



EFFICIENT, EFFECTIVE, RESPONSIVE—QUALIFICATIONS FOR INDUSTRY

ProQual Centre Application Guide

Information for Prospective Centres

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1. Introduction

Organisations must gain approval from ProQual Awarding Body (ProQual) to become a ProQual centre before they can offer any ProQual qualifications. Approval must be gained for each qualification that a centre wishes to offer.

This document is for use by organisations seeking approval to offer qualifications awarded by ProQual.

1.1 Requirements of all Assessment Centres

- Centres must have systems in place for maintaining records of candidates and their achievements according to ProQual regulations.
- Centres must have policies that will ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers for any groups of candidates. Centres must also have suitable policies for health and safety, appeals/complaints and equality and diversity.
- All ProQual qualifications are assessed and certificated in English. Centres must ensure that all of their candidates can demonstrate that they have a level of English sufficient for them to understand which qualification they are registered onto and why they are undertaking it.
- For each competence-based assessed unit centres must be able to provide at least one assessor and one internal quality assurance verifier (IQA) Verifier who is suitably qualified for the specific occupational area.
- Assessors and IQA verifiers for competence-based units or qualifications will normally need to have appropriate assessor or IQA verifier qualifications, such as:
 - 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
 - Level 4 Award in the Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practices
 - Level 4 Certificate in Leading the Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practices
- Adequate systems must be in place to implement and monitor the parity of treatment of candidates with regard to entry selection, participation, access to assessment and success. Approved centres must ensure that no unfair discrimination is applied in considering candidates for registration, and that no irrelevant information is brought to bear by assessors whilst assessing candidates.
- ProQual will provide an External Quality Assurance Verifier (EQA Verifier) who will make regular visits and will oversee the assessment process. The EQA Verifier may also visit during the approval process and will agree action plans with the centre where any issues need to be addressed.

1.2 Considerations for Assessment Centres

- A senior member of staff should have overall responsibility for the organisation's operation as an assessment centre and should nominate a person to be the lead contact between the centre and ProQual.
- Staff working as assessors, IQA verifiers and mentors have to be able to devote a substantial amount of time to support candidates and carry out the assessment thoroughly and fairly; the centre must also provide the EQA Verifier with evidence of the occupational competence of assessors and IQA verifiers and evidence of relevant qualifications.
- Where the assessor needs to observe a candidate at work, the centre must ensure that appropriate permission is obtained and that confidentiality is assured.

2. Criteria for Centre Approval

2.1 ProQual has an obligation to the regulatory bodies to ensure that assessment is undertaken to national standards. Potential centres therefore undergo a rigorous approval process. Following approval assessment will be subject to regular monitoring through Quality Auditing which includes the EQA process.

2.2 Organisations wishing to become approved centres will therefore need to show that they can meet the approval criteria – detailed in Appendix 1 *Centre Approval and Verification Criteria*. The centre will need –

- to have a single named point of accountability for quality assurance (usually a centre coordinator or manager)
- to provide guidance, information and support for candidates wishing to undertake qualifications
- to have processes in place to ensure that all of their candidates can demonstrate that they have a level of English sufficient for them to understand which qualification they are registered onto and why they are undertaking it
- the ability to plan and review the delivery of qualifications
- appropriate resources – human, administrative and technical
- appropriately experienced and qualified Assessors and IQA verifiers
- access to expertise in the field covered by the qualification
- an understanding of assessment, using a range of valid and reliable methods
- rigorous quality assurance procedures
- a commitment to equal opportunities and access to assessment

3. Steps to Centre Approval

3.1 Application for Approval

Organisations should complete the ProQual Centre Application Form. ProQual will assign an EQA Verifier who has experience in the occupational field covered by the specific qualifications that a centre wishes to deliver. ProQual may call for additional information and will be able to provide additional support and guidance, as appropriate (normally by email or telephone) to assist in the completion of the form.

3.2 Approval Visit

If sufficient evidence has been provided a Centre Approval Visit by an EQA Verifier will be arranged. During the Centre Approval Visit the EQA Verifier or other ProQual representatives will need to meet the centre staff, including those contributing to the work of any satellite centres involved in delivering the qualifications. The staff will be those who undertake assessment, quality assurance (IQA verifiers) and centre co-ordination/administration.

The centre will be expected to ensure that the co-ordination of functions and administration of the centre are carried out satisfactorily and will co-ordinate communications with ProQual through the EQA Verifier.

The EQA Verifier will produce a report on the Centre Approval Visit that:

- makes a recommendation with regard to the approval of specific qualification(s)
- identifies any issues arising out of the visit
- sets out an agreed action plan

The report and recommendation will then be considered by the ProQual Governing Body, which has the authority to grant formal approval. If, for any reason, approval cannot be given the prospective centre will be provided with recommendations as to what needs to be done to satisfy the approval criteria.

4. Organisations already Offering Qualifications with other Awarding Bodies

If an organisation is already a centre offering qualifications through another awarding organisation and wishes to offer them through ProQual then they are still required to complete the Centre Application Form and are subject to the approval process.

Depending on evidence provided an approval visit may be arranged or the application may be dealt with by a telephone approval.

5. Approval to Offer Additional Qualifications

- 5.1 A centre already approved by ProQual for one or more qualifications may wish to gain approval to offer additional qualifications.
- 5.2 The centre should use the ProQual Additional Qualification Approval Form to indicate the additional qualification(s) for which approval is sought, and any additional resources (e.g. staff, assessors, IQA Verifiers, facilities) that may be required.
- 5.3 If the additional qualification closely relates to any for which the centre is already approved then the application may be dealt with by email or telephone.
- 5.4 If the additional qualification is not closely related to that for which the centre is already approved then an appropriately experienced specialist adviser may be asked to assist an EQA Verifier in considering the application.

6. Fees

The current Fees Schedule is published on our website, alternatively contact us for a copy.

7. Further Information

Further information on ProQual is available from:

ProQual Awarding Body
ProQual House
Unit 1, Innovation Drive
Newport
HU15 2GX
UK

Web: www.proqualab.com

Email: enquiries@proqualab.com

Telephone: 01430 423822

Appendix 1 : Centre Approval and Verification Criteria

1. PLANNING

1.1 Management Systems

	Criteria	Possible sources of evidence to present to an EQA Verifier
1.1.1	<i>The centre's aim and policies in relation to qualifications are supported by senior management and understood by the assessment team.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A qualification delivery plan confirmed with, and supported by senior management. • Documented quality procedures. • Progress reports and staff updates.
1.1.2	<i>The centre's access and fair assessment policy and practice is understood and complied with by candidates and assessors.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documented policies and procedures. • Access and fair assessment policy review mechanisms.
1.1.3	<i>The centre must be recognised by the Learner Registration Service to apply for Unique Learner Numbers (ULNs).</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of registration with the learner registration service. • UKPRN
1.1.4	<i>The roles, responsibilities, authorities and accountabilities of the assessment and IQA verification team across all assessment sites are clearly defined, allocated and understood.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documented quality assurance procedures. An organisational chart. • Documented and signed agreements indicating the lines of accountability of partner organisations in relation to the management of assessment and internal quality assurance. • Records of all assessment sites and personnel. • Contact arrangements between the centre, assessment sites, clients and candidates. • CVs of the assessment and IQA verification team.
1.1.5	<i>IQA verification / standardisation procedures and activities are clearly documented, consistent with national requirements and ensure the quality and consistency of assessment.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IQA verification plans and reports. • A sampling strategy and schedule of activity. • Records of assessment team meetings. • Assessor networking opportunities.
1.1.6	<i>There is effective communication within the assessment team and with ProQual.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff handbooks and updates. • Organisational charts. • Minutes of team meetings. • Records of communication with the awarding body.

1.2 Resources

	Criteria	Possible sources of evidence
1.2.1	<i>Resource needs are accurately identified in relation to the specific qualification and resources are made available.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Records of resource availability. • Evidence of any additional resources obtained or used.
1.2.2	<i>Equipment and accommodation used for the purposes of assessment comply with the requirements of relevant health and safety acts.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public employee liability certificates. • Records of equipment and accommodation. • Maintenance schedules. • Health and safety policies.
1.2.3	<i>There are sufficient competent and qualified assessors and IQA verifiers to meet the demand for assessment and IQA verification activity.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A list of qualified assessors and IQA verifiers. • CVs, copies of qualification certificates and development plans for the assessment team. • Assessor/candidate ratios. • Recruitment and selection procedures. • Job descriptions and remits.
1.2.4	<i>A staff development programme is established for the assessment and IQA verification team in line with identified needs.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff induction and guidance materials. • Records of meetings/briefings/updates. • Records of individual development plans. • Action plans to acquire the appropriate qualifications.
1.2.5	<i>Assessors and IQA verifiers have sufficient time, resources and authority to perform their roles and responsibilities effectively.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A record of assessor/candidate allocation. • Candidate/assessor ratios and time allocation. • Allocation of marking for any assignments. • Time allowed for editing and standardisation. • Oral confirmation from assessors/IQA verifiers.
1.2.6	<i>ProQual is notified of any changes which may affect the centre's ability to meet the approved centre criteria.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notification of changes to the assessment and verification team. • Notification of changes to resources.

2. DELIVERY

2.1 Candidate Support

	Criteria	Possible sources of evidence
2.1.1	<i>The centre must have systems for acquiring and confirming unique learner numbers.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systems for checking existing ULNs. • Documentation for acquiring ULNs for candidates who do not have one incorporating appropriate declaration.
2.1.2	<i>Information, advice and guidance about assessment procedures and achievement of qualifications are provided to candidates and potential candidates.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candidate guidance and induction materials. • Qualification information. • Appeals procedures. • Safeguarding policy.
2.1.3	<i>Candidate's development needs are matched against the requirements of the qualification and an agreed individual assessment plan is established.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candidate initial assessment procedures. • Candidate assessment plans. • Candidate/trainee contracts. • Equality policies and procedures. • Details of how any prior learning has been taken into account.
2.1.4	<i>Candidates have regular opportunities to review their progress and goals and to revise their assessment plan accordingly.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candidate assessment plan, frequency of review meetings; examples of revisions to assessment plans.
2.1.5	<i>Particular assessment requirements of candidates are identified and met where possible.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Materials/equipment/facilities to support candidates with particular requirements.
2.1.6	<i>Provide candidates with feedback on progress and achievements.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated assessment plans. • Records of achievement. • Completion records.
2.1.7	<i>There is an established appeals procedure which is documented and made available to all candidates.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documented appeals procedure, including details of grounds for appeal and timescales. • Records of appeals made and their outcomes.

2.2 Assessment and IQA Verification

	Criteria	Possible sources of evidence
2.2.1	<i>Access to assessment is encouraged through the use of a range of valid assessment methods.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment plans and candidate assessment records. • Provision for candidates with particular assessment requirements.
2.2.2	<i>The centre is able to operate assessment instruments appropriate to the qualification being assessed in line with ProQual requirements.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portfolio building and assessment guidance. • Assessment workbooks/resources. • Secure storage for candidate work. • Systems for ensuring authenticity of candidates' work.
2.2.3	<i>Queries about the qualification specification and assessment guidance are resolved and recorded.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Records of queries raised with awarding organisations. • Records/minutes of queries raised with the IQA verifier.
2.2.4	<i>Assessment is conducted by qualified and occupationally competent staff.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of the occupational background, experience and qualifications of the assessment team. • CVs and qualification certificates.
2.2.5	<i>Assessment decisions and practices are regularly sampled and findings are acted upon to ensure consistency and fairness.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IQA verification plans. • Records of assessment sampling and standardisation of assessment. • Minutes of assessment team meetings. • Records of networking/standardisation events.
2.2.6	<i>IQA verification is conducted by appropriately qualified and experienced staff.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of the occupational background, experience and qualifications of the IQA verifiers. • CVs and qualification certificates.
2.2.7	<i>Consistency of standards of assessment and security of assessments and assessment records must be assured.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systems for retaining candidates' work. • Records of assignments matching retained work.
2.2.8	<i>Requests are complied with for access to premises, records, information, candidates and staff for the purpose of EQA verification.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data and information management systems. • Candidate tracking systems. • Assessment and IQA verification records.
2.2.9	<i>Information regarding qualification certification options is made available to candidates.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Records of qualifications registered/claimed awarded. • Induction materials that explain the qualification being undertaken.
2.2.10	<i>Suspected and alleged malpractice by a candidate is reported to ProQual.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Malpractice policy provided to candidates. • Records of investigation into suspected cases of malpractice.

3. MONITORING AND REVIEW

3.1 Records

	Criteria	Possible sources of evidence
3.1.1	<i>Candidate records and details of achievements are accurate and kept up to date, securely stored in line with ProQual requirements, and available for EQA verification and auditing.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candidate registration details including ULN. • Candidate assessment records. • Evidence files/portfolios. • Security and access arrangements. • Practitioner card images.
3.1.2	<i>Assessment records are maintained in line with ProQual requirements and made available for the purposes of auditing.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IQA verification plan and sampling records. • Minutes of assessment team meetings.
3.1.3	<i>Information supplied to ProQual for the purposes of registration and certification is complete and accurate.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Records of candidate entry/registration details and certificate claims including ULN. • Practitioner card images.
3.1.4	<i>Information and recording systems enable candidates' achievements to be monitored and reviewed in relation to the centre's equality policy and implementation action plan.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achievement records in relation to the access and fair assessment policy. • Statistical information on achievement and certification rates analysed by factors such as ethnic origin, disability and gender. • Evidence of revisions to implementation plan.

3.2 Review

	Criteria	Possible sources of evidence
3.2.1	<i>Actions identified by EQA verification visits are disseminated to appropriate staff and corrective measures are implemented.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EQA verification report(s) circulated to the assessment team and senior management. • Action plans.
3.2.2	<i>The effectiveness of the assessment strategy is reviewed against national requirements and corrective measures are implemented.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal reviews of sampling strategies. • EQA Verifier reports. • Evidence of corrective actions taken.
3.2.3	<i>Candidate, employer and other feedback is used to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of qualification provision against the centre's stated aims and policies, leading to continuous improvement.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation forms/surveys. • User's charter/customer service statements. • A qualification development plan.
3.2.4	<i>The centre's achievements against its plan are monitored and reviewed and used to inform future centre qualification development activity.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal audit/self-assessment arrangements. • Evidence of corrective actions taken/implemented. • A revised qualification development plan.

Appendix 2: Customer Service Statement

This charter sets out the ProQual's expected level of service. Our aim is to provide a service that is efficient, effective and responsive.

1. ProQual and Potential Assessment Centres

ProQual will:

- provide potential assessment centres with detailed guidance on becoming an assessment centre and support where required;
- provide information following an enquiry within five working days to include the information regarding the qualification requested, application form and guidance on completing the application form;
- acknowledge an application for centre approval within five working days;
- when all necessary information has been obtained ask an EQA Verifier to set up an approval visit;
- ensure the Governing Body provides a decision on EQA Verifier approval recommendations. Decisions of approval will be reached within fifteen working days of receipt of the EQA Verifier's report. The approved centre will receive a formal letter and the ProQual Centre Handbook within seven working days following approval. If a centre has not been approved then the centre will receive a letter within seven working days with an action plan required to be implemented prior to approval;
- assign an EQA Verifier upon approval.

2. ProQual and Approved Assessment Centres

ProQual and its' assessment centres work in partnership to jointly promote the development, take-up and use of accredited qualifications.

EQA Verifiers contracted to ProQual will:

- set up approval visits within fifteen working days of centre approval application having been received by ProQual or within a time-scale agreeable to the potential assessment centre;
- carry out monitoring centre visits a minimum of two times per annum. An agenda for monitoring visits will be sent to ProQual and the approved centre two weeks prior to the visit;
- complete a report and agree an action plan at the end of each visit. The action plan will be submitted to ProQual within ten working days of the visit;

ProQual will:

- give all assessment centres access to an EQA Verifier, the Operational and Quality Assurance Teams and administrative support staff;
- respond to all enquiries positively and as quickly as possible. In the first instance we will reply within five working days to enquiries in writing or by phone either with an answer or in more complex matters with an update;

- in any matters involving an investigation keep approved centres informed of progress at least once a month;
- provide a forum for debate and discussion on standardisation relating to approved centre and awarding body practices and procedures;
- provide up-to-date guidance material and support in handling technical aspects of assessment;
- organise sector specific workshops for cross centre standardisation and help develop the skills in assessment and verification, to ensure best practice is shared across each individual sector, with the objective that these take place on an annual basis;
- provide full details of annual fees, costs and resources associated with implementation of a qualification, please see the current Fees Schedule;
- welcome customer feedback from approved and potential centres, candidates and other customers. Comments and suggestions should be sent, in the first instance, to Central Support.

Assessment Centres will:

- use ProQual promotional materials and the ProQual logo on their own materials in accordance with the guidelines outlined in the ProQual Centre Handbook;
- download qualification specifications for candidates;
- ensure that materials given to candidates are of a high quality in terms of reproduction and encourage their use;
- complete ProQual candidate registrations;
- maintain complete, up-to-date records of qualifications and experience of each member of centre staff (this can be in CV format) and keep the EQA Verifier and ProQual notified of any changes;
- forward or make available CVs and qualification certificates of potential assessors to ProQual for approval via the EQA Verifier;
- ensure assessors have copies of the latest specifications and supporting paperwork;
- attend meetings for approved centres;
- uphold the Equality policy;
- assist candidates with special assessment requirements;
- assist ProQual with advice or guidance where asked to do so.

3. Registration and Certification

ProQual will:

- process candidate registrations and issue registration numbers through the Quartz system;
- invoice centres for candidate registrations;
- on receipt of a certificate claim through the Quartz system invoice the centre for candidate units completed and despatch a certificate within fifteen working days.

4. Appeals and Complaints

ProQual publishes an Appeals Policy and a Complaints Policy.

ProQual will:

Log all complaints.

For complaints relating to our service and the performance of EQA Verifiers:

- respond full, or provide a progress report within fifteen working days of receiving complaints;
- for more complex complaints, resolve the complaint through the ProQual Governing Body.

For complaints relating to the services offered by assessment centres:

- ProQual will ascertain whether the complainant has exhausted the approved centre's complaints procedure;
- where the complainant has not given the centre an opportunity to resolve the complaint, ProQual will refer the complainant to the approved centre (although ProQual reserves the right to investigate serious complaints);
- where the approved centre's system has been exhausted ProQual will investigate the complaint;
- for all complaints, ProQual will respond fully, or provide a progress report within fifteen working days of receipt;
- for more complex complaints, ProQual will resolve the complaint within an agreed time-scale.

Appendix 3: Data Protection Statement

The **General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)** replaced the Data Protection Act 1998 and is concerned with respecting the rights of individuals when processing their personal information.

In order for ProQual to design, develop, deliver and award its regulated qualifications we need to gather certain personal information about candidates in order for us to process registrations onto qualifications and process claims for certification.

Personal Information and the Purposes for which it is Used

When candidates are registered with ProQual an electronic record is created on the Quartz web-based system. The information that we collect is based on information about candidate, the qualification(s) that they are registered on to, when their achievement certificate is claimed and equal opportunities information.

Information collected:

- * first name, last name, Unique Learner Number, date of birth, gender, learning difficulties, ethnicity, number and title of qualification registered onto, date of registration, date of certification claim

This information is used in the following ways:

- * to electronically process registrations and certifications
- * to confirm candidate details against the Learner Record Service Database
- * to upload candidate achievement details to the Learner Record Service Database
- * to produce statistical information for the regulator (Ofqual, Qualifications Wales, and CCEA), Government Departments and funding bodies and to help us plan and improve our services

When a candidate has achieved a qualification, their electronic record is archived securely on the Quartz web-based system.

Access to Information and Data Storage

ProQual is committed to the data protection principles, all personal information is held on the Quartz web-based secure server accessed by ProQual staff engaged in the administration of registration and certification activities.

Data held on ProQual's QuartzWeb server is protected from unauthorised access. The data files are stored in an encrypted form to make them unreadable.

ProQual takes security very seriously. All staff are made aware of security procedures to be followed in the handling of personal information. Whilst ProQual will take all reasonable precautions to ensure that other organisations with whom we deal have good security practices, we are not responsible for the privacy practices of those organisations.

Access to Data

Individuals have the right under the GDPR to have access to, to rectify or erase their personal data held by ProQual.

Requests should be made in writing to the Operations Manager, ProQual AB Ltd, ProQual House, Unit 1, Innovation Drive, Newport, HU15 2GX or by e-mail for the attention of the Operations Manager at enquiries@proqualab.com.

Appendix 4: Equality Policy

In the performance of its regulated functions ProQual undertakes to comply with all current legislation related to equality and will not discriminate on grounds of gender, sexual orientation, colour, ethnic or national origin, age, marital status, family circumstances, social-economic background, disability, religious or potential beliefs or other irrelevant distinction.

Centres are required to sign a commitment to comply with equal opportunities legislation in force at the time. EQA Verifiers will include monitoring the operation of the equal opportunities at approved assessment centres.

Principles

The aim of the policy is to ensure that all individuals with whom ProQual has a relationship are treated solely on the basis of their merits, abilities and potential.

ProQual is committed to:

- i) promoting equality and diversity in all aspects of its regulated functions and activities;
- ii) developing assessments that avoid creating unnecessary barriers to achievement and ensuring that assessments are free from bias;
- iii) promoting access to assessment for all;
- iv) ensuring that employment and contracting policies provide opportunity for all regardless of gender, colour, ethnic or national origin, age, social-economic background, disability, religious or political beliefs, marital status, family circumstances, sexual orientation or any other irrelevant distinction

Implementation

The Equality Policy will be implemented in relation to:

- the provision of all services
- candidates who apply for assessment
- the development of qualifications and all forms of assessments
- the monitoring of registration and certification data to ensure compliance with equality of opportunity
- the monitoring of any promotional or published material
- recruitment, selection and training of staff

ProQual will ensure that its equal opportunities policy is communicated to all staff, external quality assurance verifiers (EQA Verifiers), approved assessment centres and to all candidates.

ProQual will ensure, through the centre approval process that approved assessment centres have and operate equal opportunities policies that are no less favourable than its own.

Responsibility for monitoring the effectiveness of the policy and taking corrective action from its outcomes to maintain and improve it rests with the ProQual Governing Body.

Appendix 5: Enquiries and Appeals Procedures

Enquiries

If candidates have enquiries about assessment decisions affecting their results they should first speak to their assessor to discuss the matter. The assessor should be able to explain any assessment decisions and if necessary explain to the candidate what they must do in order to meet the required standard.

All enquiries relating to assessment or other decisions should be dealt with at approved centre level, if the outcome is not satisfactory, then the centre should contact the Operations Manager who will initiate an investigation.

Appeals

ProQual requires approved centres to provide candidates with clear procedures for dealing with enquiries and appeals concerning matters clearly covered by the criteria for centre approval. The first stage of the procedure for candidate appeals must be conducted at approved centre level. If the outcome is not satisfactory to all parties, then the centre must contact ProQual to take the appeal further.

Centres wishing to appeal against a ProQual decision should lodge an appeal with ProQual for consideration.

Guidelines for candidate appeals and centre appeals are addressed separately below.

1. Guidelines on grounds for candidate appeal

The most common problem is disagreement between a centre and a candidate and/or between a candidate and assessor on the outcome of an assessment decision. The approved centre will wish to acknowledge that there is scope for genuine disagreement and to do everything possible to understand the reason for and to resolve a particular disagreement both quickly and informally.

However, the candidate may insist on exercising his or her right to undergo a more formal process. Grounds for appeal shall include any breach by the centre of regulations or codes or practice.

Candidates should be informed on registration and the availability of the approved centre's appeals procedure, which will have been developed at the time of approval, and the awarding body's review procedure. It should be made clear to whom and in what form a

request for an appeal or review should be lodged, how such as appeal will be dealt with, notification of decisions and forms of redress where an appeal is upheld.

The approved centre must keep the appeals procedure on file and ensure it is monitored and regularly reviewed.

1.1 Review

The conduct of appeals will routinely be monitored by EQA Verifiers. However, a candidate whose appeal has not been upheld by his or her approved centre may specifically request ProQual to review the conduct of the appeal. The request will be addressed to the EQA Verifier through the approved centre and will include:

- the original appeal;
- the centre's findings;
- a summary report on the conduct of the appeal;
- a brief statement by the candidate indicating where he or she believes there to have been shortcomings in the conduct of the appeal.

The candidate, the approved centre or the EQA Verifier may request that the review be referred to the ProQual Governing Body.

1.2 Quality control and assurance

Centres are expected to deal promptly with requests for the consideration of appeals, to maintain records of their conduct and outcomes, and to bring requests for review promptly to the attention of EQA Verifiers.

Stages for appeal for candidates:

i) Guidance to candidates

Candidates to be advised, on registration, of the appeals policy of the approved centre and the ProQual Appeals Policy.

ii) Lodging of appeal

Where a candidate believes that he or she has grounds for appeal, it should be brought to the attention of the centre co-ordinator within a stated maximum period of time (normally within a maximum of four weeks of the assessment decision). It will be the responsibility of the IQA verifier to determine whether a special case has been established and to advise the candidate.

iii) *Outcomes*

The appeal to be considered by the IQA verifier or group identified in the approved centre's centre procedures. The possible outcomes are either:

- recommendation that the appeal be upheld; or
- recommendation that the appeal *not* be upheld.

iv) *Centre review notification*

This refers to formal written notification to the candidate on the outcome of the appeal by the centre. If the recommendation is that the appeal be upheld, then the candidate is also told of the proposed redress, e.g. arrangements for a re-assessment by a different assessor without further cost to the candidate.

If the recommendation is that the appeal *not* be upheld, then the candidate is sent a written explanation, and is advised that the EQA Verifier will be provided with all of the relevant documentation on the appeal. The EQA Verifier may wish, or may be requested by the candidate to review the matter. EQA Verifiers will concentrate on the conduct of the centre of the appeal in the light of its appeals policy and will not normally conduct re-assessments or interview candidates.

v) *Quality monitoring*

The approved centre recommendation on the outcome of the appeal is:

- notified immediately to the EQA Verifier, together with relevant documentation for monitoring purposes.
- Recorded by the centre co-ordinator in quality assurance monitoring.

vi) *External review*

The EQA Verifier, on receipt of an appeal and approved centre recommendation, should:

- inform ProQual of the appeal and consult on the conduct of the review;
- determine whether the grounds for the appeal had been properly established;
- determine whether the approved centre dealt promptly and correctly with the appeal;
- determine whether sufficient information is available to enable him/her to endorse the approved centre recommendation;
- notify the approved centre immediately of his/her endorsement of the recommendation or request further information.

vii) *Further and Independent Review*

- Where a candidate or approved centre believes that there is evidence providing a basis for a wider review then a request is made to ProQual that the matter be referred to an independent reviewer. An independent reviewer will be somebody who is not and has not been a member of the ProQual committees, or an employee or examiner at ProQual, at any time during the past seven years. This request of a wider review will be acknowledged by ProQual within ten working days.
- The independent reviewer will determine how the review process (as in 6. above) is to be conducted, including right of representation. Where a matter of policy or principle is identified by the independent reviewer it will be referred, with appropriate recommendations to the ProQual Governing Body. The decision of the Governing Body is final.

viii) *Notification of the further and independent review*

The candidate is sent written notification within five working days of the final decision by the ProQual Governing Body.

2. Guidelines on grounds for a centre appeal

The following are examples of when a centre may want to appeal. The centre may be unhappy with a ProQual decision concerning:

- approval as a centre or extension of approval to assess an additional qualification or qualifications;
- the decision of an EQA verifier concerning the work of the approved centre;
- the result of a malpractice investigation;
- a request for reasonable adjustments or special consideration

ProQual will ensure that everything possible is done to understand the reason for and to resolve a particular disagreement both quickly and informally.

However, the centre may wish to insist on a more formal hearing. Grounds for appeal shall include any contravention by the awarding body of regulations or codes of practice.

2.1 Review

An appeal by a centre against a ProQual decision will normally be dealt with by ProQual who will review relevant documentation and seek an appropriate resolution of the matter.

Where they are unable to reach an agreed resolution the matter may be referred to the ProQual Governing Body.

2.2 Quality control and assurance

ProQual will summarise action on all enquiries and appeals in reporting to the ProQual Governing Body. This aspect of the work of the Governing Body will be covered in its self-assessment reports to regulatory bodies.

2.3 Stages for appeal and review for centres

i) *Lodging an appeal*

- A centre must give notice to ProQual of its intention to appeal within a maximum of four weeks of the decision.

ii) *Outcomes*

The appeal to be considered by ProQual. The possible outcomes are either:

- recommendation that the appeal be upheld; or
- recommendation that the appeal is *not* upheld.

iii) *ProQual notification*

This refers to formal notification to the centre on the outcome of the appeal. If the recommendation is that the appeal be upheld, then the centre is also told of the proposed redress (e.g. arrangements for further consideration of the approval or other decision, without further cost to the centre). If the recommendation is that the appeal is *not* be upheld, then the centre is sent a written explanation within five working days.

iv) *Quality monitoring*

The ProQual decision on the outcome of the appeal is:

- notified immediately to the centre, together with relevant documentation;
- recorded by ProQual.

v) *Review*

The decision of ProQual's Governing Body is final.

Appendix 6: Complaints Policy

Introduction

ProQual requires approved centres to provide candidates with clear procedures for dealing with complaints concerning matters clearly covered by the criteria for centre approval. **The first stage of the complaints procedure must be conducted at approved centre level. If the outcome is not satisfactory to all parties, then the approved centre must contact ProQual to take the complaint further.**

Complaints

Records of the way in which complaints have been dealt with will form a part of the general management records of an approved centre.

1. Guidelines on grounds for a candidate complaint

A registered candidate has the right of complaint where an approved centre has failed to meet the criteria on the basis of which it was approved. The following are examples of when a candidate may have grounds for a complaint:

- i administrative shortcomings, for example inaccuracy in recording of candidate's progress, or unreasonable delay;
- ii inadequate resources, such as inappropriate or insufficient physical (e.g. technical) resources, insufficient or inappropriately experienced and qualified staff;
- iii) shortcomings in the conduct of the assessment, for example the non-availability of alternative assessment methods or the import of extraneous criteria by an assessor;
- iv) discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, colour, ethnic background or national origin, age, marital status, family circumstances, social-economic background, employment status, responsibilities to dependants, disability or religious or political beliefs or other irrelevant distinction.

The approved centre must keep the complaints procedure on file and ensure it is monitored and regularly reviewed.

1.1 Stages for complaints for candidates

1 *Guidance to candidates*

Candidates to be advised, on registration, of the complaints policy of the approved centre and the ProQual Complaints Policy.

2 *Lodging of complaint*

A complaint can be made without prior notice.

3 *Outcomes*

The complaint to be considered by the IQA verifier or group identified in the approved centre's centre procedures. The possible outcomes are either:

- recommendation that the complaint be upheld; or
- recommendation that the complaint *not* be upheld.

4 *Centre review notification*

This refers to formal written notification to the candidate on the outcome of the complaint by the approved centre. If the recommendation is that the complaint be upheld, then the candidate is also told of the proposed redress, e.g. arrangements for re-assessment by a different assessor without further cost to the candidate.

If the recommendation is that the complaint *not* be upheld, then the candidate is sent a written explanation, and is advised that the EQA Verifier will be provided with all of the relevant documentation on the complaint. The EQA Verifier may wish, or may be requested by the candidate, to review the matter. EQA Verifiers will concentrate on the conduct by the approved centre in the light of its complaints policy and will not normally conduct re-assessments or interview candidates.

5 *Quality monitoring*

The approved centre recommendation on the outcome of the complaint is:

- notified immediately to the EQA Verifier together with relevant documentation;
- recorded by the Centre Co-ordinator in quality assurance monitoring.

6 *External review*

On receipt of a complaint and approved centre recommendation an EQA Verifier should:

- inform ProQual of the complaint and consult on the conduct of the review;
- determine whether the grounds for the complaint have been properly established'

- determine whether the approved centre dealt promptly and correctly with the complaint;
- determine whether sufficient information is available to enable him/her to endorse the approved centre recommendation;
- notify the approved centre immediately of his/her endorsement of the recommendation or request further information.

7 *Further and independent review*

- Where a candidate or approved centre believes that there is evidence providing a basis for a wider review then a request is made to ProQual that the matter may be referred to an independent reviewer. An independent reviewer will be a person who is not and has not been a member of ProQual's Committees, or an employee or examiner with ProQual at any time during the past seven years. This request of a wider review will be acknowledged by ProQual within ten working days.
- The independent reviewer will determine how the review process is to be conducted, including the right of representation. Where a matter of policy or principle is identified by the independent reviewer it will be referred, with appropriate recommendations, to ProQual's Governing Body. The decision of the Governing Body is final.
- Where, in considering a complaint, an EQA Verifier finds there to be a serious deficiency in the conduct of assessments by an approved centre, he or she should review the centre's arrangements, including a site visit and make recommendations to ProQual's Governing Body. The EQA Verifier has the discretion to recommend suspension of approval pending resolution of the serious deficiency. The decision of ProQual's Governing Body is final.

8 *Notification of the further and independent review*

The candidate is sent written notification within five working days of the final decision by ProQual's Governing Body.

2. **Guidelines on grounds for a centre complaint**

An approved centre has the right to complain where the awarding body has failed to meet the criteria set out in regulatory arrangements or codes of practice. The following are examples of when a centre may have grounds for a complaint:

- (i) administrative shortcomings, for example inaccuracy in certification, or unreasonable delay;
- (ii) conduct of the EQA Verifier.

ProQual regularly monitors complaints and reviews procedures for dealing with complaints.

2.1 Stages of complaint and review for centres

1 Lodging a complaint

A complaint can be made without prior notice.

2 Outcomes

The complaint will be considered by ProQual's Governing Body. The possible outcomes are either:

- recommendation that the complaint be upheld; or
- recommendation that the complaint *not* be upheld.

3 ProQual notification

If the recommendation is that the complaint be upheld then the centre is also told of the proposed redress. If the recommendation is that the complaint *not* be upheld then the centre is sent written explanation within five working days.

4 Quality monitoring

ProQual's Governing Body decision on the outcome of the complaint is:

- notified immediately to the centre, together with relevant documentation;
- recorded by ProQual

5 Review

The decision of ProQual's Governing Body is final.

Appendix 7: Malpractice and Maladministration Policy

This policy covers malpractice by candidates, centre staff or others involved in the development, delivery and award of a qualification or its units, and maladministration on the part of the centre or any other party involved in the assessment process. The policy is designed to enable ProQual to reduce the levels of malpractice and maladministration.

Malpractice is defined as a deliberate activity, neglect, default or other practice that compromises the integrity of the assessment process, and / or the validity of certificates.

Maladministration is any activity, neglect, default or other practice that results in the centre not complying with the specified requirements for delivery of the qualifications and as set out in the relevant codes of practice where applicable.

ProQual seeks to ensure the avoidance of malpractice in every aspect of the assessment process, to undertake careful review of any reports of malpractice / maladministration, and to take robust action to resolve any proven cases. Centres must report any irregularities in respect of non-compliance with internal assessment, internal moderation or examination procedures in writing to ProQual's Operations Manager immediately they are discovered.

All investigations are supervised by ProQual's Operations Manager, and each case will be judged on an individual basis in the light of information made available.

ProQual will expect centres to co-operate fully with them and will keep all staff and candidates informed of the process throughout any investigation.

Where malpractice is established, ProQual decisions will be commensurate with the gravity of the malpractice / maladministration identified. ProQual may impose conditions on the future involvement of any designated personnel in the conduct, supervision or administration of its assessments and / or revoke a centre's qualification approval or recognition. Certificates may not be awarded and, if already issued, may be declared invalid.

Serious cases of malpractice, where the integrity of an award is put into question, will be reported to the regulatory authorities.

Centres may appeal against any decisions taken by ProQual as a result of a malpractice investigation (ProQual Appeals Procedure).

ProQual will endeavour to carry out all its processes and procedures, and will expect centres to carry out their own duties, without undue delay.

Procedures for Investigating Malpractice and Maladministration

Reporting Malpractice

Approved centres and external quality assurance verifiers have a responsibility to report any suspicion of malpractice to ProQual who will investigate any alleged irregularities and notify Ofqual which is the regulatory authority. ProQual will also advise Ofqual of the proposed action and an estimated timescale for the investigation.

Any material collected by ProQual which is confidential to individuals or a centre, e.g. financial details, will be kept secure and not disclosed to a third party. Additionally, ProQual will guarantee that the identity of complainants will not normally be disclosed without their formal written agreement.

Responsibilities

ProQual requires its approved centres and/or external quality assurance verifiers to report any malpractice suspected after candidates have been registered, making clear any possible implications of a failure to co-operate for the future issuing of certificates and the registration of candidates.

Where malpractice or maladministration is suspected in a centre, ProQual will immediately suspend the centre from making any claims for certification and registration of new candidates. This is to allow an investigation to be initiated and for ProQual to ensure that adequate safeguards are in place to guarantee the validity of the certificates being claimed. Whilst the details may vary, the key factor to be decided by ProQual in determining when to investigate a centre, is when it has reasonable grounds to doubt the integrity of the assessment process.

ProQual's Governing Body which is independent of the management of normal working relationships with centres and external quality assurance verifiers is responsible for managing and carrying out investigations.

ProQual will prepare a final report of its investigation. This will supply the regulatory authorities with details of the investigation:

- the origin of the complaint or how the alleged irregularity(ies) was discovered;
- the investigations carried out;
- the evidence obtained;
- the conclusions drawn;
- the recommendations for action and resolution of the matter.

ProQual will work to an estimated timescale of one month to report its findings and recommend action to the regulatory bodies but may require a longer timescale if the complaint is more detailed.

Exceptionally the regulatory authorities may need to take over an investigation. In such circumstances they will provide a written instruction to ProQual to advise of this and the reasons for taking such action.

ProQual will inform the regulatory authorities whenever it finds evidence that certificates may be invalid and agree the appropriate action with the regulatory authorities.

Qualification certificates are in principle deemed invalid in the following circumstances:

- The evidence assessed is not the candidate's own work;
- The candidate is still working towards the qualification after the certificate has been claimed;
- The certificates have been claimed on the basis of falsified records;
- ProQual has issued certificates contrary to regulatory requirements or codes of practice.

The responsibility for the assessment and certification of candidates is shared between ProQual, its approved centres and external quality assurance verifiers. Centres therefore need to take their share of the responsibility when dealing with problems caused for candidates when certificates have been wrongly claimed. Where a decision is taken to invalidate certificates, ProQual will ensure that the following actions are taken, it will:

- Follow the principle of seeking to protect the interests of candidates, in so far as is reasonable and possible in the circumstances;
- Contact the candidates involved and notify them of the status of their certificates and of any arrangements for re-assessment and/or certification;
- Ensure that the original certificates are cancelled on the database to ensure that duplicates cannot be issued;
- Inform the regulatory authorities of the details of the invalidated certificates and, where appropriate, make the information available to public funding bodies.

Appendix 8: Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy

1. Overview of the policy

1.1 Scope of the policy

This policy is aimed at our centres and candidates who submit requests for reasonable adjustments and special considerations. It sets out the steps to follow when implementing reasonable adjustments and special considerations and the service that ProQual provides for some of these arrangements.

1.2 Communication of the policy

It's important that all those involved in the management, assessment and quality assurance of our programmes and all candidates are fully aware of the contents of the policy. External Quality Assurance Verifiers will check during their centre visits that all centre staff and candidates have been made aware of the contents and purpose of this policy.

1.3 Review of the policy

ProQual's Governing Body will review the policy annually revising it as and when required in response to centre and stakeholder feedback, changes in ProQual practices, actions from the regulatory authorities or external agencies or changes in legislation. ProQual reserves the right to amend the policy as and when necessary. Any review of the policy will ensure that procedures continue to be consistent with the regulatory criteria and are applied properly and fairly in arriving at judgements.

Issues raised by centres and/or candidates with respect to reasonable adjustments and special considerations will be taken into consideration in the on-going development of this policy.

2. Defining reasonable adjustments and special considerations

2.1 Overview

ProQual is committed to eliminating unlawful discrimination and to promoting equality and diversity within our policies, practices and procedures. We recognise the special educational needs of our candidates and are committed to providing equal reasonable adjustments and special considerations for all candidates registered on our qualifications. All ProQual centres are required to have an equal access to assessment policy.

ProQual is responsible for ensuring that all new qualifications are designed and developed in line with the regulatory requirements. This includes ensuring that all qualifications comply with equal opportunities legislation, that there are no barriers to entry, and that the instances of applications for reasonable adjustments and special consideration are minimised.

Reasonable adjustments or special considerations may be required at the time of assessment to ensure that candidates are not disadvantaged or prohibited from taking our qualifications. Such candidates:

- may have a permanent disability or specific learning needs;
- may have a temporary disability, medical condition or learning needs
- are indisposed at the time of the assessment

Assessment should be a fair test of their knowledge and some provision may need to be made to ensure that they receive recognition for their achievement. In making such provision the validity and reliability of assessment must be maintained.

2.2 Reasonable adjustments

A reasonable adjustment is any action that helps to reduce the effect of a disability or difficulty that places the candidate at a substantial disadvantage in the assessment situation.

Reasonable adjustments must not affect the integrity of what needs to be assessed, but may involve:

- changing standard assessment arrangements, for example allowing candidates extra time to complete the assessment activity
- adapting assessment materials, such as providing materials in Braille
- providing assistance during assessment, such as a sign language interpreter or a reader
- re-organising the assessment room, such as removing visual stimuli for an autistic candidate
- changing the assessment method, for example from a written assessment to a spoken assessment

Reasonable adjustments are approved or set in place before the assessment activity takes place; they constitute an arrangement to give the candidate access to the assessment activity. The work produced by the candidate will be marked in the same way as the work of other assessed candidates.

Awarding organisations and centres are only required by law to do what is 'reasonable' in terms of giving access. What is reasonable will depend on the individual circumstances, cost implications and the practicality and effectiveness of the adjustment. Other factors, such as the need to maintain competence standards and health and safety, will also be taken into consideration.

2.3 Special considerations

Special consideration may be given following a scheduled assessment to a candidate:

- Who is present for the assessment but who may have been disadvantaged by temporary illness, injury or adverse circumstances which arose at or near the time of assessment;
- Who misses part of the assessment due to circumstances beyond their control.

Special consideration should not give the candidate an unfair advantage, neither should it cause the user of the certificate to be misled regarding a candidate's achievements. The candidate's result must reflect his or her achievement in the assessment and not necessarily his or her potential ability.

Special consideration may result in a small post-assessment adjustment to the mark of the candidate. The size of the adjustment will depend on the circumstances during the assessment and will reflect the difficulty faced by the candidate, but will always be a minor adjustment as to do more may jeopardise the standard.

In some circumstances it may be more appropriate to offer the candidate an opportunity to retake the assessment at a later date or to extend the registration period so that the candidate has more time to complete the assessment activity.

2.4 Making reasonable adjustments

All awarding organisations and centres have a responsibility to ensure that the process of assessment is robust and fair and allows the candidate to show what they know and can do without compromising the assessment criteria.

Adjustments to assessments:

- should not invalidate the assessment requirements of the qualification
- should not give the candidates an unfair advantage
- should reflect the candidate's normal way of working
- should be based on the individual need of the candidate.

These principles should be followed when making decisions about a candidate's need for adjustments to assessment.

When considering whether an adjustment to assessment is appropriate, awarding organisations and centres need to bear in mind the following:

- Candidates should potentially be able to achieve the assessment requirements. Adjustments to assessment should not compensate the candidate for lack of knowledge and skills. The candidate must be able to cope with the content of the assessment and be able to work at the level required for the assessment
- Any adjustment to assessment must not invalidate the assessment requirements of the qualification/award or the requirements of the assessment strategy. Competence standards should not be altered. While vocational awarding organisations should take all reasonable steps to ensure that candidates with a disability or difficulty are not placed at a substantial disadvantage in terms of access to assessment, there is no duty to make any adjustment to a provision, criterion or practice which is defined as a competence standard. All candidates' performance will be assessed against set standards. These standards cannot be altered, but it may be possible to change the delivery or process of assessment so that each candidate has an equal opportunity to demonstrate what they know and can do.

- Any adjustment to assessment mustn't give the candidate an unfair advantage nor should it disadvantage the candidate. The qualification of a candidate who has had an adjustment to assessment must have the same credibility as that of any other candidate. As vocational qualifications may lead to employment, achievement of such qualifications must give a realistic indication to the potential employer of what the holder of the certificate can do.
- Any adjustment to assessment must be based on the individual need of the candidate. Decisions about adjustments to assessment should be taken after careful consideration of the assessment needs of each individual candidate, the assessment requirements of the qualification and the nature and extent of the support given as part of normal teaching practice. Centres should not assume that the same adjustment will be required for all assessments. Different qualifications and different methods of assessments can make different demands on the candidate. Candidates should be consulted throughout the process.
- Any adjustment to assessment should reflect the candidate's normal way of working providing this does not affect what is being assessed in any way. The candidate should have experience of and practice in the use of the adjustment.

3. Centre's roles and responsibilities

3.1 Assessment and IQA verification

Arrangements for reasonable adjustments for assessment and IQA verification must ensure that the resulting candidate's evidence:

- ◆ meets the performance criteria
- ◆ is assessable
- ◆ is capable of internal and external quality assurance verification.

3.2 Delegated responsibilities to our centres

The following arrangements may be implemented by centres without prior application to us. When arrangements have been made arrangements for reasonable adjustments these should be documented and made available to the External quality assurance verifier during their visit.

3.3 List of Reasonable Adjustments

Candidates who have a learning difficulty e.g. dyslexia - use of a reader, scribe, audio-cassettes, a speech synthesiser, word-processing or transcription packages/typewriters (except where hand writing is an assessment objective), coloured overlays

Candidates who have a hearing impairment - use of a communicator/interpreter, mechanical/electronic aids, any other suitable aids (recommended by a teacher of the hearing impaired).

Candidates who have a visual impairment - use of a reader, a scribe, mechanical/electronic aids (e.g. audiotape, speech synthesiser), coloured overlays.

Candidates who have a permanent physical impairment - use of a reader, a scribe and/or interpreter, mechanical/electronic aids, an assistant in practical tasks.

Candidates who have a medical condition or temporary injury - use of a reader and/or scribe and/or interpreter, mechanical/electronic aids, an assistant in practical tasks.

Candidates whose first language is not English, Gaelic or Welsh - use of a bilingual dictionary (book form only; not electronic dictionaries or translators).

Candidates with autistic spectrum disorder, with visual or hearing impairment or with physical difficulties – minor changes to the organisation of the assessment room may benefit some candidates with for example:

- visually impaired candidates may benefit from sitting near a window so that they have good lighting
- hearing impaired candidates may benefit from being seated near the front of the room removing visual/noise stimuli, such as a ticking clock, from the room.

Candidates who require extra time and/or rest breaks

Except where performance within a specific timescale is an assessment objective, centres may grant additional time up to a maximum of 25% of external assessment time, and/or rest breaks, to candidates with particular requirements and with appropriate evidence of need. This can be managed within the centre without informing ProQual beforehand. If the candidate requires more than 25% extra time the centre will need to apply in writing to ProQual before the assessment.

Candidates who require separate supervision or invigilation

Arrangements for the separate supervision of any candidate may be made at a centre's discretion. Any invigilation arrangements for such candidates should not advantage or disadvantage these candidates over other candidates.

Anyone who assists in implementing reasonable adjustments during an assessment, such as a reader, scribe or interpreter, can be employed by the centre but should not be involved in the course delivery.

3.4 Reasonable adjustment arrangements applications

Centres wanting to put in place any arrangements which are not described about are required to apply in writing to ProQual. All requests for reasonable adjustments should indicate:

- the nature of the candidate's disability/learning need
- special assessment arrangements requested
- supporting evidence or a copy of the evidence.

Send your report and supporting evidence by email to enquiries@proqualab.com or in writing to the Operations Manager at our office. A request should be submitted to ProQual each time a candidate requires adjustment to internal assessment or needs internal assessment materials modified, regardless of any previous requests made for the same candidate.

3.5 Notification timescales

All reasonable adjustments requests should be sent to ProQual at least 10 working days before your candidate requires assessment materials.

4. ProQual role and responsibilities

ProQual will review written requests within 2 working days. If we are unable to agree to the request, we will suggest a suitable alternative reasonable adjustment.

4.1 Evidence requirements

Candidates requiring arrangements for reasonable adjustments should provide centres with evidence of their learning needs or medical condition. Centres must ensure that suitably qualified personnel check that the evidence is current and relevant to the candidate. Examples of evidence could be a relevant diagnostic report or statement of learning needs or medical condition from appropriately qualified personnel.

Evidence should be retained and available to our external quality assurance verifiers.

In the case of an appeal, centres must ensure that evidence to support a reasonable adjustment or special consideration is retained for 3 months after being issued with the results of an assessment.

4.2 Special considerations for both internal and external assessment

ProQual will review the each request for special consideration to ensure that the decision made maintains the equity, validity and reliability of the assessment for the candidate and does not give the candidate an unfair advantage.

Centres must ensure that candidates submit evidence to them in support of the special consideration. This may include medical evidence or a statement from the invigilator or any other appropriate information.

4.3 Internal assessment

The only special consideration allowed is an extended time period/registration period for the completion of the assessment. Centres must retain evidence of this special consideration and make it available to our external quality assurance verifiers.

4.4 External assessment

All candidates regardless of their special consideration must still meet the minimum requirement for the award of a certificate. Where a candidate completes the external assessment under special considerations and sufficient supporting evidence is available, then ProQual may make an

exceptional circumstances award where candidates have achieved the internal assessment component providing at least 50% of the external assessment has been achieved. (This is also known as an aegrotat award).

For candidates completing external assessments, centres should record the details of these arrangements on the Invigilator's Register and return it to ProQual with the external assessment papers.

A candidate who's fully prepared for an external assessment may be eligible for special consideration if:

- performance in an external assessment is affected by circumstances beyond the control of the candidate, e.g. recent personal illness, accident, bereavement, serious disturbance during the assessment
- alternative assessment arrangements which were agreed in advance of the assessment proved inappropriate or inadequate
- part of an assessment has been missed due to circumstances beyond the control of the candidate.

4.5 Applying for special considerations

Centres should apply in writing with the following information:

- centre number and name
- candidate name
- candidate number
- qualification title, level and unit(s)
- date of the assessment session (month and year)
- summary of adverse circumstances affecting the candidate's performance in the assessment
- list of other units of the qualification already achieved and details of the assessor's and/or internal quality assurance verifier's records of their decisions about the candidate's achievement
- estimated result for the candidate
- copy of any evidence submitted to you by the candidate in support of their request.

The application must be signed and dated by a member of the centre staff who has formally been given delegated authority for this by the Head of Centre. The signatory must declare that the information given is accurate.

Centres must submit their application as soon as possible after the assessment and no later than 7 working days after the assessment.

ProQual can only accept requests for special consideration after the results of the assessment have been released in the following circumstances:

- the application has been overlooked at the centre and the oversight is confirmed by the Head of Centre
- medical evidence comes to light about a candidate's condition, which demonstrates that the candidate must have been affected by the condition at the time of the assessment, even though the problem revealed itself only after the assessment.

Email, post or fax your request for special considerations to our Quality Assurance Manager.

4.6 ProQual responsibilities

ProQual will review requests for special consideration within 2 days. If the request is approved ProQual will review the candidate's performance in the light of available evidence. A successful application of special consideration would not necessarily change a candidate's result. ProQual will keep the centre informed.

5. General information

5.1 Confidentiality

All records of reasonable adjustments and special consideration arrangements are dealt with in confidence.

5.2 Other arrangements not covered by this policy

Circumstances for both internal and external assessment not covered in this policy should be discussed with the Quality Assurance Manager before assessment takes place. Contact by email or telephone.

5.3 Appeals

Centres wishing to appeal against a ProQual decision to decline requests for reasonable adjustments or special consideration arrangements should refer to our Appeals Policy.

5.4 Using this policy

ProQual is committed to ensuring that all candidates have fair access to assessment, if ProQual becomes aware that a centre is not following this policy, then the centre's approval status will be reviewed in line with the Malpractice Policy.

Appendix 9: Payment of Fees

1. Centres

Initial Centre Approval and Verification Fees

ProQual makes a charge to cover the cost of initial centre approval and verification, it does not make a charge in subsequent years. The fee includes an initial visit by an EQA Verifier to approve the centre and the qualifications listed on the application form. A fee is charged for all EQA Verifier visits.

Existing centres with another awarding body offering the same type of qualification in the same sector that can also provide EQA verification reports demonstrating good management and quality assurance systems may or may not require an initial visit by an EQA Verifier to approve the centre and the qualifications listed on the application form. Refer to the current Fees Schedule for details of fees.

For all visits ProQual will appoint an EQA Verifier with a broad range of experience to take responsibility for monitoring the work of each approved centre.

Additional Qualifications

There is no fee for centres seeking approval to offer qualifications in the same skills sector as their initial approval.

Subsequent Sector Qualification Approval

Following initial approval a fee may be charged for centres wishing to offer additional qualifications in a different skills sector. Refer to the current Fees Schedule for details of fees.

2. Candidates

Candidate Registration and Certification

For each candidate undertaking qualifications there is a fee for registration and certifications.

Certification can be claimed for single or multiple units and for full qualifications.

Replacement certificates can be obtained for a fee.

We also offer a combined **Registration** and **Certification** option, contact us for the current fee schedule or visit www.proqualab.com to download.

3. Terms of Payment

A centre approval fee is invoiced when a centre approval visit is arranged.

All candidates must be registered for the qualification they are undertaking before claims for certification can be made. Certification can be claimed for full qualifications and as well as for single or multiple units. ProQual offers two choices for candidate registration and certification:

Option 1 Registration **payment at the time of candidate registration**
Certification **payment at the time of claim for candidate certification**

Option 2 Combined candidate registration and certification **payment at the time of candidate registration** for a full qualification.

No refunds can be made if a candidate does not complete a full qualification.

All fees are quoted exclusive of VAT.

4. Services Provided

Services provided for approved centres include advice and guidance on the preparation of an application for approval, an approval visit by an expert EQA Verifier, provision and updating of ProQual's Centre Handbook, conduct of appeals and complaints, and normally two quality assurance visits per year.

Services for candidates include the provision of guidance and standards, maintenance of a permanent record of achievement (at qualification and unit level), the issue of a full qualification certificate or a certificate of unit(s) credit.

The schedule of fees is subject to review annually at the end of each financial year.



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