Centre & Qualification Approval Criteria and Guidance

1. Introduction

To gain approval to offer any Gatehouse Awards (GA) qualification, centres must satisfy the approval criteria set out by GA and the qualification regulator(s).

Approval must be obtained for each qualification the centre intends to offer.

Applying centres should ensure that they have read this document, the Centre Handbook and other relevant policies and procedures (available at www.gatehouseawards.org) and be assured that they meet the approval criteria fully prior to completing and submitting an *Application for Centre Approval*.

Please note that the *Application for Centre Approval* needs to be accompanied by at least one *Application for Qualification Approval*.

Please also note that separate Application for Centre Approval forms are available – one for centres based in the UK and one for international centres. International centres should contact GA prior to commencing the process, to ensure that any additional requirements relating to the country are outlined and understood.

Additional support and advice can be obtained by contacting GA directly by emailing info@gatehouseawards.org

Please ensure that all sections of the forms are completed accurately and fully. Failure to do so may delay or even prevent your application being processed.

2. General Data Protection & Privacy Statement

GA will collect and hold data on centres, staff and candidates in line with the guidance of the Information Commissioner's Office (the ICO). The data will be used for the creation of monitoring statistics and, where necessary, as part of any monitoring or investigations into the conduct of the centre, its staff and candidates. The data will not be disclosed to any third parties or organisations, except where there is a statutory requirement. Under the General Data Protection Regulations 2018, the centre must ensure that candidates are aware of how their personal data will be processed. As this includes sensitive personal data, the candidate must give their consent to this prior to taking a GA qualification. A full *GDPR and Privacy Policy* is available from GA.

3. Summary of Approval Criteria

The Approval Criteria is provided below. Examples of how the criteria can be evidenced are also provided. In order to successfully gain approval, centres will need:

- A senior member of staff with overall responsibility for the Centre's operations

- Allocated individual members of staff with responsibility for internal quality assurance arrangements, registrations/certificate claims, and finance
- Robust management and administrative arrangements
- Staff who are competent and suitably qualified to deliver each aspect of the qualification(s)
- Sufficient physical resources to deliver each aspect of the qualification(s)
- Adequate policies and procedures to support qualification delivery and record keeping.

Centres that are already approved by another Awarding Organisation may already have well-established procedures and practices in place. In such cases, GA may also take into consideration previous external quality assurance and moderation reports that demonstrate that the centre has good management and administrative arrangements and appropriate assessment delivery, internal moderation (where applicable) and quality assurance practices.

Newly established centres may already have some procedures and practices in place and should submit as much evidence as they can in support of their application. Guidance for centres new to delivering qualifications is available from GA. Upon request, GA staff can also visit a centre to assist them in preparing to make their application for approval. Please email info@gatehouseawards.org to arrange such a visit.

4. Failure to meet Criteria before Approval

GA will check that the centre meets the approval criteria prior to granting approval. Where a centre does not meet the criteria, feedback is provided in the form of an action plan and the Centre has the opportunity to become compliant with the approval criteria and allow approval to then be granted.

GA will view evidence of completed actions remotely or during an approval visit.

Please note that the payment of the application fee does not guarantee a Centre will be approved and is not refundable should a Centre fail to meet the required criteria for Approval.

5. Review and Monitoring

GA will review the evidence in support of an *Application for Centre Approval / Qualification Approval* remotely, during an approval visit or at the first External Quality Assurance visit.

The approval criteria cover both initial and on-going approval. The centre is responsible for ensuring continued compliance with the approval criteria and must inform GA immediately of any changes which may impact their ability to maintain full compliance.

Continuing compliance with the approval criteria will be monitored through GA monitoring activities, which includes, as a minimum:

- Annual Re-Approval
- External Quality Assurance

- Remote monitoring of how well the centre continues to deliver qualifications

6. Failure to Meet Approval Criteria after Approval

Where it is identified that an approved centre subsequently fails to comply with the approval criteria, GA will usually issue an action plan for the centre to complete. GA will also apply sanctions if the action plan is not completed, or the non-compliance is considered severe enough to threaten the validity, integrity or reputation of a qualification or GA, or if an incident has occurred which has led to adverse effects for candidates, or is deemed likely to do so.

Failure to remedy non-compliances may ultimately result in the withdrawal of the centre's approved status.

Please see our Malpractice and Maladministration Policy and our Sanctions Policy for full details of how we manage any such incidents. Copies of these policies are available on the GA website.

7. Staff Roles and Responsibilities

GA requires all centres to allocate individual members of staff to the following roles:

- Head of Centre – a senior member of staff with overall responsibility for the centre's operations
- Delivery Personnel – this might be an Interlocutor or Invigilator or Assessor, depending on the qualification for which the centre is seeking approval
- Quality Nominee – with responsibility for all internal quality assurance and internal moderation of assessment (where applicable)
- Examinations Officer – with responsibility for all candidate registrations and certification claims through the Ark (the GA online system)
- Finance Officer – with responsibility for all financial queries and invoicing.

Centres should refer to the relevant Qualification Specification for details of the staffing requirements, including any occupational competence requirements and minimum qualifications and experience.

Centres must have an appropriate number of Invigilators and Interlocutors for all qualifications which are assessed via external examinations.

For all qualifications that are internally assessed and internally moderated (i.e. within the centre itself), a centre must ensure that they have as a minimum:

- At least ONE member of staff appropriately qualified/experienced to undertake the role of Assessor
- At least ONE member of staff appropriately qualified/experienced to undertake the role of Internal Moderator/Quality Assurer.

8. How to Apply

Once a centre has read and understood the requirements and responsibilities associated with becoming a GA Approved Centre and is assured that they fully meet the approval criteria, there is a three step process to follow:

Step 1

Complete and submit:

- an Application for Centre Approval Form
- at least one Application for Qualification Approval Form
- any additional Satellite Centre Forms or Examination Venue Forms for any additional proposed delivery sites
- a conflict of interest declaration (if applicable)

Ensure you provide full answers to all questions asked on the forms, submitting any supporting evidence requested. You must also make prompt payment of the approval fee.

Step 2

We will review your application, providing feedback where necessary. We will also tell you whether an approval visit prior to granting approval is required or not and inform you of our decision, normally within 20 working days.

Step 3

Once your approval is confirmed, you will receive your Centre Approval certificate and you can start delivering the qualifications you have been approved for.

We provide:

- Access to the Ark, our online system, to help you register candidates, verify assessment and claim certification
- Excellent customer service, with a dedicated GA Centre Administrator so you have a single point of contact to help you with any queries
- A Centre Handbook to help you to understand and meet our requirements as a recognised centre
- Comprehensive Qualification Specifications to facilitate delivery, assessment and quality assurance
- Template documentation for delivery staff to use, adapt or complement existing centre processes
- Training sessions for staff members upon request
- Continuous help, support and advice.

9. Applying for Additional Qualification Approval

Approved Centres may apply for approval to deliver additional qualifications at any time by submitting a subsequent *Application for Qualification Approval* form. There is no fee for existing Approved Centres to apply for additional qualification approval.

10. Satellite Centres

Centres must provide details of any Satellite Centres by completing the *Application for Satellite Centre Approval* form.

Where a centre wishes to add an examination venue only (i.e. a site hired by the main centre for use on a part-time or ad hoc basis for the purpose of external examination delivery) the centre must complete and submit the *Application for an Examination Venue Approval Form.*

11. Centre Approval Criteria

11.1 General

Criteria		Possible Examples of Evidence
G.1	The centre is a clearly identifiable legal entity, organisation (or sole trader 'trading as'), operating within the legal requirements of the country in which it is based	• Certificate of incorporation • Registered on Companies House (if UK based) • Registration with HRMC (or equivalent tax authorities if outside the UK) • Evidence of other formal establishment with relevant authorities overseas
G.2	The centre must be suitable to be recognised as a Centre approved to offer regulated qualifications, must be financially solvent and not in breach of any professional, regulatory or legal obligation to which it is subject (*the Head of Centre is required to sign a Declaration to this effect)	• Able to provide trade references • Credit checks • Relevant Centre Declaration and signing of the Statement of Commitment
G.3	The Head of Centre and other senior/key staff must be suitable people to be engaged in their role (*the Head of Centre is required to sign a Declaration to this effect)	

11.2. Management Systems & Record Keeping

Criteria		Possible Examples of Evidence
1.1	There is active senior management support for the qualification and the centre's aims, policies and procedures in relation to the qualification(s) are supported by senior management and understood by the assessment team	• Organisational chart • Job descriptions or profiles • Documented procedures
1.2	Staff responsibilities, authorities and accountabilities of the assessment and IQA team across all assessment sites are clearly defined, allocated and understood	
1.3	There is an effective communication system between all levels of staff and in all directions and with GA (including satellites, placements and remote-working staff)	• Staff handbooks • Team meetings • Records of communications with other relevant parties
1.4	Time and resources are allocated for all staff involved in the teaching, assessment and IQA of the programme to regular meet and discuss delivery and quality assurance	• Records of resources available • Evidence of additional resources • Planned time allowances • Evidence of reviews of delivery and adjustments made accordingly • Assessor to Candidate ratios
1.5	Potential and actual Conflicts of Interest (e.g. where a member of staff is related to, or a close friend of, a Candidate) is identified, recorded and steps taken to mitigate the risk of adverse effect	• Written processes/policy • Records of potential or actual conflicts of interests • Notifications to Gatehouse Awards of actual or potential Conflicts of Interest
1.6	Candidate records and details of achievement are accurate, up to date, securely stored and available for external moderation and audit	• Records of Candidate registrations, achievements and tracking • Assessment and IQA records • Plans for storage of records • Process for confirming identity of Candidates • Candidate registration and certification records • Security and access arrangements
1.7	An Appeals procedure and Access/Equal Opportunities and Complaints Policies are available to all candidates and regularly reviewed	• Documented policies and procedures are in place • Candidate induction materials are signed and dated by Candidates • Policy review mechanisms such as internal audits and version control processes • Records of appeals/complaints made and the outcomes

1.8	Candidate personal data is collected and stored in accordance with all current, relevant data protection legislation and regulation including, but not limited to, General Data Protection Regulations 2018, and such data is held with the permission of the candidate	• Declarations • Enrolment forms • Security and access arrangements • Registration with the ICO (or equivalent Government body if outside the UK)
1.9	The centre monitors its approach to qualification delivery to inform future activity	• Records of monitoring and review of delivery • Customer service statements • Evaluation and feedback forms and surveys
1.10	Processes are in place for the withdrawal of Candidates	• Procedure on withdrawing Candidates • Policy on suspension/withdrawal from learning
1.11	Marketing and promotional materials are clear, unambiguous and not misleading	• Materials used for marketing courses and qualifications
1.12	The Centre complies with requests for access to premises, records, information, Candidates and staff for the purpose of External Quality Assurance activity	• Records of External Quality Assurance reports compliance with requests

11.3. Resources (Staff and Physical)

Criteria		Possible Examples of Evidence
2.1	The programme is adequately staffed	• Assessor to Candidate ratios
2.2	All staff involved in the delivery of assessment and quality assurance activities and/or the conduct of external assessments are competent and suitable qualified and experienced to support the assessment of units and the qualification	• CVs and qualification records for staff • Development plans and CPD records • List of Assessors and IQAs • Recruitment procedures
2.3	There is appropriate staff development provision for staff with records of activity held centrally by the centre	• Staff induction • Records of meetings • CPD planning and CPD logs • Action plans and records of feedback to Assessors and IQAs
2.4	Physical resources appropriate to the programme are sufficient and accessible to staff and candidates	• Records of equipment • Maintenance schedules • Public liability insurance is in place • Health and safety policies
2.5	Equipment and facilities comply with relevant safeguarding, health and safety and any other requirements	
2.6	Where examinations under controlled conditions comprise any element of qualification delivery, the venue and resources are suitable	• Separate waiting area • Suitable desks/chairs and other equipment, e.g. audio, video recorders, CD players, etc.
2.7	Any changes to personnel are notified to GA	• Notification of changes to key staff including assessment and quality assurance personnel

11.4. Assessment Practices

Criteria		Possible Examples of Evidence
3.1	Delivery and assessment is planned and methods available for the programme meet GA's guidelines	• Assessment plans • Individual learning plans • Reviews of progress
3.2	Candidates are provided with information, advice and guidance about the course, qualification, assessment and quality assurance practices	• Induction materials • Details of support available • Course handbooks
3.3	A range of assessment methods are used as appropriate to the Candidates and the qualification	• Provision for Candidates with particular assessment requirements • Process for identifying a need for reasonable adjustments • Materials, equipment and facilities are available to support Candidates with learning difficulties or disabilities
3.4	Individual assessment requirements of Candidates are identified and met where possible and Gatehouse Awards is notified where reasonable adjustments are required	
3.5	Assessment practices capture evidence efficiently and effectively according to the principles of **CRAVES**; records show accurate assessment tracking progress and achievement	• Assessment plans and records • Mark sheets
3.6	Assessment decisions are in accordance with national standards as outlined in the Qualifications Specification via learning outcomes	• Standardisation activities • Minutes of standardisation/team meetings
3.7	Candidates have opportunities to review their progress and receive feedback after assessment	• Records of feedback to Candidates • Review documentation • Systems to track progress • Assessment plans and learning review documentation

11.5 Internal Quality Assurance and Moderation Processes

Criteria		Possible Examples of Evidence
4.1	The IQA ensures that the IQA strategy sets out a clear rationale for sampling decisions, assessment and moderation practices	• IQA sampling strategy • Minutes of meetings • Reviews of internal documentation • Evidence of corrective actions taking place • External quality assurance reports
4.2	Suitable arrangements have been made to ensure adequate liaison, consistency and standardisation with all satellite centres	• Minutes of meetings and records of communication • Records of all assessment sites and personnel
4.3	Assessors are provided with relevant support to achieve consistency in assessments and are given accurate advice on the use of different types of evidence	• Standardisation meeting minutes • Standardisation activities • Individual development plans, team CPD planning and CPD logs
4.4	There are adequate opportunities for Assessors and other team members to meet and discuss assessment and quality assurance issues	• Schedule of standardisation meetings • Team meeting minutes • Feedback from IQAs and evidence development needs identified have been acted upon
4.5	Internal quality assurance activities ensure evidence assessed is **CRAVES**.; full records are kept and made available to the External Quality Assurer	• IQA sample plans or schedules of planned IQA activities • IQA sample records • Feedback to Assessors • Records of meetings to disseminate information • External Quality Assurance reports
4.6	Where assessment or IQA decisions and feedback are made by an unqualified assessor or IQA, the decisions are validated by a qualified, occupationally competent assessor or IQA (where appropriate	• Details of the counter-signatory arrangements in place • Trainees are working towards the relevant Assessor or IQA qualification
4.7	Processes are in place to prevent malpractice and maladministration, and are shared with staff and candidates	• Candidate induction materials • Handbooks • Policies and procedures • Staff whistleblowing policies and disciplinary procedures
4.8	Processes are in place to manage malpractice and maladministration by staff and candidates	

11.6. Delivery of External Assessment

Criteria		Possible Examples of Evidence
5.1	There are adequate procedures to ensure secure safe storage and delivery of external assessment materials	• Working practices and written procedures • Confidentiality agreements • Secure storage facilities (e.g. cabinet in a locked office, fireproof safe, etc.)
5.2	Adequate procedures exist to ensure secure and safe storage of current and completed candidate assessment records.	
5.3	There are suitable arrangements to administer assessments (in line with GA's Conduct of External Assessment Guidelines)	• Invigilation reports • Seating plans • Details of invigilators allocated to tests • Invigilators understand the arrangements
5.4	There is a process in place to notify Gatehouse Awards where there has been a theft or other loss, or breach of confidentiality in any secure assessment materials	• Procedures for notifying Gatehouse Awards • Evidence of notifications • Investigation reports into previous incidents • Evidence of completed actions relating to secure materials

Document Specification:	
Purpose	To provide both potential and existing centres with details of Gatehouse Awards' criteria to allow them to gain and maintain centre and qualification approval.
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Other relevant documents	Centre Handbook Centre Approval Policy and Procedure Re Approval Policy & Procedure GA CASS & Moderation Policy