



Centre Handbook

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Section 1: Introduction - Welcome to Gatehouse Awards

Gatehouse Awards Limited (GA) is an Awarding Organisation recognised by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation, England (Ofqual) and other recognition bodies worldwide.

This handbook provides new and existing centres with guidance on how they can ensure they are complying with our *Centre and Qualification Approval Criteria* and *Terms and Conditions of Business* by explaining the importance of specific requirements and pointing users towards the various policies, procedures and guidance documents provided by GA to all centres.

GA values its centres and candidates and endeavours to provide useful information and guidance across a range of documents; however, should any further information or clarification be required, please contact our Customer Support team at info@gatehouseawards.org

1.1 Contact Us

There are a number of key departments within GA.

- **The Quality & Compliance Team** – is led by the Assessment Manager and oversees all aspects of compliance and quality assurance including, but not limited to qualification development and review, approvals of External Quality Assurance of Centres, policy, complaints, appeals and malpractice/maladministration.
- **Administration Support Team** – providing all current and potential centres with expert support and guidance whenever needed, available via email or by phone during normal office hours.
- **Finance Team** - is led by our Finance Manager. However, any queries relating to invoicing and fees should be addressed to the Centre Administrator in the first instance.
- **Business Development Team** – working with centres, employers and partner organisations to bring creative and innovative ideas for qualifications, as well as improvements to our current offering.

Our contact details can be found on our website www.gatehouseawards.org.

1.2 Mission Statement & Customer Service and Support

GA brings a fresh and innovative approach to the regulated qualifications sector so that learners, businesses and communities can make their success happen.

We aim to:

- ✓ be recognised as a leading organisation that delivers innovative solutions
- ✓ deliver quality in everything we do
- ✓ provide excellent customer service
- ✓ ensure transparency in every aspect of our work
- ✓ inspire others to 'make it happen' by recognising their skills and achievements
- ✓ maintain high quality in regulatory standards

Our values are:

- ✓ accountability for what we do and how we do it
- ✓ having the courage to change and the ability to make improvements every day
- ✓ working with others, to make sure we're meeting expectations
- ✓ having integrity, being honest and operating ethically and with transparency
- ✓ commitment and passion for high quality standards in education, training and qualifications

- ✓ the principles of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in our people, our leadership, our policies and all our communications

...whilst maintaining the benefits of being able to offer an individualised, tailored service to all candidates and centres.

We promise that we will endeavour to meet the goals outlined in our Mission Statement, putting the needs of centres and candidates first without compromising the standard of our qualifications and service.

GA has in place a full *Customer Service and Support Statement* containing details of the minimum service levels our customers can expect from us in all their dealings with GA, including how we look at, and act on, feedback received.

The *Customer Service and Support Statement* is publicly available and can be downloaded from our website at www.gatehouseawards.org.

Section 2: Centre Approval

2.1 What is a Centre?

Organisations that are considering offering GA qualifications must go through the centre approval process in order to become an 'approved centre' ('centre'). A centre is an organisation, such as a college, school, training provider or employer, which is approved by an awarding organisation for the delivery of training and qualifications.

Approval is based upon the ability to meet the centre approval criteria.

2.2 Centre Approval Criteria

In order to successfully gain approval, a centre will need to demonstrate that it meets the Centre Approval Criteria published by GA.

In summary, a centre is required to have in place:

- ✓ a senior member of staff with overall responsibility for the centre's operations
- ✓ allocated individual members of staff with responsibility for assessment and internal quality assurance arrangements, registrations/certificate claims, and finance
- ✓ robust management and administrative arrangements
- ✓ staff who are competent and suitably qualified to deliver, assess and internally moderate (where applicable) and quality assure 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.

The full Centre Approval Criteria and examples of how a centre can evidence it meets the criteria is published in the document *Centre & Qualification Approval Criteria*, which can be downloaded from our website.

2.3 Applying for Centre Approval

Any organisation wishing to be approved as a GA centre must complete an application on the GA website. The electronic application must be completed in full prior to submission. The application consists of two parts:

Part 1: Centre Approval Application

Part 2: Qualification Approval Application

A full copy of the procedure for processing applications for Centre Approval, including minimum requirements for centres, is available upon request or can be downloaded from the GA website.

Part of the Centre Approval Application involves the submission of a *Declaration and Statement of Commitment* by the Head of Centre. This is a written, enforceable agreement that confirms that the Centre will abide by the *GA Terms and Conditions of Business* and all relevant policies and procedures as required by GA.

A fee for Centre Approval is charged at the time the centre submits their application and is not refundable regardless of whether or not the application is successful. The centre should refer to the *Invoicing & Fees Policy* for full details. If centres are unsure of what fees may be applicable, they should contact GA directly by emailing info@gatehouseawards.org.

Centres which meet all essential requirements and have provided all requested evidence will be approved and receive official notification of their Centre Approval being granted within 20 working days of making their application. Centres **MUST** wait until official notification and their official Centre Number has been received prior to commencing marketing activities or delivery of qualifications.

GA may decide not to progress an approval application at any stage prior to approval being confirmed in writing. This is at GA's discretion. There is no obligation to let organisations know the reasons, nor is there a right of appeal.

2.4 Applying for International Centre Approval

Centres outside the United Kingdom are considered 'International Centres' and the approval process is slightly different. Some GA qualifications may not be available in every country. The terms and conditions of approval may also vary from country to country.

International Centres should therefore contact GA directly for information about how to apply for centre approval in the first instance by emailing info@gatehouseawards.org.

2.5 Further Qualification Approvals

Approved centres may add further qualifications to their approval at any time by submitting a further *Qualification Approval Application Form*, containing the information specific to how the centre will meet the delivery, assessment, moderation and quality assurance requirements of the additional qualification(s).

2.6 About our Terms and Conditions of Business

The *Ofqual Conditions of Recognition* sets out the regulatory requirements for Awarding Organisations and include the obligations for Awarding Organisations in relation to their approved Centres. GA's *Terms and Conditions of Business* are therefore based on these requirements and part of our legally enforceable agreements with centres.

GA will, if necessary, take legal action against a centre who breaches the terms of the agreement, particularly where that risks our ability to comply with our Conditions of Recognition. It is imperative, therefore, that all centres read and understand these in full, but particularly the Centre's Obligations. The *GA Terms and Conditions of Business* is a publicly available document and can be downloaded from our website.

2.7 Centre Approval Visits

A Centre Approval visit will normally be conducted by a GA External Quality Assurer (EQA), who is allocated by the Assessment Manager. During these visits, the EQA seeks evidence to confirm that the applicant organisation meets the centre approval criteria and ensure that all systems, processes and procedures are in place. The allocation of EQAs is at the discretion of GA.

The duration of a Centre Approval visit will vary, depending on the time needed to complete the review but organisations should normally expect that the visit will last at least half a day. At the end of the visit the EQA will complete a report form, which will include any action plan and approval recommendation. This report is reviewed by GA alongside the application for approval. A copy of this report will also be made available to the organisation for their records.

2.8 Maintaining Centre Approval Status & Centre Visits

It is essential that centres maintain the level of resources, equipment, staffing, assessment and quality processes and maintain an appropriate venue and data storage process in order to maintain their Approved Centre status. These will be checked by the GA EQA when they conduct centre visits.

Centre visits may be arranged with the centre in advance. GA also undertakes unannounced visits to centres from time to time. Centres are obliged to allow GA staff into their premises on these occasions and to comply with any reasonable request for access to information, records, staff and learners.

Unannounced visits often include examination audits. These are designed to ensure validity, reliability and integrity in the assessment of qualifications and provide the opportunity to confirm that the centre's examination administration and conduct meets requirements.

In addition, GA conducts an annual re-approval exercise to ensure that centres are continuing to maintain the minimum standards and continue to adhere to the Statement of Commitment. GA reserves the right to apply sanctions, refuse re-approval of a centre or withdraw Centre Approval if the centre fails to comply with the requirements for approval.

2.9 Changing Centre Information

At times it may be necessary for a centre to update the information GA holds about it, for instance if there has been a change in key staff or relocation of premises. Should this be the case, a centre is required to complete a *Centre Update Form*, available on the GA website.

Please note that dependent on the nature and scale of the reported change an administration fee may be applied.

Where substantial changes have taken place in a centre, particularly in relation to management, physical and staff resources, centres should be aware that:

- an additional EQA visit may be required to confirm that the approval criteria continue to be met. Additional EQA visits are chargeable.
- it may be necessary to withhold certification until an additional visit has been made and a satisfactory report received.

Centres will be kept fully informed of all actions required in these instances.

2.10 Alternative Delivery Locations: Satellite Centres, Examination/Assessment Venues and Subcontractors

Centres may wish to deliver GA qualifications in other locations other than their main centre premises. Centres must be aware that GA will count the additional site as an extension of the Main Centre. The Main Centre will be expected to undertake sufficient internal quality assurance to be satisfied that the Satellite Centre is operating compliantly and in line with all of GA's systems and procedures.

Satellite Centres: centres wishing to apply for a satellite site approval can do so by completing the *Satellite Approval Application* form on the GA website.

A satellite centre is a separate, permanent site where the main centre delivers GA qualifications, and may be wholly owned by the same person or parent company as the main centre, or operate on a franchise basis with a written enforceable agreement in place with the main centre.

A satellite centre must operate in line with the management, administrative and quality assurance systems of the main centre. The main centre retains responsibility for all actions of a designated satellite centre. Should an issue arise at one satellite centre this could affect the approval status of the main centre and any other approved satellite centres. For audit purposes, all candidate records must be held at the main centre or be able to be made available (electronically is acceptable) at the main centre within 24 hours of a request.

Examination Venue: An examination venue is a venue utilised by the main centre and is usually on a part-time and/or ad hoc 'room for hire' basis, or a school or other organisation where the main centre is delivering examinations. The main centre must ensure that they arrange to take any assessment materials with them to the examination venue and that all examinations are delivered by staff employed directly by the main centre. No assessment materials or candidate records must be held at the examination venue, other than for the duration of the examination delivery.

Assessment Venue - An additional assessment venue is a venue used by the main centre where the main centre is delivering assessments to its own learners on a site separate to its main/satellite site (excluding premises where learners are assessed on their own employer's premises – this does not require an application to GA). **Please note: the sub-contracting of any aspect of the delivery of GA qualifications and/or examinations is NOT permitted.**

2.11 Centres Operating Across National Borders

Where a centre operates across national borders and wishes to deliver GA qualifications in different territories, the centre must seek prior permission from GA. This is because terms and conditions may vary from country to country. Each centre's request to operate across national borders will be considered on a case by case basis.

Please note, this does not apply within the United Kingdom e.g. if a Centre in England wishes to also operate in Scotland. In this instance, the Satellite Approval Application form would be the appropriate route of establishing approval to do so.

2.12 The Gatehouse Awards Logo

All approved centres are provided with a copy of the GA logo for use on marketing and other documents.

However, the use of the logo is restricted and closely monitored to ensure it is not misused.

Centres must ensure the following requirements are adhered to:

- The colours, wording and font of the logo must not be altered in any way
- Borders must not be added to the logo
- The logo should be used on websites and appropriate marketing material of approved centres **only**, including any satellite centres
- Use of the logo should be restricted to authorised marketing and promotional materials, such as:
 - Stationery, e.g. letterhead, business cards and compliment slips

- Websites and email signatures
- Marketing material advertising GA qualifications, such as leaflets, brochures and exhibition stands
- On termination of centre approval, for whatever reason, the centre must remove the GA logo from all websites, literature, marketing material and any other documents immediately

All centres must ensure that the GA logo is not subject to misuse. This includes ensuring that centres **do not**:

- Use the logo on materials advertising qualifications or courses which are not accredited by GA
- Produce their own certificates for qualifications
- Use the logo on certificates produced by another Awarding Organisation for a qualification they accredit
- Allow the use of the logo by any person or business who has not been approved by GA

2.13 Qualification Titling

It is a regulatory requirement that the qualification titles listed on the Register are used consistently whenever they are being referenced. It is important, therefore, that centres ensure that they make the titles of the qualifications clear and keep them in line with the titles used on the Register and on the *Qualification Specifications* provided by GA whenever they refer to the qualifications on their websites, marketing or any other materials they may provide to learners or make available to the general public.

2.14 Gatehouse Awards Documentation

To help centres and their staff meet the requirements set out in the *GA Terms and Conditions of Business* and the *Centre Statement of Commitment*, GA provides a full suite of policies for centres to read, understand and implement, plus a number of important documents and forms.

All documents, forms and policies are available upon request or may be available to download from the GA website.

The documents referred to include, but are not limited to:

- *Terms and Conditions of Business*
- GA Policies – including (but not limited to):
 - *Conflict of Interest Policy & Procedure for Approved Centres*
 - *CASS Strategy & General Moderation Policy*
 - *Quality Assurance Policy*
 - *Appeals Policy and Procedures*
 - *Malpractice & Maladministration Policy and Procedure*
 - *Customer Service & Support Statement*
 - *Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy and Procedure*
 - *Invoicing & Fees Policy*
 - *Sanctions Policy*
 - *Candidate Access Policy*
 - *Whistleblowing Policy*
 - *Regulations for Conducting Controlled Assessments*
- Examination and Assessment Materials including Candidate Booklets, Guidance for Assessors and Quality Assurance staff and Invigilator and Interlocutor Booklets

- Request for Reasonable Adjustments
- Record of Reasonable Adjustments / Special Considerations
- Declaration of Interests
- Malpractice and Maladministration Report Form
- Centre Update Form

If a centre is either unable, or unsure of, how to comply with any of GA policies and procedures, they should contact us at info@gatehouseawards.org.

2.15 Inactive centres

If a centre is inactive (i.e. there are no registrations or certifications for any GA qualifications and there hasn't been a visit or any other activity to confirm the centre's status) for a period of twelve months or more, centre approval will automatically lapse. The centre will need to re-apply for centre approval.

2.16 Minimum Spend Threshold

Unlike some Awarding Organisations, GA does not require centres to meet an annual minimum spend threshold. However, in order to ensure that GA is able to deliver a high-quality service to centres and candidates and ensure GA is able to meet all regulatory and legislative requirements, GA reserves the right to charge individual centres for additional quality assurance services.

Section 3: Qualifications Information

3.1 Background to Regulated Qualifications

GA is recognised by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) in England. Regulated qualifications appear on the Ofqual Register of Regulated Qualifications. All GA qualifications can also be made available in other countries and are generally accepted worldwide.

3.2 The Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF)

From October 2015, regulated qualifications appear under the new Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF). The RQF provides a single, simple system for cataloguing all qualifications regulated by Ofqual. Like a bookcase in a library, qualifications are indexed by their 'level' and 'size'. Qualifications at any specific level can be very different from one another, for example in their content and purpose.

Qualification Level: Levels indicate the difficulty and complexity of the knowledge and skills associated with any qualification. There are eight levels supported by three 'entry' levels. While most qualifications will be assigned a single level, some may span more than one.

Qualification Size: Size refers to the estimated total amount of time it could typically take to study and be assessed for a qualification. This can be anything from a matter of hours to several years of study and different Candidates can take different amounts of time to study for the same qualification. Size is expressed in terms of Total Qualification Time. The part of that time typically spent being taught or supervised, rather than studying alone, is known as Guided Learning Hours. Qualifications can sit at different levels but require similar amounts of study and assessment time. Equally, qualifications at the same level can take different amounts of study and assessment time.

3.3 Quality Endorsement Scheme

GA recognises that not all training programmes necessarily result in an Ofqual-regulated qualification, for example those which are only delivered and assessed overseas. The GA Quality Endorsement Scheme (QES) provides an opportunity for organisations to submit details and content of their training and education programmes for endorsement and backing from a leading Awarding Organisation. With the GA QES, training providers can demonstrate the quality of their delivery to their own customers with externally issued and endorsed certificates from GA.

QES is subject to a separate approval agreement and quality assurance monitoring of the training provider. Course endorsement is based on documentary evidence submitted by the provider, desk-based checks and centre visits carried out by GA to verify the information provided.

Detailed information can be found in the document *GA Quality Endorsement Scheme Policy and Procedure* and in the *GA QES Standard Submission Form*, available on the GA website.

3.4 Use of Regulators' Logos

Centres must **NOT** use the Ofqual logo under any circumstances without the prior written permission of Ofqual.

Under Ofqual Regulations, the logo can only be used by Awarding Organisations and then only on qualification and credit certificates.

Please also note that the Ofqual logo will not be included on any certificates for qualifications not listed on the Ofqual Register of Regulated Qualifications.

3.5 Making Reference to Regulators

Centres must **NOT** refer to themselves as being 'approved' by a Regulator or offering qualifications 'approved' or 'accredited' by a Regulator. This is a serious breach of the Regulators' conditions as it is misleading to the general public. Any centre found to be using such references to the Regulator will be asked to remove such references and, in the case of written material, withdraw and destroy any documents containing the reference.

Approved centres are recommended to use the following phrases when describing their approved status:

- 'Approved by Gatehouse Awards, an Awarding Organisation recognised by Ofqual'
- 'Approved by Gatehouse Awards to offer qualifications on the Register of Qualifications regulated by Ofqual'
- 'Able to offer regulated qualifications under Approval by Gatehouse Awards, an Awarding Organisation recognised by Ofqual'

Should a centre require any further guidance on the wording to use, they should contact their Centre Administrator.

Section 4: Candidate Registrations

4.1 Use of the Ark

The Ark is the secure GA online Candidate Management System which all approved centres are provided access to via a secure username and password, issued at the point of centre approval. As well as registration, it also allows centres to carry out other administration tasks, such as view the qualifications they are approved for, search for candidates, view examination results, claim certificates for internally assessed qualifications and even apply for approval for other qualifications.

Centre staff must keep their username and password secure and adhere to the terms and conditions of use of the Ark at all times.

A full *Centre Guide to the Ark for Centres* is available upon request or may be available to download from the GA website.

4.2 Candidate Registration and Data Storage

Centres must have a candidate registration process that ensures all the relevant data required for certification is obtained. Candidate data must be held securely (whether electronic or paper-based records) and in line with current Data Protection and Privacy legislation.

As a minimum, the following Candidate details are required to be held by Centres:

- full name
- date of birth
- address
- acceptable confirmation of identification and/or candidate signature

Any additional information required is detailed in the relevant Qualification Specification. Candidate information must be retained by the centre for a minimum of **12 months** following candidate certification.

For controlled examinations, centres must also refer to the *Regulations for Conducting Controlled Examinations* for details on the requirements for photographic ID.

Data must be stored in such a way that it is secure but easily retrievable when required by authorised staff and for internal and external quality assurance purposes. If a Centre holds records off site, such as in a secure document storage facility, they must be **able to retrieve such documentation within 24 hours**.

Records **must not** be held in a private, domestic household as that is not a secure storage facility and does not allow GA or the Regulator access to the documents.

4.3 Registration Requirements

Please refer to the *Centre Guide to the Ark for Centres* for full details regarding making candidate registrations.

Usually, registrations have a set period of validity. This is specified in the relevant Qualification Specification.

4.4 Unique Learner Numbers (ULNs)

All centres funded for Further Education and work-based learning in England, Wales and Northern Ireland must register each recorded learner with a Unique Learner Number (ULN).

Further information on how centres gain access to the Learning Records Service can be found at the Education and Skills Funding Agency website
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-and-skills-funding-agency>

4.5 Amendments to Candidate Registration Details

There may be times when a centre needs to amend some details on a candidate's registration. Centres should refer to the *Centre Guide to the Ark* for full details of how to do this.

Section 5: Delivery: Assessments and Examinations

5.1 Assessment Models

Assessment is the process by which a candidate’s knowledge, understanding and skills are evaluated against set criteria, for example occupational standards. These are referred to as ‘assessment criteria’.

All GA qualifications rely on assessment (i.e. the assessment of the candidate is designed to confirm that they have achieved the standard or meet the criteria the programme requires. Assessment is a measure of the candidate’s attainment against set learning outcomes and assessment criteria.

Assessment models vary depending on the qualification.

| Assessment Model | Assessment Type and Examples | |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| Assessment carried out by the Centre | <p>Internally-devised assessment materials, e.g. projects, assignments, observations of demonstration of skills, questions & answers (written and/or verbal), witness testimonies, work product evidence.</p> <p>These may be compiled into a portfolio of evidence.</p> <p>There may be a combination of evidence types, which are internally assessed and moderated and externally moderated by GA.</p> | <p>Examination materials externally set and issued by GA.</p> <p>These may be delivered, assessed and internally moderated by centre staff and externally moderated by GA.</p> |
| Assessment carried out by GA | <p>Externally set examination materials to be used with candidates under the supervision of centre staff (acting as interlocutors and/or invigilators).</p> <p>The centre returns the completed scripts (or recordings/other forms of examination materials) securely to GA for external assessment and moderation.</p> | <p>Externally set examination materials to be used only by GA staff in order to conduct the examinations with candidates.</p> <p>The materials are also externally assessed and moderated by GA.</p> |

Full details of the assessment model(s) for each qualification, as well as all the quality assurance criteria and standards, can be found in the relevant Qualification Specification.

5.2 GA Assessment Standards (CRAVES)

Regardless of the model or method of assessment, Assessors must ensure that all evidence is judged to meet the requirements of “CRAVES”:

- ✓ **Current:** the work is relevant at the time of the assessment
- ✓ **Reliable:** the work is consistent with that produced by other learners
- ✓ **Authentic:** the work is the Candidate’s own work
- ✓ **Valid:** the work is relevant and appropriate to the subject being assessed and is at the required level
- ✓ **Evaluated:** Where the learner has not been assessed as competent, the deficiencies have been clearly and accurately identified via feedback to the learner resulting in improvements in knowledge or competency leading to the award
- ✓ **Sufficient:** the work covers the expected learning outcomes and any range statements as specified in the criteria or requirements in the assessment strategy.

More details on this for specific qualifications can be found in the relevant Qualification Specification.

5.3 Candidate Access to Assessment

GA is dedicated to providing access to assessment for all candidates, free from discrimination and unnecessary barriers of any kind. Centres should refer to the *GA Candidate Access Policy* for details of our general rules, a copy of which is available upon request or may be available for download from the GA website.

There are a number of reasonable adjustments available to eligible learners to ensure that they are not disadvantaged in any way. For more information and support relating to learners who are eligible, please refer to the *GA Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy and Procedure*, available on the GA website.

5.4 Guidance for the Delivery and Assessment of GA Qualifications

Each qualification has its own set of learning outcomes, with assessment criteria or indicative content which needs to be adhered to. This information can be found in the relevant Qualification Specification and qualification-specific supporting Handbooks or other documentation for centre use. In addition, centres should refer to the following guides and policies prior to setting any assessments to ensure they are meeting all of the requirements laid down by GA and the Regulator:

- *Candidate Access Policy & Procedure*
- *CASS Strategy & General Moderation Policy*
- *Conflict of Interest Policy & Procedure*
- *Maintaining Confidentiality of Assessment Materials Policy*
- *Malpractice & Maladministration Policy & Procedure*
- *Regulations for Conducting Controlled Examinations*
- *Appeals Policy & Procedure*
- *Guide for Centres – Invigilating Reading, Writing and Listening Examination*
- *Guide for Centres – Preventing Malpractice in Assessments and Examinations*
- *Any IESOL specific guidance, regulations and supporting documentation*

Please note, the above is not an exhaustive list.

5.5 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

In some circumstances, candidates may be allowed to claim credit for learning or achievement or experience and therefore not have to duplicate learning or work produced for assessment. The evidence presented to support a claim for RPL must be sufficient to allow Assessors to judge the candidate as having met the learning outcomes and assessment criteria according to CRAVES and be an 'equivalent' source of evidence.

Centres should first refer to the Qualification Specification for the qualification they wish to apply RPL to for details of what might be accepted. They must then apply for RPL by completing the Recognition of Prior Learning Form and submitting it to GA, together with any evidence supporting the RPL claim as well as any other relevant assessment materials and evidence. GA will evaluate the request and any supporting evidence and inform the centre of the outcome of the request.

5.6 Language of Assessment

GA has a responsibility to ensure that candidates can be assessed in English and may allow assessment in a language other than English provided that:

- the assessment is comparable to that offered in English
- the candidate's lack of language proficiency does not prevent them from properly carrying out the role that is supported by the qualification.

Please note, this does not apply to assessments where proficiency in the English language is part of the assessment criteria.

5.7 The Rules of Combination

Rules of Combination are developed by GA and outline the mandatory and non-mandatory units that must be achieved in order to gain the appropriate combination of units, or qualification contents, for a qualification to be awarded. Details of the Rules of Combination are included in the relevant Qualification Specification.

5.8 Staff Requirements

All staff involved in any part of the delivery of a GA qualification (i.e. teachers, assessors, invigilators, interlocutors, internal verifiers or moderators and internal quality assurance staff) must meet set criteria which is set out in the relevant Qualification Specification. Centres should refer to this prior to applying for approval to offer a qualification and ensure these standards are maintained throughout the time a centre offers that qualification. Centres should also refer to the various guidance documents mentioned above and ensure that all assessments meet the criteria of 'CRAVES'.

Section 6: Quality Assurance Arrangements

6.1 Internal Quality Assurance

Centres must have a written policy or procedure outlining their internal quality assurance processes. All such policies must reflect the specific Internal Quality Assurance arrangements set out in the Qualification Specification for the qualification(s) the centre offers.

GA also provide a range of guidance documents and template forms which centres may find useful when developing their internal assessment, moderation and quality assurance policy and Procedures.

All centre policies must be made available for review by a GA External Quality Assurer or the Regulator on demand. It is therefore important that these are kept up to date.

6.2 Internal Quality Assurance Staff

The following staff information must be held by the centre for all staff involved in the delivery, assessment and quality assurance of GA qualifications:

- Assessor / Internal Moderator / Internal Verifier vocational competence and continuing professional development (CPD) records, including CVs showing how staff satisfy relevant assessment strategy requirements
- Interlocutors / Invigilators competence, level of language proficiency and continuing professional development (CPD) records, including CVs showing how staff satisfy examination delivery requirements
- Assessor / Internal Moderator / Internal Verifier achievements of relevant Assessment and IQA / Learning & Development qualification certificates (originals)
- Monitoring records of all staff, including Assessor / Internal Moderator / Internal Verifier progress towards relevant Assessment and IQA / Learning & Development unit achievement.

6.3 Internal Quality Assurance Records

The centre's internal quality assurance records and associated documentation must be held for a minimum period of three years, as required for regulatory compliance purposes.

The records will include, as a minimum:

- who assessed and internally moderated/quality assured what and when it was done
- what assessment decisions have been made and the methods of assessment used
- details of the sample selected for moderation and its rationale
- details of Assessor and IQA standardisation meetings
- details of delivery staff feedback and support
- details of delivery staff competence and CPD
- the monitoring of delivery staff and impact of CPD undertaken

6.4 Centre staff registered for a GA qualification

Centres must inform GA in advance if they wish to register a member of staff for a GA qualification. This must be done before they undertake any assessment. Failure to notify GA could affect the centre's approved status and/or may constitute malpractice. Members of staff should only undertake assessments if they are registered to complete the qualification and cannot undertake a GA qualification while they are teaching or assessing that qualification at that centre without the

express prior agreement of GA. Where this happens without seeking prior agreeing, GA reserves the right to withhold certification.

6.5 Assessment of Relatives

In some centres, we recognise that family members may work together and may be in a position to assess and/or internally quality assure one another. This is considered a conflict of interest and is not allowed unless formally agreed beforehand with GA. Failure to notify GA of these situations is considered non-compliance and could affect the centre's approved status.

6.6 External Quality Assurance

GA operates a model of external quality assurance comprising of centre assessed standards scrutiny and a wide system of centre controls. These are designed to ensure the ongoing compliance of all Approved Centres and the validity of all qualifications.

Full details can be found in the *CASS Strategy and General Moderation Policy* and *Quality Assurance Policy*.

6.7 Centre Risk Assessment and Ratings

GA will apply a 'risk rating' to a centre based on a number of factors. Please see the *Quality Assurance Policy* for further details.

6.8 External Quality Assurance Visits

In addition to Centre Approval visits, where these are required, GA operates a system of External Quality Assurance which includes reviews of centres (either carried out remotely or via site visits) on at least an annual basis.

Reviews and visits are carried out by fully trained and authorised External Quality Assurers who, as the representatives of GA and have the right of entry at all Approved Centres, whether prior notice has been provided or not.

The EQA's function is to ensure that centres adhere to the GA approval criteria for Approved Centres in the areas of

- Management Systems
- Resources and Staff
- Assessment Arrangements
- Internal Quality Assurance Arrangements

To do this they will sample check various documents relevant to GA qualifications being offered and conduct external moderation and / or verification of the centre's assessment decisions and internal quality assurance (where applicable to the qualification).

They will sample candidate work, speak to delivery and internal quality assurance staff and may interview candidates and observe assessments or examinations taking place.

The EQA will identify good practice and make recommendations to the centre about how to continually develop the quality of their provision and provide support and guidance.

Where any element of the GA criteria for approval or qualification approval cannot be met by the centre, the EQA will discuss remedial action with the centre and record the Action on the report. Reports are sent to the centre electronically.

Centres must retain/have access to candidate portfolios at least until the EQA visit has taken place to allow for standards scrutiny and moderation / verification.

6.9 Investigations into Malpractice and Maladministration

As part of External Quality Assurance activities, GA will fully and thoroughly investigate any allegations of malpractice and maladministration, whether it has been identified externally or internally. All information which GA deems necessary to investigate and resolve an allegation of maladministration or malpractice must be provided by the centre.

Failure to report suspected malpractice and/or to co-operate with follow up activity may lead to awards not being made, certificates not being issued, future entries and/or registrations not being accepted or withdrawal of qualification and/or centre approval.

Full details of how an investigation might be undertaken, from the initial suspicion being raised to a sanction being applied and, in some instances, a fee being charged for the visit, can be found in the *Malpractice and Maladministration Policy*.

6.10 Identification of Non-Compliance Within a Centre

The GA External Quality Assurance activities at pre- and post-approval of a centre and GA's post-approval monitoring ensures that where the centre is found to be non-compliant with any GA regulation, this is identified and communicated to the centre. The centre's Risk Rating will increase and the non-compliance(s) could lead to the withdrawal of the centre and/or qualification approval.

GA may withdraw or suspend centre and/or qualification approval on written notice to the centre at any time. Reasons for this include, but are not limited to:

- Failure to comply with the *GA Terms and Conditions of Business, Centre Approval Criteria* or with any GA policies, regulations, requirements and procedures
- If there are major deficiencies in the assessment process and GA reasonably believes that the centre can no longer assure the appropriate quality of provision
- Where GA is notified of sanctions placed on a centre by another Awarding Organisation.

GA reserves the right to withdraw Centre Approval with immediate effect should the non-compliances adversely affect candidates or the reputation of GA, the Regulator or that of regulated qualifications. If the centre and/or qualification approval has been withdrawn, centres must provide GA and affected candidate with the information or support GA considers reasonable within a specified timeframe. In these instances the centre will be advised of the process.

Centres which have their approval removed have a responsibility to fulfil their legal obligations, as set out in the *GA Terms and Conditions of Business* that form part of their contract with GA.

GA may decide not to withdraw approval immediately but may decide to suspend all or any centre activities (including the ability to register/certificate candidates) for either a specified period of time or indefinitely. This may be in order to see if a situation can be remedied, or in order to protect candidates and/or GA. Centres have the right to appeal against withdrawal or suspension of centre or qualification approval. For further information, refer to the *GA Appeals Policy and Procedure*.

Where a centre chooses to withdraw itself, they must inform GA. GA's Quality Assurance staff will work with the centre to support candidates who may be affected by this decision.

Section 7: Certification

7.1 Design and Content of Certificates

GA certificates have been designed to be clear and secure. They meet all regulatory conditions as set out in the Ofqual Certificate Requirements.

Candidates who are awarded a GA qualification or unit certificate will receive an e-certificate as standard, in place of a hard copy (paper) certificate from November 2021 onwards.

E-certificates contain additional security features to those found on traditional paper certificates and are compatible with the *GA Online Certificate Verification tool*. E-certificates are kinder to the environment and this is one way in which we are reducing our carbon footprint and responding to the national and international climate change emergency.

Traditional hard copy certificates can be requested from GA for an additional fee. Standard e-certificates can also be printed out by the centre or by the candidate for use in a paper-format portfolio or to be displayed in paper format where required.

Please note that all information used for certificates will be taken from that held on the Ark. It is the responsibility of the centre to ensure that these details are correct prior to claiming certificates.

7.2 Issue of Certificates/Results

Specific details regarding the issue of certificates and results can be found in the relevant Qualification Specification. General points to note include:

- All externally-assessed results (including certificates for successful candidates) for qualifications and units are published and issued to centres within 10 working days of the receipt of the examination materials or authorised certification claims. The results and certificate numbers will appear on the Ark for centres to refer to alongside the instructions on how to download and access the e-certificates.
- Candidates should not have their results confirmed for internally-assessed qualifications until the required levels of External Quality Assurance has been carried out by GA.
- All internally-assessed qualification certification claims should be made via the Ark.
- Any hard copy certificates will be issued to the main centre (not a satellite address) and it is the responsibility of the centre to ensure these are forwarded to candidates in a timely manner. This is a regulatory responsibility and failure to do so could result in action being taken for malpractice against the centre.
- The main centre is expected to hold all candidate records (or be able to bring them to the Main Centre within 24 hours notice, if they are routinely held at satellite centre premises) for the purposes of auditing by GA and/or the Regulator.

IT IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED for centres to produce their own certificates for GA qualifications or units. To do so is a serious breach of the Regulations attached to being a GA Approved Centre and could affect the approved status of that centre. In addition, all such unauthorised certificates would be invalid for the candidates, who would have to be reassessed before they could be certified by GA for that qualification, at the expense of the centre involved. Any centre found to be producing their own certificates using the GA name/details will be immediately subject to sanctions.

7.3 Direct Claims Status

Direct Claims Status (DCS) is not available for GA qualifications. Arrangements for moderation / verification will be put in place in line with CASS Strategy and General Moderation Policy.

7.4 Amended and Replacement Certificates

Centres should refer to *The Ark Guide* for details of the process for obtaining an amended or replacement certificate.

Section 8: Complaints and Appeals

8.1 Centre Complaints Procedure

Centres are required by GA to operate an internal complaints procedure, which candidates, all staff, external stakeholders and members of the public can use in the event that they wish to challenge the centre. Centres have a responsibility to inform learners of their complaints policy. EQAs will request to see evidence of the centre complaints procedure as part of their quality assurance monitoring.

Centres must also make candidates aware of GA's complaints policy and procedure.

8.2 Centre Complaints

If a centre has a complaint relating to GA, their feedback is welcome and is seen as an opportunity to make improvements. GA will investigate all complaints received in line with the *GA Comments, Compliments and Complaints Procedure*, available on the GA website.

8.3 Candidate Complaints

Learners who have a complaint about their centre must first raise the matter using their centre's formal complaints procedure. If after doing this, they are unhappy with the outcome provided, they may raise the complaint with GA, remembering to send copies of all relevant correspondence between the candidate and centre.

Candidates must ensure they provide their enrolment number (if known), their date of birth and details of the centre (including the centre number if known) and contact GA by emailing info@gatehouseawards.org

8.4 Results Enquiries & Appeals

Candidates must seek information about their results from the centre prior to contacting GA with a results enquiry.

Centres are required by GA to operate an internal appeals procedure. EQAs will request to see evidence of the centre's appeals procedure as part of their quality assurance monitoring. When a candidate's results vary considerably from the result they expect, the centre must follow their own internal procedure. If the issue cannot be resolved internally after exhausting all available channels for appeal, the centre should inform GA.

Where the appeal is related to a decision GA have made about the results of external assessment, reasonable adjustments, special consideration or actions to be taken following a malpractice or maladministration investigation, the centre may wish to bring it to GA's attention. Centres are entitled to appeal against GA's decisions (including decisions taken about approval and revocation of centre approval) and should refer to the *GA Appeals Policy and Procedure* for full details. The document can be found on the GA website.

Appendix 1: Glossary of Terms

Appeal: a request for a review of a decision.

Assessor: a member of staff at the centre employed for the purpose of making internal assessment decisions.

Centre: an institution or organisation, usually a school, college, training provider or employer which is approved by GA to deliver the training, preparation and delivery of the assessment for a qualification.

Comment: an idea, suggestion or opinion on how GA could improve its services.

Complaint: a formal expression of dissatisfaction made by a member of GA staff, Candidate, Centre Representative or a member of the public who has reason to raise a complaint regarding the service received from, or conduct of, GA as an Awarding Organisation or one of its Approved Centres.

Compliment: positive feedback about a service provided by GA.

Controlled Assessment: an internal assessment, where the assessment materials are set either internally or externally, where Candidates are usually supervised by their teachers and elements of the assessment can be taken at flexible times, and internally assessed and moderated.

Controlled Examination: examinations which are externally set and externally marked by the awarding organisation and are conducted in accordance with *Regulations for Conducting Controlled Examinations*.

CRAVES: the principles of quality assurance in relation to the assessment of candidates' work, which stipulate that the work assessed must be Current, Reliable, Authentic, Valid, Evaluated and Sufficient.

Examinations Officer: a person who is employed by the Centre to be the single point of contact for GA with regards to all aspects of the delivery and administration of examinations.

Head of Centre: a person who is employed by the Centre to be the single point of contact and accountability for all aspects of quality assurance with regards to the delivery of examinations.

Marker: a person who is employed by the awarding organisation and who marks the completed scripts or recordings of learners across a range of Centres approved by the awarding organisation. Also referred to as an **Examiner**.

Examiner: a person who is employed by the awarding organisation and who marks the completed assessment materials or recordings of learners across a range of Centres approved by the awarding organisation. Also referred to as a **Marker**.

External Moderator (EQA): a person who is employed by GA and is responsible for assuring the quality and consistency of assessment across Centres, general quality assurance, moderation and verification activities

GA appointed Examination Observer: a professional person engaged by GA to attend Centres when controlled examination session has been booked for the purposes of ensuring that the examination is delivered in line with all relevant regulations and requirements.

GA Representative: An individual or Organisation, or employee of such an organisation, contracted by GA to represent GS in specific locations outside the UK.

Instructions (or rubric): an explanation given on the front cover of the question paper in order to guide the learner e.g. in terms of the number of questions to answer, the time allowed or the marks allocated for each task.

Interlocutor: a person who is employed by the Centre to administer the spoken components of any controlled examinations. This term is usually used in the context of language assessments.

Interlocutor script: script provided for the members of staff delivering spoken examination components which should be adhered to unless otherwise indicated.

Internal Quality Assurer: a member of staff employed by the centre who is responsible for monitoring the work of all assessors involved with the qualification, to ensure that they are applying the assessment criteria for the competency of skills consistently throughout all assessment activities, and that the evidence presented meets the requirements of CRAVES .

Invigilator: a person who is employed by the Centre to supervise learners whilst they undertake written elements of the controlled examinations.

Learner (or Candidate): a person who is registered with the awarding organisation to undertake a qualification and to be assessed for that qualification.

UK Centre: An approved GA Centre, based in the United Kingdom (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales).

Maladministration: is a sub-category of malpractice which relates directly to the administration of GA qualifications, but which has not been a deliberate act to attempt to subvert the integrity or security of the assessment process or the qualification as a whole.

Malpractice: a deliberate act by a staff member, Candidate or Centre which has, or may have, an adverse effect on the assessment process, the award of the qualification or the integrity or security of any examination or qualification made available by GA.

Marking (or assessing): an activity which is undertaken by the GA subject specialists to check the learners' answers to the test questions against the mark scheme in order to produce an overall mark or result.

Moderation: the process by which assessment decisions made by either centre's internal assessment staff or awarding organisations' assessment staff (markers) are checked in order to ensure standardisation of results for learners.

Overseas or International Centre: An approved GA Centre, located outside of the United Kingdom.

Reasonable adjustment - arrangements made prior to assessment which help to reduce the effect of a disability or difficulty that may place the Candidate at a significant disadvantage during the assessment process.

Scripts: the question papers completed by the learners. These may be referred to as **completed tests**, **completed question papers** or **completed assessment materials**.

Special consideration – a consideration applied during or after an examination when unforeseen circumstances may prevent the Candidate from attending or completing their examination, such as temporary illness, bereavement or disruption to examination.

Tasks: these form the parts of the tests and are the sections of the question papers which are answered by the learner.

Tests: the question papers which are provided by the awarding organisation to the Centre for the learners to undertake. These may also be referred to as **unit tests**, **examinations** or **assessment materials**.

Tutor (or teacher, trainer, teaching staff): a person(s) who is (are) employed by the Centre to teach the learners in preparation for the tests.

| Document Specification: | |
|---------------------------|---|
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| Other relevant documents: | Ofqual General Conditions of Recognition (GCR) Qualification Specifications GA's website at www.gatehouseawards.org All Gatehouse Awards Policies, Procedures and Guidance Documents, including Forms |