs, satellites.

FDQ staff provide support to centres in the use of FDQAwards. Centres may also refer to the FDQAwards User Guide and the FDQ Tutorial videos on our website.

FDQ provides a range of support services to centres, these include:

- website access to qualification information and downloadable documentation

- FDQ Tutorial videos on our website which cover a range of topics

- qualification handbooks

- pro-forma examples of assessment documentation

- pro-forma examples of internal quality assurance documentation

- regular e-newsletters for centre contacts

- learning support material for certain qualifications

- development workshops and conferences

- business and consultancy support services.

Details of many of these services are available at www.fdq.org.uk or referred to in our regular e-newsletter.

Please contact FDQ to discuss your specific development, business or consultancy needs.

5.6 Feedback to FDQ

Centres are encouraged to provide feedback (positive or negative) to FDQ on any issue of concern in order that the necessary improvements to service standards and products can be identified.

Feedback can be provided by:

- telephone 0113 8591266

- email at fdq@fdq.org.uk

- contact with EQACs during EQA activity

- evaluation feedback at workshops or conference events

- our annual customer survey review.

Feedback from centres is especially welcomed in the following areas:

- code of conduct and service standards

- communication

- IT services and support

- FDQAwards, FDQ's centre management system

- external quality assurance arrangements

- qualification design, development and review (including content, fitness for purpose and assessment)

- documentation (including content, fitness for purpose and usability)

- our website.

SECTION 6 Centre quality assurance

Quality assurance of centres is at the heart of FDQ operations and is designed to ensure that all centres consistently meet FDQ's qualification provision requirements. In order for quality assurance to be effective and relevant to the range of situations in which FDQ qualifications are provided, fit-for-purpose monitoring, evaluation, reporting, improvement and support is applied. The focus of this activity is on the quality, consistency and integrity of centres to provide FDQ qualifications. Protecting the learner and the maintenance of standards within qualifications is central. The completion of the centre approval and qualification approval application forms and the enforceable centre agreement, constitute contractual consent to centre quality assurance requirements.

6.1 FDQ approved centre quality assurance requirements:

1. Centres must keep FDQ updated with any changes to the details declared in the original centre approval or qualification approval applications e.g. the centre name and location details, centre contact name and details, staff and their CV/CPD records, facilities changes, satellite sites, partnership arrangements, use of foreign languages. Most of these updates are managed by via the FDQ secure centre management system, FDQAwards.

2. Centres are required to:
   - manage qualification provision effectively and maintain an internal quality assurance system that standardises practice and supports innovation
   - monitor and support the quality, consistency, reliability, authenticity and integrity of assessment practice and judgements in the centre including any satellite sites
   - regularly review management and internal quality arrangements to drive improvements in qualification provision.

3. Centres must permit FDQ and/or the relevant regulatory authority open access to FDQ qualification provision at the centre in its entirety, for the purpose of monitoring and sampling management, internal quality assurance, assessment and related practices.

At approval, and in the centre agreement, FDQ recognises a centre's shared commitment to FDQ values and to meeting high standards in qualification provision. Where monitoring shows these standards are not maintained or where any of the requirements above are not met, non-compliance will be identified in the Centre Quality Rating. This may result in suspending a centre's right to registration and/or certification depending upon the severity the non-compliance, impact on the integrity of the centre and risks posed to learner achievement. FDQ will take action appropriate to the non-compliance and set an action and target for rectification.

Any centre that does not respond to or rectify actions to address non-compliance may have centre/qualification approval withdrawn. In this situation FDQ is under regulatory obligation to inform the relevant regulatory authority. Any centre found to be making deliberately inaccurate or misleading claims or statements, either in approvals or in centre practice will be seriously sanctioned. In these circumstances FDQ reserves the right to take any action deemed appropriate.

6.2 Requirements for records, information and data

Centres must maintain accurate records and retain up to date information and data regarding qualification provision. Records, information and data must be maintained and securely stored in accordance with data protection legislation.

FDQ will sample records, information and data during scheduled monitoring activity. In addition, FDQ or regulatory authorities may require access to centre premises, records, information and data at other unscheduled intervals on request. Centres agree to permit such access by signing the enforceable centre agreement.

The centre quality rating of a centre will be adversely affected where adequate/auditable records cannot be maintained or provided and cannot substantiate claims for certification made on behalf of learners. Centres must retain adequate assessment and internal quality assurance records for a minimum of three years after learner certification. It is a regulatory requirement to make these records available to FDQ and/or the relevant regulatory or funding authority on request.

The auditable records, information and data:

1. For administration, records will include the:

    - registered learner's full name, address and date of birth and gender

    - confirmation of the learner's identity (eg by passport or driving licence)

    - details of the units/qualifications they are registered for

    - any previous FDQ registration number for learners

    - Unique Learner Number (ULN) as applicable

    - satellite site that the learner is working in (if appropriate)

    - enrolment or starting date with the centre

    - learner registration date and number

    - learner's internal quality assurer(s) and assessor(s) names

    - claims for certificates.

FDQ is committed to ensuring all learners are registered / certificated reflecting their chosen name. However, if a learner is registered using a name that does not appear on their official documentation (eg passport / driving licence) it is important that the learner is made aware of possible issues that may arise if the registered name differs from the official / documented name. If there are differences in the registered and documented name, this may cause issues for learners proving authenticity when sitting exams or providing copies of certificates when applying for jobs or FE/HE courses. FDQ advises centres to discuss the issues with learners before making a decision to use a name that is not on their official documents.

FDQ will support registration / certification decisions made by learners and their centre.

2. For learner progress and assessment, records will include:

   - tracking of learner progress and achievement

   - who assessed what, when and with what assessment methods

   - assessment judgements/decisions and signatures confirming authenticity

   - location of records and any supporting evidence.

3. For internal quality assurance, records will include:

   - sampling strategy, rationale and plan

   - who quality assured what, when and with what methods

   - internal quality assurer standardisation activity and actions

   - assessor support and feedback to learners

   - assessor and internal quality assurer CVs, CPD activity and records

   - learner complaints and appeals

   - details of reasonable adjustments and special consideration requests

6.3 Unique Learner Numbers

Learners should be provided with a Unique Learner Number (ULN), obtained by centres on behalf of the learners in the UK. The ULN is a 10-digit identifier which is applied to the Personal Learning Record of anyone over the age of 14 involved in education or training in England, Wales or Northern Ireland. Each ULN is issued and held by the Learning Records Service (LRS). The LRS uses the number to index each learner's identity details and qualifications, building towards an accurate record of achievement within the Personal Learning Record (PLR).

Mandatory requirements for ULNs

The mandatory requirement to have a ULN applies to all publicly funded learners in England achieving FDQ qualifications. At time of learner registration on FDQAwards and again at time of a claim for certification, a centre will be asked to declare if any learners have been publicly funded in England. Those learners who are declared as being publicly funded in England for

the achievement of an FDQ qualification will require a ULN to be recorded on FDQAwards in order to permit certification.

FDQ is obliged to provide accurate PLR data for all learners achieving FDQ qualifications with the support of public funding in England. The ULN for the relevant learners claiming certificates must be provided by centres, preferably at time of registration and at latest by time of claim for certification.

The failure of FDQ to update the PLR with accurate and regular achievement data will result in the FDQ qualifications provided being withdrawn from public funding in England.

Clearly, this is a significant issue and is a very clear message from government to ensure that ULNs and the PLR are implemented and used effectively by both awarding organisations and learning providers across the learning and skills sector.

Where to go for help:

- if you need more information about the PLR, its benefits, and how to register with the Learning Records Service to manage ULNs please go to: www.gov.uk/government/publications/lrs-unique-learner-numbers
- if you need more information from FDQ about FDQAwards, learner registrations or certification claims please refer to the FDQAwards User Guide or email fdq@fdq.org.uk for assistance.

Awarding organisations are not subject to the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, and the position of FDQ as an awarding organisation has been confirmed by the Information Commissioner's office.

FDQ as an awarding organisation is subject to the conditions of the Data Protection Act (1998) and General Data Protection Regulation (2018). FDQ can request personal information about learners on FDQ qualifications from centres; this information is for FDQ use and may

be passed to regulators and funding authorities to fulfil FDQ's AO and EPAO duties. FDQ does not pass personal date to other third parties.

Centres consent to provide relevant data, information and records when the centre agreement is signed by an accountable and authorised member of the centre's staff

Should centres request information from FDQ, this would be disclosed at the discretion of the FDQ head office team. Centres must notify FDQ if they are releasing information regarding FDQ under the Freedom of Information Act.

6.4 Requirements for learner registration and claiming certificates

FDQAwards is FDQ's secure centre management system. This is the platform that enables centres to manage learners with regards to: registration, withdrawal, transferring to alternative qualifications, making claims for certification.

Centres must confirm the identify of learners (by checking a passport or driving licence as proof) before the learners are registered with FDQAwards.

Registered learners are issued with a FDQ registration number which is held on the database. Completion of registration generates an invoice to the centre which includes learner details. The system is accessed by secure login to FDQAwards. FDQ provides support to centres in the use FDQAwards, and additionally guidance material is available.

Centres must not conduct any FDQ qualification assessment activity with learners until the learner has been registered for the relevant units/qualifications.

Centres must have an internal system in place to ensure that learner registration, leavers/ transfers and certification claims are managed, and quality assured effectively. Centres must ensure that learners are registered on the correct qualification, that their registration is

managed should their circumstances change, and that claims for certification are valid, authenticated and correctly signed off.

The centre's system must include:

- specified arrangements for the registration of learners by competent staff

- arrangements for processing invoices which are generated at registration

- management of learner registrations including leavers, transfers and amends

- specified claims for certification arrangements including authentication by a competent internal quality assurer, as certification claims are invalid without this

- where centres do not have automatic claims status for a qualification, centres will be unable to claim certificates using FDQAwards and contact with the FDQ is advised

- arrangements for the rectification of errors in registration and claims for certification that involve notifying FDQ and complying with any action we specify.

A certificate of credit will be issued to registered learners for each successfully completed credit/unit, even if a full qualification is not achieved. Registered learners who do complete a full qualification will receive, in addition to their full Award/Certificate/ Diploma, a certificate listing the credits/units achieved.

Replacement certificates

Centres or learners may request replacement certificates where original certificates have been lost, damaged or require replacement for any other reason.

Centres may order replacement certificates by using FDQAwards and accessing the learner record, where a replacement certificate option is available. The reason for the replacement must be declared using the drop-down menu options or by free-text in the space provided. It is expected that (where possible) the original certificate is returned by post to the FDQ head office. The replacement request is subject to FDQ approval and a replacement certificate fee.

This fee is waived where a FDQ error has been implicated in the need to request a replacement certificate.

FDQ learners who have been certificated can similarly request replacement certificates using www.fdq.org.uk. However, this requires that learners provide suitable photographic evidence of identity as part of the request process. It is expected that where possible the original certificate is returned by post to the FDQ head office. The replacement request is subject to FDQ approval and a replacement certificate fee payable in advance of the certificate despatch.

6.5 Managing registration amendments, leavers and transfers

Centres must actively monitor and maintain learner records on FDQAwards on a regular basis. Centres should withdraw leavers and amend and transfer other learners as set out in this section of the Centre Handbook. Maintaining accurate records is important to ensure both the centre and FDQ comply with data requirements.

FDQ's EQAC team use the learner information on FDQAwards to plan and prepare for EQA activity and centre visits. Ensuring that information on FDQAwards is current and accurate enables effective EQA planning and activity for both the centre contact and EQAC.

Amendments

Centres are permitted to make amendments free of charge, where a learner's name has been registered incorrectly or is legally changed after registration. FDQAwards allows for limited name changes which are monitored and checked before certification is approved. Other types of amendments will require centres to withdraw the learner (they will become a leaver), and then to complete a new registration. This will be subject to a registration fee.

Leavers

Leavers are defined as: learners who leave their learning or programme of study early without completing the achievement for certification of their planned learning goals or parts of their learning (credits/units) agreed at time of registration. Learners who have not achieved any qualification components or credits/units which might enable a centre to make a claim for a Certificate of Credit can be withdrawn from registration as leavers. Leavers are not eligible for transfer to an alternative qualification, they are withdrawing from registration. When a centre withdraws a registered learner as a leaver, the registration system on FDQAwards creates a vacant registration for specific qualifications, to which a centre can allocate one new learner on the same qualification, subject to a transfer fee. Only one transfer can be made against a vacant registration.

Note: Centres must claim for any qualification components or credits/units, which a learner has achieved during their time in study or learning.

Centres are responsible for maintaining accurate learner records.

Transfers

These are defined as learners who wish to re-register on an alternative FDQ qualification. Transfers are learners withdrawing from a registration on one FDQ qualification and transferring to another FDQ qualification. The centre will not be able to claim any learner achievement relating to the original qualification, all claims for achievement will be against the qualification to which the learner is transferring. Transfers are often required where a learner's job/role or course of study changes after registration.

When a centre withdraws a registered learner as a transfer, re-registration is required immediately on an alternative FDQ qualification. On transfer the centre will be charged a transfer fee and will be additionally charged any difference in cost should the transfer

qualification be more expensive than the learner's original registration. The transfer process does not allow any vacant or backfill facility, as it closes the registration of the learner on the original qualification.

Backfill

When a centre withdraws or transfers a learner, FDQ permits the centre to backfill the space left on the specific qualification. A new learner may backfill the space left by the original learner at the time as the first learner is transferred or leaves. The new learner will remain in the same batch as the original learner.

6.6 External quality assurance

FDQ provides external quality assurance of all centres, covering all FDQ qualifications. FDQ appoints an External Quality Assurance Consultant (EQAC) to each approved centre. EQACs are appointed by FDQ to carry out qualification approval and monitor internal quality assurance and assessment carried out by centres. External quality assurance ensures that assessment is valid, consistent, sufficient, reliable and authentic and that there is satisfactory and improving assessment practice in centres. To carry out their quality assurance role, EQACs must have appropriate vocational and quality assurance knowledge and expertise. FDQ provides training and development to keep their practice up-to-date, facilitate standardisation and share good practice.

The role of the EQAC
The role of the EQAC is to:

- carry out qualification approval
- monitor and improve the quality of assessments within and between centres
- visit centres and sample activity to ensure they continue to meet our centre monitoring criteria
- provide feedback to centres and make recommendations to FDQ using action planning and the centre/qualification quality rating

- identify any actual or suspected malpractice or maladministration

- provide advice and support to centre staff.

External quality assurance reports provide objective feedback about centre internal quality assurance and assessment practice and make recommendations to FDQ. The EQAC monitoring uses centre monitoring criteria and a centre/qualification quality rating system; see appendix 3. EQACs assign a provisional rating to both the centre and to individual qualifications to reflect centre and qualification performance. This is provisionally agreed in feedback to the centre in conclusion of the external quality assurance activity.

FDQ staff will confirm these recommendations or review these in the provisional report and approve a report for sending to centres. As an absolute minimum EQACs are required to recommend, whether centres are in breach of FDQ requirements and should have their approval status revoked or suspended.

Monitoring activity will be dependent on a number of factors which an EQAC will consider when developing a sampling rationale for a centre. Such factors will include the:

- centre quality rating

- qualification quality ratings

- the types of qualifications offered (eg high risk)

- number and cohorts of registered learners

- number of IQAs, assessors, satellite sites

- rectification performance of action plans

- centre experience of delivering qualifications/changes in qualification provision

- range and types of qualifications/ assessments provided

- responsibilities for marking or allocating assessment grades (eg centre marked or assessed, externally marked) and FDQ's Centre Assessed Scrutiny Standard (CASS)

- FDQ (or another AO) identifying issues at the centre we wish to investigate

- to provide extra support to resolve any issues that could affect results at the centre

On consideration of these factors, the EQAC will ascertain the amount and types of monitoring activity that are appropriate to the quality risk posed by a centre.   The full range and significance of factors will be considered in determining monitoring activity and may be considered in consultation with the relevant FDQ staff.

Centre Assessed Scrutiny Standard (CASS)

From September 2021 Ofqual, Qualification Wales and CCEA require Awarding Organisations (AOs) and their approved centres to meet requirements for Centre Assessment Standards Scrutiny (CASS). CASS requirements apply when the centre marks or assesses evidence generated by a learner for assessment in a FDQ qualification.

> **To comply with CASS requirements**
>
> - all centres will receive at least one annual EQA verification visit per year
> - EQAC visits will normally be conducted face to face at the centre site
> - Remote visits may also be used in some circumstances.
> - EQACs will sample all active qualifications and all active units the centre offers over a period of time during their EQA verification visits
> - EQACs will also sample centre IQA activity or the outputs from IQA activity, moderation and centre marking activities

Depending on the type of qualification, EQACs will sample the individual qualification assessment components such as observation of

- a workplace assessment (proficiency qualifications)
- a practical demonstration in a learning environment (professional qualifications)
- an online examination taken at the centre
- portfolios or records of learner evidence for assessment

This is not an exhaustive list, and EQACs will plan and arrange each visit according to each centre's provision and circumstances.

EQAC monitoring

The FDQ centre monitoring criteria, the centre quality rating (CQR) and the qualification quality rating (QQR) provides a comprehensive framework by which FDQ can assess, risk rate and sanction centres in accordance with any centre non-compliances identified.

Notification of EQA monitoring activity

FDQ's EQACs will suggest and agree a date for the centre's EQA activity with the Main Centre Contact. This will then be recorded on the EQAC's pre-visit plan which will be issued to the centre.

To comply with Regulatory requirements, in exceptional circumstances, FDQ may need to conduct announced EQA monitoring visits to centres.

Timescales for monitoring activity:

- confirmation of centre visit/activity provided within 25 working days of activity

- plan of visit/activity provided within 15 days of activity

- external quality assurance report sent to centre within 10 days of visit/activity.

Where a centre is overdue an external quality assurance visit and that this has been delayed by the actions of the centre, automatic certification rights may be suspended.

Centre EQA activity cancellations

As set out in the enforceable centre agreement, FDQ reserves the right to charge a fee of £400 for EQA visits that are cancelled by the centre with 24 hours or less notice. Similarly, FDQ reserves the right to charge a fee of £400 if the centre fails to provide access to the assessment evidence, centre activities, learners and staff required for sampling and as set out in the EQAC pre-visit plan which may mean that a further EQAC visit is required to complete the EQAC activity.

EQAC reports

Centre contacts will review and confirm their acceptance and agreement of the approved external quality assurance report using FDQAwards within 5 working days of issue as set out in the enforceable centre agreement.

Where a centre disagrees with the report, a verbal appeal is considered and where this may fail a written appeal can be considered; see section 7.5.

The external quality assurance requirements for specific qualifications are set out in qualification handbooks. Centres must meet these requirements in full. The handbooks may also provide mandatory or example quality assurance and assessment recording documentation.

6.7 Internal quality assurance

Internal quality assurance plays a pivotal role in ensuring consistency as well as maintaining and improving the quality of assessment within a centre. This is important in ensuring the integrity, fairness, credibility and value of our qualifications. Centres must comply with our requirements for internal quality assurance set out in the following criteria statements. The criteria will be applied to all the qualifications FDQ provides; in addition, qualification handbooks explain how the criteria and any additional internal quality assurance criteria (eg for assessment or invigilation) are applied to specific qualifications.

Criteria for internal quality assurance:

1. Centres must appoint internal quality assurers (IQAs) and record them on FDQAwards in accordance with qualification requirements. The IQAs will be recorded by FDQ at point of qualification approval and monitored by external quality assurance activity. New IQAs

recruited after qualification approval will be approved by external quality assurance consultants and logged by the centre on FDQAwards.

IQAs must be responsible for the following activities performed in the context of a specific qualification or range of qualifications:

- sampling strategy and plans for monitoring assessment
- ensuring that learners are registered with FDQ, in a timely and accurate manner
- sampling assessment activity and decisions across all assessment methods
- ensuring accuracy and consistency of decisions across assessors
- providing feedback to assessors on the effectiveness of assessment practice
- recording internal quality assurance activity
- maintaining standardisation of practice between assessors
- supporting and developing/training assessors and trainee internal quality assurers
- making arrangements, records/facilities available for external quality assurance
- ensuring that external quality assurance action plans are implemented.

2. Internal quality assurance staff must meet the occupational and competence requirements set out in the relevant assessment strategy/qualification handbook. As a minimum these are:
- internal quality assurance practice must be commensurate with the National Occupational Standard CLDLD11, Internally monitor and maintain the quality of assessment
- sufficient time must be granted to internal quality assurers to perform their role
- support/training/CPD must be provided for internal quality assurers
- auditable records for external quality assurance must be maintained
- internal quality assurers may only carry out assessment if they are suitably experienced and qualified to do so. IQAs must not internally quality assure their own assessment.

3. Internal quality assurance staff 'in training' who are not yet fully recognised as competent by FDQ may carry out internal quality assurance of assessment practice. For the period 'in training' and working towards recognition, they must have their quality assurance activity monitored and signed off (countersigned) by a fully recognised internal quality assurance person. The 'in training' period should be limited to twelve months and have clear development goals set for recognition.

4. Centres must maintain effective quality assurance policy and procedures:
    - to determine the consistency, reliability and accuracy of assessment decisions across the centre
    - to manage the use of unfair means (cheating, plagiarism, collusion and contracting) in learner completed assignments, examinations and assessments
    - to ensure that assessors are consistent in assessment to the requirements set out in the qualification handbook, qualification structures and units of assessment
    - to demonstrate that internal quality assurance is effective in improving qualification provision and practice.

Any centre failure to continually meet the criteria for internal quality assurance places at risk the integrity of assessment decisions and the credibility and value of FDQ qualifications. The EQAC report will note any issues of concern with supporting references to relevant sections of FDQ policies and guidance when appropriate.

In this situation the relevant centre/qualification quality rating will be applied to the centre or across qualifications which may lead to the suspension of registration and/or certification rights.

6.8 Assessment

The ability of a centre to drive high standards in assessment practice and in decision making is important in maintaining the integrity, credibility and value of FDQ qualifications. It is FDQ's policy to demonstrate that the delivery of assessment is fit for purpose. It is essential

therefore that centres must comply with the requirements for assessment set out in the following criteria statements. These will be applied to all qualifications FDQ provide.

Criteria for assessment:

1. Centres must appoint assessors and log them on FDQAwards, in accordance with qualification requirements. They will be approved by FDQ at point of qualification approval and monitored by external quality assurance activity. New assessors recruited after qualification approval will be approved by external quality assurance consultants and logged by the centre on FDQAwards. They must be responsible for the following activities performed in the context of a specific qualification or range of qualifications:

- ensuring arrangements for learner initial assessment and induction
- ensuring the timely registration of learners prior to assessment
- managing and planning assessment for and with learners
- carrying out assessment using appropriate assessment methods
- making assessment judgements and decisions
- marking, scoring and securely controlling examination material
- providing feedback to learners on the outcomes of assessment
- recording assessment decisions and outcomes
- providing a written declaration that assessment outcomes are authentic and took place in compliance with the qualification handbook
- engaging in standardisation of assessment activity
- supporting trainee assessors where appropriate
- making arrangements, records/facilities available for internal quality assurance
- supporting implementation of external quality assurance action plans
- understanding the requirements for assessment and relevant policy and guidance
- ensuring that assessment takes places only after a learner has been registered on our qualification or component(s) of a qualification.

2. Assessors must meet the occupational and competence requirements set out in the relevant assessment strategy/qualification handbook. As a minimum these are:

   - assessment practice must be commensurate with the National Occupational Standard (CLDLD09) Assess Learner Achievement

   - sufficient time must be granted to assessors to perform their role

   - support/training/CPD must be provided for assessors

   - auditable assessment records for external quality assurance must be maintained.

3. Assessors 'in training' who are not yet fully recognised as competent by FDQ may carry out assessment practice. For the period in training and working towards recognition, the assessor must have assessment activity monitored and signed off (countersigned) by a fully recognised and competent assessor. The 'in training' period should be limited to twelve months and have clear development goals set for achieving recognition.

4. Centres must maintain effective assessment procedures:

   - to support accurate judgements and decision making in assessment

   - to ensure that assessment meets the requirements set out in the qualification handbook, qualification structures and units of assessment

   - to support the improvement of qualification provision and assessment practice.

Any centre failure to continually meet the criteria for assessment places at risk the integrity and reliability of assessment decisions and the credibility of our qualifications. In this situation the relevant centre quality rating will be applied to qualifications or across the centre which may lead to the suspension of registration and or certification rights.

6.9 Invigilation

1. For some qualifications, centres are responsible for selecting and training suitable staff to act as invigilators. The invigilator may be a member of staff at the centre, at the learner's workplace, or be an independent invigilator. Invigilation activity will be monitored by external quality assurance activity and by the centre through its IQA activity.

2. FDQ does not mandate formal qualifications for invigilators. However, FDQ does require all invigilators to be trained for their role before they invigilate any tests.

3. As a minimum, invigilators must

    - have the knowledge and skills required to carry out the duties set out in FDQ's Guide to Invigilation available at FDQAwards

    - be familiar FDQ requirements for the particular tests they are invigilating

    - understand and follow their centre's internal procedures for invigilation, record keeping and storage

    - be familiar with the JCQ publication 'Instructions for conducting examinations' current at February 2023 and any subsequent updates:

    - www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examination

    - be trained to use any software or technical equipment needed for remote invigilation, and have trialled and used this successfully, before invigilating any live tests with learners.

    See FDQ's Guide to Invigilation for further details.

6.10 Assessment in foreign languages

Foreign languages are those other than English, Welsh or Irish (Gaeilge). A centre may support a learner taking a qualification in any other language than English, Welsh or Irish, as permitted by qualification regulators. Specifically:

- a learner may be assessed in British Sign Language

- to learn a second language

- to support a role in the workplace, providing that proficiency in English is not needed to carry out that role.

Centres requiring support in assessing learners in any of the above should contact FDQ to ensure the appropriate arrangements can be put in place. A centre wishing to support a qualification completion in a foreign language must inform FDQ at point of registration.

As an awarding organisation, FDQ is under regulatory obligation to provide

- for England, qualification specifications and assessment materials in English

- for Wales, qualification specifications in Welsh or English; with a declaration of the language(s) in which assessment is available

- for Northern Ireland, qualification specifications in English and assessment material in either English or in English and Irish (Gaeilge).

Currently FDQ provides qualification specifications and assessment materials in English. External quality assurance of our centres in Wales and Northern Ireland determines if they have assessors and internal quality assurers who could assess in Welsh or Irish (Gaeilge) and whether they feel there is any learner demand for materials to be translated into Welsh/Irish (Gaeilge). If demand is identified, FDQ will consider developing materials for Welsh/Irish assessments.

Any centre wishing to use a language other than English, Welsh or Irish (Gaeilge) to provide our qualifications, must contact FDQ staff for approval, before any assessment activity is planned or takes place. FDQ must ensure that:

- qualifications provided to learners in foreign languages are comparable to those offered in English, Welsh or Irish (Gaeilge)

- in qualifications designed for application in the workplace, lack of proficiency in English, Welsh or Irish (Gaeilge) does not prevent the learner from properly discharging their role that is supported by the qualification.

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, where assessments are carried out in a foreign language, a centre must provide evidence that those learners are also competent in English, Welsh or Irish (Gaeilge) to the required standard. The assessment methodology and quality assurance for the use of foreign languages will be agreed in writing with the centre.

External quality assurance of centres will include ensuring suitable arrangements are in place, including the availability of sufficient resource, to support assessment in a foreign language. All quality assurance activities, including reporting will be carried out in English.

The centre may be charged a fee for any translation required for assessment materials and quality assurance, as there are often significant costs involved.

6.11 Malpractice and maladministration policy

There is an obligation on all staff at FDQ and in FDQ centres, involved in the provision of the qualifications, demonstrating honesty and integrity at all times. Centres are expected to have comprehensive malpractice and maladministration policies and procedures in place, detailing how malpractice and maladministration are prevented and the actions to be taken if they are discovered at the centre.

The centre should also have a conflict of interest (CoI) policy, which complements FDQ's own conflict of interest policy. FDQ's CoI policy is available in the policies section of the FDQ website: www.fdq.org.uk.

Centre Conflict of Interest Policy

The centre CoI policy should specify how the centre will identify, manage and monitor conflicts which could lead to an adverse effect or compromise the confidentiality of FDQs assessment materials. For example, the centre's CoI policy may address dealing with conflicts that may arise when

- learners are friends or relatives of centre staff or
- when centre staff are also employed in roles which could compromise the confidentiality of FDQ's assessment materials (eg as an examiner for another AO or EPAO).

The enforceable centre agreement sets out the centre's obligations for maintaining confidentiality of sensitive information.

Centres have a responsibility to report any malpractice or maladministration suspected, in writing to FDQ. Examples of malpractice and maladministration include:

- falsification of learner details

- fraudulent claims for certification

- inaccurate recording of assessment

- invalid or inadequately authentic internal quality assurance

- breach of security of assessment material

- inadequate invigilation of examinations.

The centre is also expected to have a whistle blower policy. FDQ's whistle blower policy is published on the policies section of FDQ's www.fdq.org.uk.

The centre should make copies of its malpractice, maladministration, whistle blower and conflict of interest policies available to FDQ.

Any persons with knowledge of malpractice or maladministration in FDQ centres are able to confidentially report to FDQ in accordance with the whistle blower policy.

Suspected or alleged malpractice or maladministration

If a case of suspected or alleged malpractice or maladministration is discovered in a centre after learners have been registered, it must be immediately notified to FDQ in writing either by letter or email to fdq@fdq.org.uk.

Suspected or alleged malpractice or maladministration may also be identified as a result of external quality assurance activity. FDQ's risk -based policies set in place measures to limit the number of times FDQ will need to intervene to make adjustments to marks. However, the proactive CASS scrutiny verification activity may periodically identify areas of malpractice or maladministration in marking which could lead to a potential Adverse Effect.

An act, omission, event, incident, or circumstance has an Adverse Effect if it

- gives rise to prejudice to learners or potential learners

or if it adversely affects

- the ability of the awarding organisation to undertake development, delivery or award of a qualification in compliance with Regulatory Conditions of Recognition
- the standards of the qualification/s
- public confidence in qualification/s

The following examples have potential to have Adverse Effects on learners

- Incorrect results with a higher grade than achieved issued to a learner (potentially allowing a learner to incorrectly apply for a higher level course
- An exam breach at a centre means some learners see some questions before their examination

FDQ will follow our policies to deal with the situations outlined above and make any adjustments to marks, keeping centers and learners informed. In such cases, FDQ requires the centre to fully co-operate with its procedure and policies to resolve the issues.

Our policies on malpractice or maladministration set out our approach to dealing with any such situation and to making adjustments to marks. FDQ staff ensure that centres are informed of any adjustments required are provided with all necessary details and given opportunities to discuss or appeal any such adjustments via our appeals process.

Where this occurs and while an FDQ investigation is carried out, the centre will normally be suspended from making any claims for registration and certification. The regulatory authority will be informed where systematic malpractice or maladministration is suspected and where any learner is disadvantaged with an adverse effect. Where there are special circumstances, the regulatory authority may conduct the investigation.

Identified malpractice or maladministration

Where a malpractice or maladministration is identified in the internal quality assurance or assessment of a qualification within a centre or one of its satellite sites, FDQ will instigate procedures to maintain the integrity of the qualification. Where this is identified as a result of external quality assurance, activity it may be necessary to carry out an investigation. In such circumstances, one or more of the following actions will apply until FDQ is satisfied that appropriate corrective measures have been taken by the centre:

- approval of assessment tasks and activities
- an increased level of monitoring activities
- a suspension on learner registrations and claims for certification
- suspension or withdrawal of centre approval
- reporting to the regulatory authorities.

The malpractice or maladministration will be reported to the relevant regulatory authority where an adverse effect has affected more than one learner.

Authenticity checks conducted by FDQ

FDQ takes the authenticity of learners very seriously. Centres must have in place a rigorous policy and set of procedures to ensure the authenticity of learners at time of registration with FDQ. The external quality assurance activity will check the effectiveness of the policy and procedures. If a learner authenticity issue arises as a result of these checks, the centre will be contacted immediately and an investigation will commence.

Incidents of malpractice and maladministration are monitored as part of FDQ's on-going self-evaluation.

SECTION 7 Exemptions, reasonable adjustments, special considerations and appeals

7.1 Recognition of prior achievement (RPA)

FDQ defines Recognition of Prior Achievement (RPA) as: the transfer of credit from a regulated framework unit or qualification, towards the part or whole achievement of a FDQ qualification. Learners may present evidence of prior achievement, which centres will take into account when planning qualification provision. Use of RPA evidence is not mandatory, but centres must have a RPA policy in place to identify when it may be appropriate to allow the use of RPA evidence. The relevant FDQ qualification handbooks contain guidance on when FDQ permits the use of RPA evidence – and centres should note that not all qualifications do permit RPA evidence to be used.

Centres must provide a copy of their RPA policy to FDQ. This is confirmed at time of centre approval. The on-going effectiveness of the policy is monitored as part of our external quality assurance arrangements. Centres must also comply with FDQ's RPA policy, which is available in the policies section of the FDQ website: www.fdq.org.uk.

7.2 Recognition of prior learning

FDQ defines Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) as: a method of assessment, used to identify whether a learner can demonstrate that they can meet the assessment requirements (by learning or attainment) for one of more unit(s) of assessment through skills, knowledge or understanding they already possess and do not need to develop through a course of learning.

Use of RPL evidence is not mandatory, but centres must have a RPL policy in place to identify when it may be appropriate to allow the use of RPL evidence. Centres must provide a copy of their RPL policy to FDQ. This is confirmed at time of centre approval. The on-going effectiveness of the policy is monitored as part of our external quality assurance arrangements. Centres must also comply with FDQ's RPL policy, which is available in the policies section of the FDQ website: www.fdq.org.uk.

7.3 Reasonable adjustments

Reasonable adjustments are adjustments made to an assessment for a qualification so as to enable a disabled learner to demonstrate his or her knowledge, skills and understanding to the levels of attainment required by the specification for that qualification. FDQ recognises the need, and has a positive approach, to provide a range of flexible and responsive assessment strategies for learners with disabilities. FDQ aims to ensure that these learners have the same access to assessment as other learners. In doing so FDQ aims to remove any barriers, which place disabled learners at a disadvantage without giving them an unfair advantage over other learners. It is important that this removal of barriers does not affect the validity or reliability of the assessment process. Arrangements agreed depend upon each specific qualification and the methods of assessment, as well as learner requirements.

Centres must provide a copy of their own policy for considering reasonable adjustments to FDQ. This is confirmed at time of centre approval. The on-going effectiveness of the policy is monitored as part of our external quality assurance arrangements. Centres must also comply with FDQ's Arrangements for reasonable adjustments policy, which is available in the policies section of the FDQ website: www.fdq.org.uk.

FDQ's policy sets out which adjustments it permits centres to make internally, which adjustments need to be authorised by FDQ and how FDQ monitors adjustments as part of the external quality assurance process.

The application to FDQ to permit reasonable adjustments must be completed using FDQ's Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Application form via FDQAwards.

The Application form is available from the policies section of our website
www.fdq.org.uk/fdqpolicies

Centres must record and retain the relevant evidence supporting the application for monitoring during external quality assurance activity. FDQ will monitor applications and respond to centres accordingly.

7.4 Special considerations

Special consideration is given to learners who temporarily experience an illness or injury, or another event outside of their control which has, or is reasonably likely to have had, a material effect on that learner's ability to take an assessment or demonstrate their level of attainment in an assessment. This ensures that learners who undergo assessment in these circumstances are treated fairly. FDQ will consider requests for special consideration in cases such as:

- sudden, temporary, illness
- accident or injury
- bereavement of a close family member
- evacuation of the assessment venue in response to an emergency
- disturbances during the assessment
- failure of any equipment provided for assessment.

Centres must provide a copy of their special considerations policy and procedures to FDQ. This is confirmed at time of centre approval. The on-going effectiveness of the policy is monitored as part of our external quality assurance arrangements. Centres must also comply with FDQ's Arrangements for special considerations policy, which is available in the policies section of the FDQ website: www.fdq.org.uk.

The application to FDQ for special considerations must be completed using FDQ's Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Application form via FDQAwards.

The Application form is available from the policies section of our website www.fdq.org.uk/fdqpolicies.

Centres must record and retain the relevant evidence supporting the application for monitoring during external quality assurance activity. FDQ will monitor applications and respond to centres accordingly.

7.5 Guidance to centres on learner appeals policy

Learners who are dissatisfied with an assessment outcome have the right to appeal.
All centres must have a clearly defined appeals policy and procedures at time of approval, and these must be maintained effectively and reviewed regularly part of our external quality assurance arrangements

All centres must have an appeals policy with procedures that encompass the following:

- examples of situations which could result in an appeal

- defined support systems

- clear, published and communicated appeals process

- specified timescales for handling appeals

- clear responsibilities of identified appeals staff

- maintenance of accurate records.

Centres must ensure that the appeals procedure has been communicated to the learner, and that learners have received a copy during their induction programme. Learners must be clear about access to appeals and actions they would need to take to make an appeal.
Centres must ensure that all staff involved in a learner's qualification provision understand and have received the appeals policy and procedures.

FDQ is responsible for:

- ensuring that there centres have an appropriate appeals policy and procedures in place at the time of centre approval

- monitoring the effectiveness of the appeals policy and procedures in the centre during external quality assurance activity

- providing factual information to learners on request.

In the first instance, learners must use their centre's appeals process to deal with any appeal. If learners are dissatisfied with the outcome of their centre's appeal process, they may further appeal to FDQ. The form and our policy for learner appeals is available from the polices section of our website. www.fdq.org.uk/fdqpolicies

Where the outcome of an appeal is such as to bring into question the accuracy of results for other learners in the same assessment, FDQ will take appropriate steps to protect the interests of all learners and the integrity of the qualification. The procedure detailed for centres to appeal, is the same as that for learner appeals.

7.6 Appeals policy for centres and learners

FDQ wishes to provide the highest levels of service to its customers. It aims to answer accurately, and within published timescales, any appeals received from users of its services as a regulated Awarding Organisation. FDQ is committed to providing the highest levels of service to its customers, including employers, training providers, learners/ apprentices and centres. It anticipates that issues or complaints can be resolved through the complaints or enquiries procedures and these procedures will be followed in the first instance. However, in the event that a customer remains dissatisfied having exhausted these procedures, they have recourse to the appeals process.

SECTION 8 Centre support for learners

8.1 Learner entry requirements

Centres are responsible for ensuring the learner's needs are fully assessed and evaluated before making any decision about the relevance of a specific qualification. Learners should not be registered for a qualification of the same type, content and level as that of a qualification they already hold, unless there is a specific developmental rationale for this, for example achieving the Knife Skills qualification alongside Proficiency or Apprenticeship-based qualifications. There is an obligation on centres to be confident at time of registration that learners have reasonable opportunity and potential to achieve a qualification successfully.

There are no formal entry requirements for learners to register for most of FDQ qualifications. Centres must apply in full the requirements of the qualification handbook appertaining to the qualification(s) they are approved to provide.

Centres must check any industry, funding or regulatory (eg Health and Safety) requirements for learner age limits when registering them for our qualifications. For example learners for the FDQ Level 2 Award in Food Safety for the Food Industry must be age 14 or older.

Centres must also note that

- publicly funded learning programmes may apply restrictions to the application of our qualifications
- some learners may be restricted access to our qualifications by regulatory or industry constraints or industry constraints (e.g. Insurance or use of machinery) in the workplace
- some qualifications apply age restrictions

It is the responsibility of the centre to ensure that the identity of the learner is authentic and confirmed. Procedures for this must be consistently and reliably adhered to, along with procedures for obtaining the learner's Unique Learner Number where this is required. Learner authenticity is monitored as part of external quality assurance arrangements.

8.2 Initial assessment and induction of learners

It is good practice to carry out an initial assessment of learners prior to the start of their prospective course or programme of study. This will help to ensure that learners are registered for the most suitable type and level of qualification. It will also help centres to meet their obligation to learners, so that learners have reasonable opportunity and potential to achieve a qualification successfully. A variety of initial assessment methods and diagnostic tests are available to centres, and care must be taken to select the most appropriate means of assessment for the course and qualification. Initial assessment should identify the specific learning needs of the learner, and the support and guidance they may need.

A learner induction programme is essential to ensure that learners fully understand their proposed course or programme of study, assessment requirements and the qualification to be achieved. Learners need to be clear about their rights and responsibilities, and that of the centre. FDQ expects centres to ensure learners have received and understood the following in the context of their qualification provision:

- appeals procedure

- health and safety arrangements

- equality of opportunity and diversity policy

- qualification purpose, title and units to be achieved

- opportunities for credit accumulation/certification

- Recognition of prior achievement and recognition of prior learning

- support arrangements

- Unique Learner Number (ULN).

The outcomes of the induction programme should be recorded, and a plan agreed for provision of learning and assessment for the achievement of the qualification. The effectiveness of learner induction will be monitored as part of external quality assurance arrangements.

8.3 Learner progression

FDQ qualifications provide recognition of either competence at work or knowledge and/or practical skills related to current industry practice. Centres have a responsibility to support learner's progression; into employment, in employment or in learning. This may include considering apprenticeships or recommending further qualifications to support development. Qualification handbooks will provide specific details of the qualifications, apprenticeships or other learning which may support learner progression. The provision of progression opportunities will be monitored as part of external quality assurance arrangements.

8.4 Resources

Physical resources

To gain, and maintain, approval to offer one of FDQ's qualifications a centre will need to demonstrate that it can develop and assess learners in facilities which are appropriate to the provision of the qualification. These physical resources will be detailed specifically in the qualification handbook and must be met in full at time of qualification approval.

Facilities must be managed and operated as an effective environment for learners, with suitable policies, procedures and systems for safe operations in line with industry standards and regulatory practice, where these are applicable. The centre will need to ensure that the mix of units of assessment offered to learners within a qualification will be supported by the appropriate physical resources and facilities for assessment in the provision. The relevance and suitability of physical resources will be monitored as part of external quality assurance arrangements.

Human resources

For a centre to offer an FDQ qualification it will need to demonstrate that it has the human resources necessary to provide the following functional roles effectively:

- management of policies, facilities and learning/assessment

- administration and registration/certification of learners

- provision of learning/training

- internal quality assurance

- assessment

- invigilation when required for specific qualifications.

FDQ requires the name and contact details of the centre's Chief Executive to be recorded on FDQAwards. In addition we require staff to be allocated to the following roles and their details to be recorded on FDQAwards:

- Main centre contact

- Exam Officer

- Invoice Contact

Centres must support their staff in their roles and ensure that their skills, knowledge and operating practice are maintained to the required standards and meet regulatory requirements. The appropriate qualification handbook will detail the specific requirements for human resources and must be met in full at time of qualification approval. The effectiveness and suitability of human resources will be monitored as part of external quality assurance arrangements.

Centre Staff CVs should be available for EQACs at EQA.

Appendix 1 – FDQ feedback form

Please comment or provide suggestions for improvement on any of the following:

FDQ Products including qualifications, End-point Assessments or endorsed programmes	
FDQ support documents for example Centre Handbook, Step by step guide to FDQAwards etc	
FDQ Customer Service	
FDQ IT systems including FDQAwards or FDQAssess etc	
General feedback	
Name and job title	

Centre name	
Date	

Thank you for taking the time to complete this form. Please return to FDQ by email to

fdq@fdq.org.uk

Appendix 2 – FDQ Sanctions Policy - Centre Quality Rating Tariff

FDQ sanctions for centre non-compliance:

Level	FDQ centre Quality Rating	Non-compliance	Sanction
1	Green	No non-compliance issues.	Not applicable.
2	Double amber (low risk)	Centre systems and/or one or more qualifications are not fully compliant with FDQ requirements but there is no actual threat to the integrity of assessment decisions.	Centre is subject to agreed actions to address low risk non-compliance issues. Monitoring of centre performance is set at 'low' level.
3	Amber (medium risk)	Centre systems and/or one or more qualifications are not fully compliant with FDQ requirements and could lead to a threat to the candidates and the integrity of the assessment decisions, risking invalid claims to certification. Non-compliance leading to a Level 2 sanction has not been rectified.	Automatic certification claims for the qualifications concerned are suspended – all such certificate claims must be approved by FDQ. Centre is subject to an agreed action plan detailing corrective actions that must be implemented before automatic certification is resumed. Monitoring of centre performance is set at 'medium' level.

4	Red (high risk)	Centre monitoring indicates that for centre systems and/or one or more qualifications, there are serious non-compliance issues relating to assessment and/or quality assurance and/or centre resources and management, which are likely to lead to a threat to the candidates and the integrity of the assessment decisions, risking invalid claims to certification. Non-compliance leading to a Level 3 sanction has not been rectified.	Registration and certification rights for the qualifications concerned are suspended. Centre is subject to an agreed action plan detailing corrective actions that must be implemented before registration and certification is resumed. Monitoring of centre performance is set at 'high' level.
5	Red (high risk)	Irretrievable breakdown in management and quality assurance of specific qualifications delivered by the centre. Non-compliance leading to a Level 4 sanction has not been rectified.	Withdrawal of approval for specific qualifications.
6	Red (high risk)	Irretrievable breakdown in overall centre management and/or quality assurance of all qualifications delivered by the centre.	Withdrawal of centre approval and approval for all qualifications.

Appendix 3 - FDQ Sanctions Policy - Centre Monitoring Criteria

The monitoring criteria are designed to meet the requirements of the:

- Regulatory arrangements for the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF)
- Regulatory Authorities - conditions of recognition

FDQ uses a traffic light system to indicate the Centre Quality Rating (CQR) for each centre and the Qualification Quality Rating (QQR) for each qualification. The CQR and QQR status for active centres is determined by monitoring against Centre Monitoring Criteria.
Centres that have been declared inactive for twelve months will be automatically be allocated single amber CQR. A centre inactive for a period of eighteen months will automatically be allocated a red CQR.

- Red indicates a high risk rating for a centre
- Amber indicates a medium risk rating for a centre
- Double amber indicates a low risk rating for a centre
- Green indicates a fully compliant centre and a very low risk rating

🔴	🔺	🔺🔺	🟩
Centre Quality Rating is **high risk**	Centre Quality Rating is **medium risk**	Centre Quality Rating is **low risk**	Fully Compliant Centre - Quality Rating is **very low risk**
Centre will have registration and certification rights suspended.	Centre will have registration rights however automatic certification claims	Centre will have registration and automatic certification claims rights.	Centre will have registration and automatic

|		
Centre is subject to an agreed action plan detailing corrective actions and high level monitoring of centre performance.	rights are suspended. Centre is subject to an agreed action plan detailing corrective actions and medium level monitoring of centre performance.	Centre is subject to an agreed action plan detailing minor corrective actions and low level monitoring of centre performance.	certification claims rights. Centre is not subject to an action plan. Minimum level of monitoring centre performance.

Centre monitoring criteria

The table below sets out the Centre Monitoring Criteria. These are linked for the purposes of continuity to Centre Approval Criteria. The table provides guidance for the risk rating of criteria and is not intended to be an exhaustive list.

Centre Monitoring Criteria		
1. Keep FDQ updated with all centre changes	⚠️⚠️	Failure to update with changes to initial centre approval information on physical resources and/or centre management systems.
	⚠️	No main centre contact. Failure to update with changes to initial centre approval information on staff resources.
	🔴	Failure to update with critical changes to centre information and performance.
2. Keep FDQ informed of any withhold or withdrawal of centre approval by another AO	⚠️⚠️	
	⚠️	Failure to update with changes in initial centre approval information on status with other centre approvals.
	🔴	No declaration of withhold or withdrawal of centre and/or qualification approval.

3. Learners have a safe and managed environment	⚠️⚠️	Insufficient management of a safe environment for learners. Poor internal communication within QA team – risk to learners.
	⚠️	Inadequate arrangements for the safeguarding of young people and vulnerable adults.
	🔴	Ineffective or no policy, procedures and resources to manage and maintain a safe environment for learners.
4. Learners have equality of opportunity and are treated fairly	⚠️⚠️	
	⚠️	Insufficient management of equality of opportunity and diversity.
	🔴	Ineffective or no policy, procedures and resources to manage and maintain equality of opportunity and diversity and/or fair treatment in qualification provision.
5. Learners obtain a ULN or SCN and have learner plans/ records	⚠️⚠️	No arrangements for obtaining ULN No arrangements to access the learner's previous achievements with consent, or obtain plans/records.
	⚠️	No policy, procedures and resources to manage ULN/ learner plans/records.
	🔴	
6. Learners receive adequate induction and have their RPL/RPA taken into account	⚠️⚠️	Inadequate arrangements for the induction of learners to qualification provision. No arrangements in place for RPL/RPA.
	⚠️	No policy, procedures and resources to manage learner induction and/or RPL/RPA and SC/RA
	🔴	
7. Assessment and internal quality assurance meets regulatory requirements	⚠️⚠️	Assessment methodology selected for learners does not fully meet their needs.
	⚠️	Assessment does not comply with centres' arrangements for the management and assessment/examination of learners. Insufficient record keeping of assessment and/or internal quality assurance.

		Insufficient evidence to demonstrate effective assessment and internal quality assurance practice.
		Ineffective monitoring or consistency of assessment in centre or across satellite sites.
		No countersigning of assessors or internal quality assurance staff who are in training and are not fully centre recognised to operate.
		Inadequate or no system to track learner progress and/or achievement.
		Ineffective learner appeals arrangements.
		Ineffective arrangements for learner exemptions, proxies, reasonable adjustments and/or special considerations.
	🔴	Ineffective assessment and/or internal quality assurance processes or practice, or Ineffective management of assessment and/or internal quality assurance.
		No assessment or internal quality assurance policy, procedures or resources for assessment and/or internal quality assurance.
		No declaration of the authenticity of learner evidence in assessment.
		No authentication of certificate claims by Internal Quality Assurance staff.
		Inadequate record keeping of assessment and/or internal quality assurance.
		Failure to provide adequate access to facilities, staff and records for external quality assurance of centre.

Criterion	Severity	Description
8. There are secure and managed arrangements for learner records, examinations and achievement claims	⚠️⚠️ (yellow)	Ineffective management or insufficiently detailed learner records.
	⚠️ (yellow)	Failure to keep adequate management records for learner records, examinations or achievement claims. No notification of certificates claimed in error.
	🔴 (red)	Inadequate security for the administration and/or management of examinations/tests. Providing inaccurate claims, information or records. Failure to report malpractice and/or co-operate with investigation into potential malpractice in learner records, examinations or claims for achievement.
9. There are adequate and effective staff in place to provide qualifications	⚠️⚠️ (yellow)	
	⚠️ (yellow)	Insufficient assessors and/or internal quality assurance staff to provide qualifications for the number of learners registered. CVs and copies of certificates are not adequately recorded or maintained.
	🔴 (red)	Assessors or Internal Quality Assurance staff do not have the required competence, qualifications or experience to perform in their role. No staff in place to provide qualifications.
10. There are adequate and effective physical resources in place to provide qualifications	⚠️⚠️ (yellow)	Insufficient administration of facilities and equipment. Inadequate or no documentation for subcontracting or partnership arrangements.
	⚠️ (yellow)	Insufficient facilities, tools and/or equipment resource to provide qualifications. Ineffective management of satellites sites and centre outreach facilities.
	🔴 (red)	Inadequate or no facilities, tools and/or equipment resource to provide qualifications.

11. The centre monitors its performance and drives quality improvement of its qualifications provision	⚠️⚠️	Inadequate or no relevant support, training or development of assessor and/or internal quality assurance staff. Inadequate assessor and/or internal quality assurance staff appraisal.
	⚠️	Insufficient assessor and/or internal quality assurance staff monitoring or development. Inadequate records of CPD or support to assessor and/or internal quality assurance staff. Ineffective management of continuous improvement. Previous external quality assurance action plans are only partially or not met.
	🔴	Inadequate or no capability to monitor performance or drive quality improvement of qualifications provision.
12. Assess the impact of the Centre Quality Rating (CQR)	⚠️⚠️	The CQR is likely to have minimal impact and most likely would not affect the quality of qualification provision or adversely impact the learner. Issues raised can be corrected relatively quickly and easily, without impact in other areas of provision.
	⚠️	The CQR is likely to have some impact and most likely would affect the credibility and integrity of qualification provision or have some detrimental impact to the learner. Issues raised can be corrected in the short term with resource implications, additional input or development required.
	🔴	The CQR is likely to have significant impact and most likely would affect the validity, credibility and integrity of qualification provision or the centre's entire effectiveness. It will have a significant impact to the learner. Issues raised must be corrected relatively quickly with resource implications, additional input or development as required.