

Explanation, guidance and information for Section 3C

This form is designed to be viewed, completed and submitted electronically. All completed forms should be sent to your main contact person.

The purpose of this application form is to allow the organisation to provide details of its quality assurance processes to award credit.

Where appropriate the sections within the forms will list the essential policies and information that is required to accompany the application form. All of this information should be clearly cross-referenced within the application documentation.

Please note as the form is to be completed electronically that the information below has been designed to be in the form of a hover help. For the purposes of this paper copy, the information has been boxed so that it can be cross-referenced to the appropriate sections of the application within section 3C.

Awarding credit (further explanation, guidance and information)

Organisational aims, structure and relationships

An organisation seeking recognition must be able to demonstrate that it has the relevant expertise and a thorough knowledge and understanding of the principles of awarding credit contained in the CQFW Common Accord in particular:

- Only Credit Values assigned to units in accordance with the CQFW Common Accord should be awarded.
- Credit is to be awarded on the basis of successful achievement in the assessment of a unit's learning outcomes. However within Higher Education compensation and practices to condone are well established quality assured practices and this practice will continue, subject to individual institutional arrangements.
- Credit is not to be awarded for achievements of sub-components of a unit.
- The award of credit does not reflect any grade achieved. The candidate is awarded either all the credit available, for achieving a pass in the unit, or none of the credit for not achieving the unit.
- Credit is to be awarded after all quality assurance and other Recognised Bodies awarding processes (e.g. assessment, moderation, verification, aggregation of components, setting grade boundaries, marking review) have been completed for any one unit.
- With regard to units of qualifications that are issued at a grade, credit is to be awarded to all candidates who achieve units of qualifications at the pass/threshold grade.

The fundamental principles of Credit are contained within the CQFW Common Accord and the CQFW Handbook should be referenced in the submission. Application of the credit principles contained within the QCF and SCQF are of equal merit.

It is important that an organisation utilises staff (and outside consultants) who have a range of experiences, including qualification development, assessment, subject/sector expertise and learning delivery. In particular organisations should be using personnel already familiar with credit principles and for personnel unfamiliar with credit build that expertise through workshops, training and professional development.

In practical terms an organisation must be able to demonstrate the sustainability of knowledge, experience and expertise in awarding credit, so that they are embedded in the organisation (i.e. not 'in the head' of an individual). The detail that should be in the application would include:

- Organisational structure (e.g. a chart of the key personnel involved in the awarding of credit process).
- Person specifications and job descriptions for key members of staff involved in the awarding of credit (assessment, awarding, certification, quality assurance and contact with centres) process.
- Processes for selecting staff and consultants with appropriate expertise.
- Staff/consultant development and briefing programmes on credit principles and unit development.
- Supervision and monitoring of staff and consultants.

The clear identification of the governance and management of the awarding function as separate to that of other functions of the organisation must be documented to deliver transparency and avoid any potential conflict of interests. The organisation should ensure that multiple roles do not constitute a barrier to access or promote restrictive practices, by having in place effective measure to manage any potential for these occurrences.

Centre administration

Delivery of its units/learning programmes by centres/providers is for the organisation to arrange.

An essential part of that arrangement is a centre recognition process whereby a centre wishing to offer the organisation's recognised units is confirmed as being able to maintain the required quality and consistency of assessment for learning outcomes specifications. This section does cross-reference with Assessment and Verification of Achievement, Diversity and Equality and Self-evaluation and Continuous Improvement but an organisation needs to detail its:

- processes for approving centres
- mechanisms for communicating with centres
- mechanisms for on-going management of centres

Evidence of effective communication policy application for both internal and external contacts should be documented.

Essential information to support and referenced to the narrative would be the following:

- Flowchart detailing the process for Centre approval.
- Centre approval criteria.
- Guidelines defining a Centre's role, responsibility and accountability.

Guidance and advice documentation should be discussed and evidenced.

Assessment and verification of achievement

Throughout this section the quality assurance processes should be detailed with specification of application, monitoring and review.

A key element in the award of credit is the assessment of learner achievement. Assessment is all about the judgement of evidence showing that learning has taken place and confirming that a learning outcome or part of a learning outcome has been achieved. Therefore, Credit is awarded to a learner in recognition of the achievement of designated learning outcomes at a specified level – the learner will need to have satisfied all of the assessment criteria to receive the award.

Organisations when developing their assessment policy to guide the assessment strategies of the respective learning programmes and units they are developing should seriously consider these principles when considering fitness for purpose:

- Assessment strategy must be clearly linked to the aim of the programme and the learners.
- Assessment activities used should be appropriate to the learner, the learning and the level.

Any assessment strategy should include a variety of assessment methods appropriate to the target group and subject.

It is the responsibility of the organisation to ensure that its methods to assess evidence produce results that are reliable and consistent based on the following key points:

- Validity – evidence is directly related to learning outcomes and assessment criteria.
- Authenticity – evidence is a result of the learners own work.
- Sufficiency – sufficient evidence to enable an assessor to make a consistent and reliable judgement about achievement.
- Fit for purpose – must be appropriate and relevant to the target group of the learners and the context the learning takes place.
- Inclusive – must provide equality of opportunity and allow for all learners to achieve regardless of individual need. (It is important to link to the requirements of Diversity and Equality).

The organisation would need to describe how it ensures that its methods to assess evidence that will ensure that the key points above will be met. When considering the key points the following guidelines should be considered.

In the delivery of assessment the organisation should ensure that there are no barriers to entry to the learning programmes to which it will award credit (links with the section 'Diversity and equality'.) In particular, organisations:

- must have in place the necessary systems and procedures to allow the provision of access arrangements, including reasonable adjustments. These should reflect the needs of individual learners and must also ensure that assessment continues to enable valid, reliable and consistent judgements to be made about achievement of all learning outcomes against the stated assessment criteria.
- must also arrange for special consideration to be given to learners that experience temporary illness, injury or indisposition at the time of an assessment. This should allow them to demonstrate the achievement they are capable for the units that are subject to special consideration.

Use of language is also an important issue for the organisation to consider and this again links in with the section 'Diversity and equality'. In particular:

- 1) Learning programmes to which organisations will award credit must provide specifications that are expressed in Welsh or English, or in Welsh and English; specifications must state explicitly in which language(s) assessment is available.
- 2) Organisations may also allow assessment in a language other than English or Welsh, provided that:
 - a) it ensures that the assessment is comparable to that offered in English or Welsh
 - b) in learning programmes designed for the workplace, lack of proficiency in English and Welsh does not prevent the candidate from properly carrying out the role that is supported by the learning programme.
- 3) Where more than one language is used, the organisation must put mechanisms in place to ensure that assessments carried out, and awards made to learners, in different languages are comparable.
- 4) In accordance with the above arrangements an organisation may also allow assessment in British Sign Language.

Explanations of the roles and responsibilities of any associated delivery centres should be clearly documented and discussed.

An essential component in ensuring quality of the award of credit is the verification of learner achievement. It is the organisation's responsibility to ensure that its verification processes are rigorous in ensuring assessment standards have been applied correctly and consistently between assessors, between Centres and over time.

At a centre level the organisation needs to ensure that the Centre's assessors carry out accurate and consistent standards of assessment. Therefore, the organisation will be seeking to ensure that:

- Centres have the appropriate internal verification/moderation and assessment systems – trained assessors and internal verifiers; sufficient resources especially competent and trained personnel to carry out assessment/internal verification; appropriate assessment/verification records are used and retained. Personnel are familiar with organisation's assessment/verification procedures.
- Centre assessment and internal verification activity is conducted in accordance with its procedures – process for centre approval, external verification visits.
- Assessment and verification criteria and procedures are consistently applied on a national level – organisation's deployment and monitoring of external verifier's, standardisation and sampling activity, communication and information briefing of Centres, ensuring that the principles of the CQFW Common Accord are adhered to.
- The structure and context for the units to be awarded have been subject to a validation process. Where there is separation of the assigning and awarding bodies, the validation process is mutually co-ordinated and applied.
- There are arrangements in centres to consider the transfer of units for APL purposes.

Diversity and equality

Explain the organisation's strategies for diversity and equality supported by relevant procedures and policies on equal opportunities, special assessment arrangements and reasonable adjustments.

Any statements and/or explanations should be shown to be compliant with all current legislation for those areas which diversity and equality covers – race, ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, age and language (especially the Welsh language).

The organisation needs to demonstrate that issues of diversity and equality are incorporated into its quality assurance mechanisms. This is important as the organisation needs to give due consideration to how it can ensure equality for all learners.

Evidence of staff training both internally and externally with regards to the above will also be important.

Learner credit history

The organisation is required to identify how accurate and up-to-date records of units/frameworks/learning programmes/individual learner achievement (as appropriate) are monitored. It needs also to explain its systems for the retrieval of all individual learner achievement records, as far as can be reasonably guaranteed, from the date of recognition by CQFW.

Within the narrative, where appropriate, make specific references to links/protocols with national databases, such as Managing Information Across Partners (MIAP) standards and Unique Learner Number information, links to funding systems, e.g. PLASC, LLWR and costing regime(s) for non-funded learning.

Discuss the management of records for partial achievement and/or full achievement to include the methodologies for electronic tracking for records of credit achievement recorded and stored over time. (This should also contribute to the discussion within ongoing quality assurance).

Rationalise and/or justify the length of time for which learner records are retained for retrieval purposes.

Production and security arrangements for certificates and/or credit transcripts

Explain the processes in place to ensure clear and consistent quality standards for processing information in line with CQFW requirements.

Include a detailed narrative of explanations in relation to the standard format(s) for certification that are available, consistency of compliance with CQFW requirements, description of how certification is checked for accuracy and how this is monitored and reviewed over time.

Organisations must develop certificates that will ensure clarity and be fit for purpose for the learner. Organisations must submit a sample certificate and/or credit transcript with their submission for recognition.

Organisations must include the following details on all unit certificates in order to meet the minimum requirements of the CQFW:

- The full name of the Recognised Body.
- The recognised unit(s) title(s).
- Candidate name.
- The unique number(s) for the unit(s).
- Unique certificate number.
- Date.
- The authorised signature.
- Certificate details to be available in English and/or English and Welsh, when delivered bilingually.
- Unit Level.
- Credit Value.

- Where details require multiple sheets for certification, the learner name and the unique certificate identifier should appear on every sheet.

Security arrangements for certificate design and issue should be defined in the submission for recognition to award credit.

The awarding body must ensure that there is a secure system for handling certificates and their issue is covered by an audit trail.

Specifically detail the security arrangement(s), responsibility, policy and process either internally and/or externally. This must include reference to reliable and secure information management systems with adequate back-up and contingency arrangements, whether in-house or via contract.

Explain how security is checked and maintained over time and detail the mechanisms for the issue of replacement certificates. Include the measures that the organisation has in place to protect against fraudulent or mistaken claims for certificates.

Management of data systems

Organisational policy/regulation(s) relating to learner credit history.

Detail how data is stored and protected and explain how the recognised awarding body will ensure data management in relation to organisations and legislation (e.g. Data Protection Act, Freedom of Information Act, and Welsh Language Act).

This should include detailed explanations for the implementation of:

- data procedures comply with statutory requirements
- reporting of data to CQFW, WAG and others as required
- data systems are reliable and secure
- data systems are provided with adequate back-up and contingency arrangements
- hardware and physical infrastructure backup
- a disaster recovery plan.

Malpractice and maladministration

One of the key requirements of recognition is to secure the award of credit.

Evidence and explain the organisation's malpractice policy in relation to learners, the learning deliverers, the assessment and verification processes and internal organisational practices. Any relevant legislation should be included and referenced to.

All investigated cases of malpractice should have an auditable trail of evidence in place and communication pathways clearly stated.

Customer service standards for administration of credit

Include a detailed narrative of how the customer service statement/policy and procedure(s) are implemented to include reference to timescales.

Include details of how the quality service, pricing structure, appeals and complaints statements or policy and procedure(s) are implemented. Also detail the procedures for developing and monitoring the overall quality of service provided.

Explanations of how these are managed and monitored with reference to staffing and departmental responsibilities.

Self-evaluation and continuous improvement

In this section the organisation must demonstrate that it has a rigorous self-evaluation model to ensure that submitted policies and procedures are operating appropriately and subject to continuous improvement strategies. Part of the model would include a Quality Improvement Plan highlighting the organisation's current priorities for continuous improvement.

Therefore, the organisation is required to describe its overarching self-evaluation model and also to provide more specific commentary on the processes to evaluate the following activities:

- The quality and consistency of assessment within and between centres.
- The effectiveness of verification processes.
- Review of services offered.
- Review of communications methodologies.
- Review of the way policies are implemented in this context.
- The effectiveness of the management of this continuous improvement process.

All sections should have quality assurance processes highlighted throughout as standard practice(s).