

CENTRE OPERATIONS HANDBOOK 2021-22



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1. General Information

1.1. New centres...start here

This document outlines the basic information all OCN London centres should know, and it describes the essential processes each approved centre is required to go through.

OCN London prides itself on the support we provide to centres and a measure of that is the allocation of designated staff members to help you with all accreditation matters.

As an OCN London centre, you will already have been allocated an OCN London Curriculum and Relationship Development Manager and an OCN London Business Support contact. If you are not sure who these people are, please check the welcome email sent to you when your centre was first approved. If you can't locate the email, please call the switchboard or email enquiries@ocnlondon.org.uk and we can let you know.

Contact your OCN London Curriculum and Relationship Development Manager (CRDM) with any questions regarding curriculum matters, for example if you wish to run a new qualification or get a new course accredited. If you have any general or administration related questions, such as how to register learners, get in touch with your OCN London Business Support contact.

1.2. Updating Named Contacts

Each centre is itself required to provide OCN London with a named contact for Quality, Curriculum, Administration and Finance, and this information was provided on the centre's Application form. These named contacts are the staff members in your organisation who liaise with us for these four areas.

One of the requirements of centre approval is to keep us informed of any changes to the named contacts at your centre (Quality, Curriculum, Administration and Finance). Please make sure that we are aware of any such changes by promptly returning an updated Contact Form to us (this form can be downloaded from QuartzWeb or you can request a copy from enquiries@ocnlondon.org.uk)

If we are not informed of staff changes it can cause delays and important information may not be received by those delivering OCN London provision in your centre.

All of those involved in OCN London provision within your centre should be aware of these named contacts. It can cause confusion if individual tutors raise issues about, for example, course development or external quality assurance directly with OCN London rather than going through the relevant contact person at the centre.

2. Course/Qualification Approval

2.1. New Course/Qualification Approval

If you want to add a new Bespoke Accredited Course or qualification to your offer, please contact your designated OCN London Curriculum and Relationship Development Manager to discuss your plans. They will send you the OCN London Approval to Deliver a Qualification form or the Bespoke Accredited Course Submission form. A copy of the Approval to Deliver a Qualification form is also available from the OCN London website at

<https://www.ocnlondon.org.uk/Centres/Centre-Area>

A proposed new course / qualification should go through your centre's internal course approval process prior to being discussed with OCN London. Once confirmed in-house, please complete and send the relevant form to your designated OCN Curriculum and Relationship Development Manager. The requests are then submitted to a quality assurance process and we may or may not require further information from you prior to approving the course. Once the application is approved you will receive email notification along with your newly approved course list. If there are support materials and/or digital resources linked to the units in your new course you will receive them in the email notification. The courses and qualifications a centre are approved to run, with their constituent units, are recorded on our central database called Quartz. Once courses are approved, they are allocated a unique course code. Only when courses / qualifications have been approved and email notification has been sent, can you register learners on them.

2.2. Developing New Units

If you need to develop new units to add to your Bespoke Accredited Course, please discuss this with your Curriculum and Relationship Development Manager before beginning any development. New units must be approved by OCN London before you start delivering them. Support for the writing of new bespoke units is available. Fees for these services can be found in the OCN London charges booklet at: <https://www.ocnlondon.org.uk/centres/centre-area/charges.aspx>

2.3. Amendments to Courses

If you wish to add or remove units from a course after it has been entered onto our system, you can do so by completing and submitting a Course Amendment

Form to your Curriculum and Relationship Development Manager. The form is available to download from the OCN London website at <https://www.ocnlondon.org.uk/Centres/Centre-Area>

3. Learner Registration

3.1. Registration of Learners

All centres must register learners at, or close to, the beginning of a course:

- for short courses (less than 15 weeks duration) you must register learners within **25 working days** of the start date of the course;
- for all other courses you must register learners within **60 working days** of the start date of the course.

These timescales are in place to ensure that we can put appropriate quality assurance mechanisms in place to monitor standards of provision.

If centres register learners after these timelines a late registration fee may be charged, and centres will be required to take action to prevent further late registrations.

3.2. Online Learner Registration

All centres are required to register learners using OCN London's secure online QuartzWeb registration system (<https://quartz.ocnlondon.org.uk/>) The named Administration Contact at the centre is issued with a user account and further accounts can be created for additional administrators.

QuartzWeb allows centres to register learners against any of their existing OCN London approved courses using a generic e-registration spreadsheet template. The template will be sent to the centre's named Administration Contact by their OCN London Business Support contact and additional copies can be downloaded from QuartzWeb. If the centre has an internal management information system, it will be possible to export data directly to populate the e-registration template.

Course details are selected from drop down menus within QuartzWeb to create a course run and the completed e-registration template is then uploaded to link the learners to the course run.

Full instructions on the process, complete with User Guides, are provided upon the creation of a new user account and the OCN London Business Support team are available by phone, email or a Team or Zoom meeting to help and offer guidance.

Step by step QuartzWeb User Guides, complete with screenshots, showing how to register learners and how to claim for certification are available from <https://www.ocnlondon.org.uk/Centres/Online-registration>

In normal circumstances, a free monthly *'Introduction to Learner Registration and Certification'* information session is held at the OCN London offices where a real time

demonstration of the learner registration process takes place. We are pleased to provide tailored training in this area through a Teams or Zoom meeting.

If you would like further information on QuartzWeb, or any aspects of the learner registration and certification process, please contact Simon Endacott, our Business Support Manager, at: s.endacott@ocnlondon.org.uk.

4. Assessment and Internal Quality Assurance

4.1. Fair Assessments

Our policy and procedure on fair assessment, including special consideration and reasonable adjustments, explains which variations to standard assessment practice require approval from your External Quality Assurer (EQA). Others are listed that can be used at your discretion, but the EQA must be informed so that we can maintain a central record of the use of these variations.

4.2. Assessment Practice

All those involved in assessing learners against OCN London qualifications and courses (except for the Essential Digital Skills and ESOL qualifications) must be trained in developing assessment tasks and activities that meet the requirements of the units, and in preparing portfolios of assessed evidence mapped to unit assessment criteria. OCN London offers training sessions in assessment which are open to all our approved centres. The training schedule and booking forms are available on the OCN London website in the [Training and Development](#) section.

It is important that you are making use within your centre of our set of [Assessment Definitions](#). This document details fourteen different assessment methods and explanations of how to operate those methods with learners at the different levels, together with the types of evidence an EQA would expect to see in the learners' portfolios. The Assessment Definitions guidance is available electronically and is located on the OCN London website at <http://www.ocnlondon.org.uk/centres/centre-area/quality-assurance/assessment.aspx>

To ensure fair assessment, the range of assessment methods used should reflect the needs of your learners. At the same time the centre should maintain a consistent approach to assessment to underpin the effectiveness of the standardisation process (see section 4.4).

4.3. Internal Quality Assurance

Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) is the system that ensures learner evidence is complete and genuinely meets all the required assessment criteria. It is also the system that should identify and alert learners and assessors when they have not assembled evidence that meets all of the assessment criteria, and so are in danger of failing that unit. If Internal Quality Assurance is carried out responsibly and in

time for the learner to be alerted and supported in producing any additional evidence, then the IQA system can ensure the centre avoids learners being failed unnecessarily. The Internal Quality Assurer (IQA) is responsible for ensuring all portfolios are ready when presented for External Quality Assurance (EQA). Learners who are found to have gaps in their portfolio of evidence at the point of EQA may be failed because at that point, there is often no time/opportunity for them to do additional work.

IQA is therefore key to learner achievement and the Internal Quality Assurer must take responsibility for any learners they put forward being failed by the EQA. The IQA should either pick up shortcomings in time for the learner to address them, or not put that learner forward as having achieved.

Internal Quality Assurers usually only need to sample assessments to ensure their assessors are assessing fairly across different units and levels. The IQA's chosen sample can also show them that the assessor has ensured that learner evidence is appropriate, effectively labelled, and fully ready for the EQA to consider. However, the sample strategy needs to ensure it covers appropriate elements, such as all the different assessors, different units, different levels, different assessment methods used and different subject areas.

Internal Quality Assurance is also the system that enables the EQA to only sample learners' work. The EQA relies on the effectiveness and integrity of the IQA system to not put forward learners who have not achieved. If the EQA feels the IQA process is ineffective and / or performed without absolute integrity, for example putting forward learners for an award whose work does not justify this, then the EQA will have no choice but to consider a much greater number of learners' evidence themselves. If they are concerned that they cannot rely on the IQA's judgement or practice, they may not sign off the entire cohort. Considering more learners' portfolios is time consuming for the EQA and will cause delay. Also, the centre may be charged for additional time needed. In some circumstances, the situation may be a result of 'malpractice' or 'maladministration', which could invoke sanctions, for example prohibiting the award of certificates, since the integrity of the awarding system would be compromised. IQAs are responsible for ensuring assessors are aware of the consequences of malpractice or maladministration, and how to avoid it.

IQA records are important since the EQA is required to check that they are being kept and because they indicate the effectiveness of the process. For example, if a tutor is not assessing fairly, the IQA needs to both pick this up and then address the situation. This might be done by amending the assessment decision for

affected learners and arranging further training for the assessor. The records should include the IQA's conclusions – after having sampled learners' work and considered the assessor's assessing – and include the feedback provided to the assessor.

The centre can produce its own templates for its IQA Records and Reports, but OCN London has a selection of [ready to use templates](http://www.ocnlondon.org.uk/centres/centre-area/quality-assurance/internal-verification.aspx) if required. These are available to download from the OCN London web site at <http://www.ocnlondon.org.uk/centres/centre-area/quality-assurance/internal-verification.aspx>

IQA records are also important in providing evidence that an effective and robust assessment system is in operation. This is useful for various reasons, including cases where learners dispute their assessment results, as the IQA report provides evidence that 'due process' has been followed by the centre regarding formal assessments.

4.4. Centre Based Standardisation

Internal Quality Assurers need to ensure there is 'standardisation' in place so that learners assessed by one tutor / assessor are not awarded credits more easily than when assessed by another tutor / assessor. The IQA needs to do whatever is necessary to ensure fairness and comparability between different assessors. This is often done by conducting standardisation events where different assessors sample each other's assessments and any variations in marking are highlighted and addressed.

Centres that rely on centre designed assessment tasks also need to ensure they are fit for purpose. The IQA is responsible for ensuring that the assessment methods and tasks used by the tutor / assessor are appropriate in that they will support learners in addressing the related assessment criteria and are valid. If different tutors are using different assessment tasks in relation to the same unit, they should ensure the different tasks used are comparable, so that learners in one group do not have an easier task than those in another group. Standardisation events can be used to 'standardise' assessment task design as well as assessment judgements.

This check is sometimes referred to as conducting 'pre-verification' and the IQA should ensure this takes place, and any weaknesses in the design of assessment tasks is addressed before they are used with learners

5. Learner Achievement

5.1. Completing and Uploading the ERAC

All centres have the facility to make claims for certificates using our secure online QuartzWeb system (<https://quartz.ocnlondon.org.uk/>).

Following the registration of a cohort of learners, centre staff can download the Electronic Recommendation for the Award of Credit (ERAC) form for that particular course run from QuartzWeb. The ERAC form is an Excel spreadsheet that has the registered learners listed adjacent to columns headed by titles of the units that make up that course or qualification.

Following the completion of all assessments and the final Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) process confirms the learner 'claims of achievement', the results are indicated on the ERAC form, prior to it being uploaded to QuartzWeb.

Completing and uploading the ERAC form submits the centre's claims of achievement for the learners that OCN London then needs to check and verify either through an External Moderation or Monitoring engagement. It is only after successful External Moderation or Monitoring that we can then dispatch certificates.

When the ERAC is uploaded to QuartzWeb, the centre's designated EQA or Approved Internal Moderator (AIM), (in the case of Centres that hold Direct Claim Status (DCS) for bespoke courses), is notified that the ERAC is now 'awaiting moderation'.

Centres without DCS will have to arrange an EQA engagement. To do this, contact your Centre's EQA or the OCN London Quality and Standards Team if you do not know who your allocated EQA is. The EQA will then confirm the quality engagement for a mutually convenient date. To avoid unnecessary delay, the Centre is encouraged to book an EQA engagement well in advance. (See following section also.)

A step-by-step QuartzWeb User Guide, complete with screenshots, showing how to download, complete and submit an ERAC is available from <http://www.ocnlondon.org.uk/centres/online-registration.aspx>

In normal circumstances, OCN London's free monthly 'Introduction to Learner Registration and Certification' information session contains a real time

demonstration of how to download, complete and submit an ERAC. The Business Support team are able to provide such a demonstration through an online Teams or Zoom meeting tailored to a centre's needs.

6. Quality Engagement and DCS

6.1. External Quality Assurers

Each centre is allocated an EQA or is designated as a 'Hub' centre. Hub centres may be moderated by different EQAs at different times. EQAs see a broad range of provision that enables them to share and promote good practice across centres and across different types of centre.

EQAs are responsible for carrying out external moderation and monitoring activities (as applicable) and also for carrying out periodic centre quality monitoring and review engagements.

6.2. External Quality Assurance

EQAs can carry out external moderation or monitoring at the centre, or this can be done 'remotely', where centres provide a selected sample of learner portfolios and related documentation, such as IQA reports and learner evaluation data, either electronically or by the delivery of paper-based documents and portfolios. These remote EQA engagements are undertaken on specified/pre-arranged dates, as agreed with the centre's EQA(s). 'Hub centres need to book their EQA remote engagements to designated 'Hub Dates' in advance by contacting OCN London's Quality and Standards Coordinator.

6.3. Direct Claims Status (DCS)

Centres delivering bespoke courses that have achieved Direct Claims Status (DCS) with OCN London can recommend learners for certification without needing to wait for the EQA to verify the learners.

Centres are only eligible to be considered for DCS once they have demonstrated that their quality systems are operating effectively and with integrity. The centre needs to apply for DCS by first discussing their intention with their EQA, who must 'recommend' the centre for DCS before it can apply.

To achieve DCS, the centre must also be considered 'low risk' and have been identified recently as such, through at least one previous EQA engagement. In their application, the centre also needs to nominate an 'Approved Internal Moderator' or 'AIM', for each course the centre is hoping to achieve DCS for. OCN London will then consider the qualifications or experience of the proposed 'AIM'.

This might include a moderation related qualification, such as the 'Internal Quality Assurance Award', (or IQA) or the External Quality Assurance Award (EQA), or historical equivalents. OCN London will also consider IQAs that have successfully completed the OCN London accredited 'Develop Your Internal Moderation Skills' course as suitably qualified.

Achieving DCS status with OCN London for one or more accredited courses is a genuine 'badge of quality' and can bring a financial discount. (See the current Charges document under the heading 'Annual Centre Approval Fee' at the following web page <http://www.ocnlondon.org.uk/centres/centre-area/charges.aspx>

However, please note that centres with DCS are required to hold all learner portfolios until a retrospective EQA engagement takes place. Also note that should an AIM leave, the centre may lose DCS for the courses covered unless and until there is a similarly qualified replacement approved by OCN London.

Further information regarding DCS and other moderation/monitoring related matters, is available from the Quality Assurance page of the OCN London website at <http://www.ocnlondon.org.uk/centres/centre-area/quality-assurance.aspx>

6.4. External Quality Assurance Engagement Reports

The collective name OCN London uses for internal moderation events, external moderation events, remote moderations, centre visit based moderations, centre monitoring reviews and centre support visits, is EQA engagements.

Following any formal EQA engagement, OCN London staff will record the key outcomes of that engagement by producing a EQA report, and a copy of the report will be sent to the designated centre staff by email.

The report aims to record key aspects relating to what was considered, the conclusions that were reached by the moderator, aspects of good practice found, formal 'actions' that the centre should take to improve their practice in relation to the aspects considered, and reference to the progress made against any previously set 'actions'. Additionally, the EQA may make some broader recommendations as to how assessment and moderation practices could be improved. Where possible, the EQA should provide a brief written or verbal summary of their conclusions toward the end of any EQA engagement, so that actions set in these circumstances should not be a surprise when the report comes

through, but this is not always possible, particularly where the engagement takes place remotely.

Centres that receive a report and have an issue with its contents, whether simple errors or areas of contention, can contact the Deputy CEO or Quality and Standards Manager at OCN London to discuss the matter. If agreed as necessary and right to do so, the report can be amended and re-dispatched.

6.5. OCN London Based Standardisation

OCN London is required to conduct its own standardisation activities to ensure comparability of assessments between different centres. To do this, we need to borrow assessed portfolios of work and IM records from a wide range of centres. Please co-operate with the EQA / Quality and Standards Coordinator in identifying appropriate samples of learners' work to review for this activity, should they ask.

7. Award of Credit

7.1. Dispatch of Certificates

Once approved by an OCN London EQA, the OCN London Business Support team can process learner achievements, produce certificates and arrange for their dispatch to the centre.

Under normal circumstances, the certificates will be posted by recorded delivery and addressed to the named Administration Contact at the centre. It is the responsibility of the centre to ensure that the certificates reach their learners.

Centres should normally expect to receive their certificates within 24- 48 hours of the results being approved by the EQA.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, e-certificates are being made available for centres to download and email to their learners until such time that the hard copy certificates can be printed and posted. Please contact your Business Support contact for full details.

Should you need to clarify the timing, please call the Business Support team for an estimate on how long the certification will take; at busier times of year there may be a slightly longer 'turnaround time'. If you have a particular deadline, such as an awards ceremony, please do let us know in advance and we will do our best to issue the certificates in time.

8. Additional Support

8.1. Website – for all related information

The OCN London website is a dynamic resource we are adding to all the time. It holds useful information including key policies and resource materials – see below. We hope the placement of particular documents and information is logical and easy to access, but if you are having trouble finding what you want, do call or email us.

Here are a few useful links to get you started:

[Assessment](#) – general brief information about assessment but links to more detailed ‘Assessment Guidance’ document, which details what is expected with different assessment tasks at different levels.

[Malpractice and Maladministration](#) – as particularly relating to assessment is key for centres delivering accredited courses or regulated qualifications. See how to best avoid assessment cheating – by learners but also by assessors, and what to do if it occurs.

[External Moderation/Monitoring](#) – what it is and how to prepare for it. Slightly more detailed information than provided in this document.

[Hub External Quality Assurance](#) – what it is and how to book a ‘hub’ external moderation event.

[Internal Quality Assurance](#) – this is the key process that ensures learners get the assessment they genuinely deserve and has to be effective. If nothing else, read the information on the website and in this document relating to IM to make sure this essential activity is conducted rigorously and effectively at your centre.

Please feedback and tell us what other information would be useful for you to have available on our website, and we’ll see what we can do.

8.2. Training Opportunities

We offer a range of training events for centre staff. We have scheduled dates throughout the year for workshops on assessment, IQA and learner registration and certification. The training schedule and booking forms are on the OCN

London website at <http://www.ocnlondon.org.uk/training-events/training-and-development.aspx>

For most events there is a small fee, but some are free to members.

All training opportunities are also available for tailored in-house delivery at your centre if you have a few staff that you wish to have trained. The minimum number of learners for in-house training is normally six, but please contact OCN London for further information.

About OCN London

OCN London is a well-established national awarding organisation with over 25 years' experience in accrediting learning. We are a not-for-profit organisation with charitable status, dedicated to widening participation in learning and training, social inclusion and employability. We are also a market leader in the recognition of achievement through credit-based units and qualifications. Based in London we work with Centres both across the UK and abroad, offering national qualifications and accredited programmes.

Our mission is to provide opportunities for people from across society to benefit from learning, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Why work with us?

- We are agile and responsive. This means you will get a personal service with direct access to a named contact and a quick turnaround.
- We pride ourselves on our close relationships with Centres. The people we work with see us as a trusted partner, not just a supplier.
- We want to help you get the best from your learners and employees.
- We have a reputation for high quality. The OCN London brand carries national recognition and kudos.
- We are flexible and recognise the importance of accommodating the needs of different learners and different learning styles.
- We offer exceptional value for money. Just ask the people we work with.
- We are committed to the belief that learning can change lives.

OCN London is regulated by Ofqual and the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

If you would like to deliver any of these qualifications please contact our Curriculum Development Team on **020 7689 5867**.

For further information call 020 7278 5511. E: enquiries@ocnlondon.org.uk

Or visit our website: www.ocnlondon.org.uk



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