User Guide to the Centre Approval Report

External Quality Assurance team

Version 9.1 – October / 2026

Visit ncfe.org.uk **Call** 0191 239 8000

Introduction **3**
The Approval Report **3**
Section 1: Review details **3**
Section 2: Leadership, Policies and Learner Placement Arrangements **3**
Section 3: Staff Management, Development and Accountability **4**
Section 4: Learner Recruitment, Delivery and Records Management **5**
Section 5: Agreed Centre Action Plan **10**
Section 6: Internal Action for EQA or Head Office **10**
NCFE Active IQ qualifications only **10**
Version control **12**

Introduction

To gain and maintain approval to offer one of our qualifications you must meet NCFE's approval criteria. We will review the evidence available in support of the approval criteria on the initial approval review and then throughout our annual monitoring reviews and external quality assurance reviews.

We want to ensure that our centres feel supported and confident when delivering our qualifications and this guide offers an explanation for each section of the Centre Approval Report.

Centres should ensure that all supporting evidence is available in advance of the review. Documentation does not always need to be formal policies but must be clearly documented, accessible and understood by staff involved in the delivery of NCFE qualifications.
There are other supporting documents available on our website in the approvals section and on our how to prepare for a quality review page.

The Centre Approval Report will be completed by an external quality assurer (EQA) and you'll be graded as either yes or no for meeting each criteria.

Once you have gained approval and registered learners, you will be allocated a Quality Reviewer to carry out an Annual Monitoring Review (AMR). This will take place once per session and the first will be 6-12 months after gaining approval, the first AMR will be completed as a desk-based review unless the centre offer moderated qualifications.

The Approval Report

Over the following pages we will take a look at each section of the report, explaining what each section is for and what evidence you will need to provide ahead of the review taking place.

Section 1: Review details

This section will record key information about the centre, EQA, approval activity and qualifications requested. Both the EQA and centre must confirm all contact and qualification details are accurate during the review.

Section 2: Leadership, Policies and Learner Placement Arrangements

This section will confirm that essential policies and procedures are in place and supported by senior management within the centre.

2.1	**Aims, policies and procedures that are supported by senior management are in place and understood by the delivery and assessment teams**

Centre guidance:

To demonstrate and confirm that the centre has the required policies and procedures in place, that they are supported by senior management, are understood by delivery and assessment teams and that they are shared with learners.

Evidence to meet this criteria must include:

- Copies of policies and/or procedures
- Confirmation of when policies are reviewed and who by
- Details of how and when these are provided to learners
- Confirmation of support from senior managers to run the qualifications.

Policies and Procedures required to be in place:

- Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)
- Appeals
- Complaints
- Malpractice/Maladministration/plagiarism
- Provider Contingency and Adverse Effects (to include withdrawal of provider approval status and protection of the learners' interest in the case of such a withdrawal)
- Conflicts of Interest (COI)
- Data Protection including GDPR
- Risk Assessment and Health and Safety (including Public Liability)
- Safeguarding
- Controlled Assessment
- Assessment and Internal Quality Assurance (to include the use of an internal quality assurance strategy).

2.2	**Sufficient work placements are available to learners and supporting policies and procedures are in place**

Please note: this criteria is only applicable when running qualifications with a mandatory work placement.

Centre guidance:

The centre will need to demonstrate that they have sufficient and suitable work placement opportunities available for all learners to be able to achieve the work placement requirement of the qualifications. They will also ensure policies and procedures are in place to ensure the work placement environment is suitable and safe.

Evidence to meet this criteria must include:

- Copies of relevant policies and/or procedures
- Risk assessment documentation
- Copies of formal agreements between the learner, centre, and industry placement
- A process for recording the placement hours to show that the number of hours are in line with the required hours outlined within the Qualification Specification
- Communication channels between employers/work placements.

Section 3: Staff Management, Development and Accountability

This section will review staff recruitment, how staff are inducted to the centre and role, and what continuing professional development (CPD) will be undertaken throughout the academic year.

3.1	**Recruitment and induction processes are in place for all staff involved in the qualifications**

Centre guidance:

Confirm that the centre is recruiting sufficiently competent, suitable, and knowledgeable assessors and internal quality assurers (IQAs) who are able to meet the demand of qualifications being delivered. Where applicable the EQA will also need to confirm that staff are registered with regulators in accordance with Qualification Specifications. The EQA will review the CVs of all assessors and IQAs delivering the qualifications and record them in the table within the Approval Report.

The induction processes for assessors and IQAs will be reviewed to ensure an appropriate induction is in place for their role and that they are provided with sufficient information, training and support they

need to deliver, assess and internally quality assure NCFE qualifications in line with NCFE requirements.

Evidence to meet this criteria must include:

- CVs for all assessors and IQAs on the qualifications being sought for approval
- Recruitment and interview policy/process
- Staff induction handbook/process.

3.2	**Processes are in place to ensure all staff are provided with accurate advice and support to enable them to identify and meet their training and development needs, via CPD**

Centre guidance:

To ensure the centre continues to provide all staff access to training and support and to enable them to maintain and update their skills as required in the Qualification Specification. We don't specify the amount of time to be spent on staff development, but any updates affecting the qualifications being delivered should be accommodated as they take place.

Evidence to meet this criteria must include:

- CPD records for all assessors and IQAs (showing completed and/or planned)
- CPD policy and/or process.

Section 4: Learner Recruitment, Delivery and Records Management

This is the largest section and covers the learner journey from recruitment through to their certification.

Additional requirements apply for specialised qualifications, international delivery, and Customised provision, these will also be covered in this section where applicable.

4.1	**Marketing and advertising of all qualifications is clear, accurate, not misleading and complies with our guidelines**

Centre guidance:

The advertising, marketing, and promotion of all NCFE qualifications must adhere to NCFE's brand guidelines. The correct advertising must be implemented through all websites and other materials. Any marketing or advertising materials used to promote qualifications, including pages on your website, must accurately reflect the details of the qualifications being offered.

Customised centres:

When advertising Customised Qualifications the guide to advertising Customised Qualifications must be adhered to. The EQA will review various advertising materials used by the centre to satisfy this criteria.

Evidence to meet this criteria must include:

- Copies of relevant promotional materials, for example, qualification prospectus, options booklet, website pages, leaflets, and PowerPoint presentations linked to the promotion of all NCFE/Active IQ qualifications.

4.2	**An appropriate recruitment process is in place for learners**

Centre guidance:

To ensure the centre has appropriate recruitment processes in place for each qualification being delivered. The EQA will need to confirm that the centre is aware of and is implementing appropriate entry requirements onto qualifications, ensuring only appropriate learners are recruited onto NCFE qualifications.

The EQA will also confirm that appropriate information, advice, and guidance are provided to potential learners prior to enrolment, so they can make an informed decision to determine if the qualification is suitable for them.

Evidence to meet this criteria must include:

- Recruitment policy and/or process such as options process, open events, learner interviews, parent evenings and taster sessions
- Information, advice and guidance policy and/or process.

4.3	**An enrolment and induction process which provides sufficient information, advice and guidance is in place for all learners**

Centre guidance:

The EQA will review the centre enrolment and induction process for learners to ensure it is robust and that it provides learners with sufficient information, advice, and guidance about the qualifications they have chosen to study. This should include advising learners of any technical needs required for the qualification they have chosen to study for and also what support will be available to them.

Evidence to meet this criteria must include:

- Application process
- Enrolment process/form
- Information on any initial assessments carried out, such as English and maths
- Learner induction process, schedule/content.

4.4	**Learners' development needs, including SEND needs are matched against the requirements of the qualification, and are regularly reviewed in agreed individual assessment plans**

Centre guidance:

Explore how learner development needs established during enrolment are matched against the requirements of the qualification learners are registered to. The EQA will review the centres processes and systems used to record, review, and monitor progress.

Evidence to meet this criteria must include:

- Arrangements to identify additional learning needs and offer appropriate support
- Individual learning plans/individual assessment plans
- System used to track and report learner progress, for example SIMs, Promonitor.

4.5	**A planned programme of delivery is in place for all requested qualifications**

Centre guidance:

The delivery and assessment of every qualification must be in line with the requirements of the NCFE Registration Policy. The EQA will record the commencement of the qualification delivery, for each

qualification. This criteria will also be satisfied by a review of how well the delivery and assessment of qualifications are being conducted within the centre, including what assessment methods/facilities and resources are being used.

Evidence to meet this criteria must include:

- Commencement dates of all qualifications applied for
- The locations of both theory and practical delivery (where applicable)
- Qualification delivery plan to show guided learning hours/total qualification time
- Example of intended assessment plans with centre devised tasks (if applicable)
- Example of intended IQA sampling plans
- Evidence of resources required as per Qualification Specifications.

If the centres delivery includes; satellite centre, international satellite centre, partnership or sub-contracting arrangements, the EQA will ensure that all subcontracted provisions is effectively controlled and monitored, ensuring there is clear oversight, accountability, and quality assurance of any third-party delivery, and all associated sites (such as satellite/remote delivery locations) follow the same policies and standards as the main centre.

International centres:

Satellite centres are usually only permitted within the country of the primary and original centre and to centres which are owned or managed by the same entity or person. Satellite centres requested in a location outside of the primary and original centre's region or requests to grant satellite centre status to centres not owned or managed by the original centre's entity or person, will only be considered on an exceptional case by case basis.
The International team will review all submitted applications and will decide whether to approve the addition of satellite centres to the existing approval.

Evidence to meet this criteria must include:

- A clear rationale for the inclusion of a satellite centre, international satellite centre, partnership or sub-contracting arrangement
- Satellite centre, international satellite centre, partnership or sub-contracting centre policies/procedures, demonstrating clear adherence with NCFE approval criteria
- Clear lines of reporting across the main site and any satellite centres, partnership or sub-contracting centres.

4.6	**Learner records and details of achievements are accurate, kept up to date and securely stored**

Centre guidance:

This criteria confirms that learner records of achievement are accurate and kept up to date, procedures are in place to retain records of learner achievement and that these records are stored securely for a minimum of 3 years. There should be evidence that learner personal data is collected and held in accordance with data protection legislation.

Evidence to meet this criteria must include:

- Details of how information is stored and kept secure relating to the Data Protection policy
- Confirmation that data will be kept for 3 years.

4.7	**Adequate and compliant procedures are in place to ensure the secure and safe storage and management of live and completed learner assessment records, examination materials, and external or controlled assessments, in line with NCFE and Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) requirements**

Centre guidance:

If the centre is delivering qualifications that involve any of the following types of assessment:

- External assessment
- Controlled assessments
- Non-examined assessment (NEA).

The EQA will document whether procedures in place are adequate and compliant with the NCFE 'Regulations for the Conduct of External Assessment' and 'Regulations for the Conduct of Controlled Assessment', as well as with JCQ requirements.

Functional Skills and EDSQ:

The EQA will comment on the booking and distribution of assessment materials and whether this is in line with the relevant Regulations for the Conduct of Controlled Assessments.

The EQA will comment on the secure storage of assessment materials and whether this is in line with the relevant Regulations for the Conduct of Controlled Assessments. Centres delivering online only still need to maintain secure storage facilities, for example in the event a learner may require a paper-based examination as a reasonable adjustment.

The arrangements for the delivery of the controlled and external assessments, including invigilation, will be commented on in line with the Regulations for the Conduct of Controlled Assessments – EDSQ.

International centres:

International centres cannot deliver qualifications where there is an external or controlled paper assessment. External assessments are only permitted if they are online for Functional Skills.
If the centre wants to use translation, then they must have a translation agreement in place which has been agreed by the international team, prior to the EQA approval.

Evidence to meet this criteria must include:

- JCQ compliance such as most recent annual inspection certificate (if in scope)
- Relevant centre examination policy and/or processes, including; invigilation, room utilisation and the resources available
- A process for the secure storage of passwords, live assessment materials (synoptic projects and recorded assessments) that complies with NCFE guidelines
- Identification of the designated individual/department managing the process, access to the materials, and who is responsible for the distribution and security of the materials.

4.8	**Comprehensive and compliant processes are in place for the registration, withdrawal, and certification of learners and qualifications, ensuring accuracy, timeliness, and adherence to NCFE requirements**

Centre guidance:

This criteria is to ensure the centre has appropriate registration, withdrawal and certification processes in place for learners and the qualifications being delivered at the centre.

Evidence to meet this criteria must include:

- Learner registration policy and/or process (timeliness and responsibilities of registrations to NCFE, via the Portal (including adding start and end dates for each enrolment), and the departments/individuals involved)
- Withdrawal policy and/or process (withdrawal of learners from NCFE, and the departments/individuals involved)

- Certification claiming policy and/or process (claiming and issuing learner certificates, and the departments/individuals involved)
- Process for the completion of term-time checks (if applicable)

4.9	**Feedback is used to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of qualifications to drive continuous improvement**

Centre guidance:

To meet the requirements of this criteria, the EQA will explore how the centre gathers feedback from learners and staff on the quality and effectiveness of qualifications being delivered, and how this leads to continuous improvement.

Evidence to meet this criteria must include:

- Process for capturing learner feedback and how it is used to drive improvement (surveys, learner voice, learner council)

4.10	**Processes are in place to notify us of any changes that would affect the ability to maintain delivery or assessment of qualifications**

Centre guidance:

The EQA will need to confirm that designated personnel are in place and know how to contact NCFE.

Centres must be aware of the requirement to complete the 'Change of centre contact details' form via the website on the external quality assurance page to notify us of any changes in personnel.

Evidence to meet this criteria must include:

- Confirmation of a suitable process
- Confirmation and the identification of the responsible person

4.11	**A robust process in place to ensure that content is fit for purpose where NCFE Customised Qualifications are developed**

Centre guidance:

The EQA will check that where centres have developed Customised Qualifications, there is a robust process in place to ensure the content is fit for purpose.

Evidence to meet this criteria must include:

- A process, with competent staff/person is in place to carry out a review of the qualification

4.12	**A robust process in place to ensure that international delivery is to be offered in line with NCFE requirements – including the translation of learner work where required.**

Centre guidance:

The EQA will check whether the centre is approved to deliver and assess the qualifications in English only, or if they have applied to become approved to deliver and assess qualifications in a language other than English. Centres will be responsible for the additional operational processes when delivering, assessing and quality assuring assessments in another language, by an approved third-party.

Evidence to meet this criteria must include:

- A suitable process is in place for the translation of documents

- An approved third-party is used for the purpose of translation
- Clearly defined roles and responsibilities for the oversight of the process are in place.

4.13	**For NCFE Active IQ qualifications offered internationally are REPS UAE requirements being met?**

Centre guidance:

Any centre going through approval who are based in the UAE must also seek approval from REPs UAE to become a recognised centre with them. REPs UAE will only approve centres if they are meeting their requirements with how the qualifications are to be delivered. The EQA will need to ensure that the centre is aware of these requirements and that they will adhere to them. REPs UAE will contact NCFE/AIQ to discuss any newly approved centres delivery model.

Evidence to meet this criteria must include:

- The EQA to check the centre Scheme of Work to ensure the minimum number of days for face-to-face delivery in a gym environment is being met on the following qualifications:
    - Active IQ Level 2 Certificate in Fitness Coaching – at least 4 days face-to-face delivery
    - Active IQ Level 2 Certificate in Gym Instructing – at least 4 days face-to-face delivery
    - Active IQ Level 3 Diploma in Gym Instructing and Personal Training – at least 6 days face-to-face delivery
- REPs UAE request that each centre in the UAE has an EQA site visit biannually and an EQA remote visit in between.
- The EQA must observe a practical assessment on each EQA visit whether this is on site and in person or recorded.

Section 5: Agreed Centre Action Plan

This section will address any actions or recommendations that the EQA has identified from each section of the report. Your EQA will explain what will appear in this section with their feedback. Please ask about any areas you're unsure of during the review or when you receive your report. Remember that the EQA is there to offer help and guidance throughout the process.

Section 6: Internal Action for EQA or Head Office

This section of the report is used to enter any action that NCFE may need to take following the approval review. For example, updating qualification contact details or advising that further information regarding some of our qualifications is required. The EQA will complete this section and any actions mentioned for head office will be passed to the relevant department.

NCFE Active IQ qualifications only

The EQA will need to discuss resources for the above qualifications with the centre and complete the equipment section of the Approval Report:

- Active IQ Level 2 Certificate in Fitness Coaching/Active IQ Level 2 Technical Occupational Entry in Fitness Coaching (Certificate)
- Active IQ Level 2 Award in Instructing Circuit Sessions/Active IQ Level 2 Technical Specialist in Instructing Circuit Sessions (Award)
- Active IQ Level 2 Award in Instructing Kettlebell Training/Active IQ Level 2 Technical Specialist in Instructing Kettlebell Training (Award)
- Active IQ Level 2 Award in Instructing Studio Cycling/Active IQ Level 2 Technical Specialist in Instructing Studio Cycling (Award)
- Active IQ Level 3 Diploma in Personal Training/Active IQ Level 3 Technical Occupational Entry in Personal Training (Diploma)
- Active IQ Level 3 Diploma in Sports Massage/Active IQ Level 3 Technical Specialist in Sports Massage Therapy (Diploma)/Active IQ Level 4 Diploma in Sports Massage

For the delivery of any gym-based exercises (gym/PT/ kettlebells/ circuits)		Resistance Machines Y/N		Free Weights (B/B, D/B, K/B) Y/N		CV Machines Y/N	
The centre has confirmed that the venues to be used for the delivery of practical sessions have a suitable, and sufficient range of:							
Pilates		**Group**		**CPD**		**Sports massage**	
Blocks and mats		Music player mats		Spin bikes suspension/ RTX		Massage bed towels	

If a Centre is being approved for any of the Active IQ sports massage qualifications, the EQA must ensure that the Centre is aware of the Sports Massage Association (SMA) minimum delivery requirements
The EQA to ensure the following when discussing delivery models -

- Any Level 3 Sports Massage Qualification must be hands-on teaching and must run over a minimum of 8 weeks with at least 48 hours of tutor contact. The final assessment should follow the taught phase without an extended gap.

- Any Level 4 Sports Massage Qualification must be hands-on teaching and must run over a minimum of 6 weeks with at least 48 hours of tutor contact. The final assessment should follow the taught phase without an extended gap.

The SMA will not give membership to any person if the qualification they completed, did not meet the above requirements.

Section 7: Outcome of Approval Review

This section outlines the result of the approval review:

- Delivery approved

The centre has been approved to deliver NCFE and/or Active IQ qualifications. The EQA will return the report to Head Office and centre will be contacted about next steps towards onboarding.

- Approval pending

The EQA and centre have discussed an action plan and will meet again at an agreed date to review progress towards gaining approval.

- Not approved

NCFE has concluded that approval should not be given, or the centre has asked for the approval application to be closed.

The EQA will also complete an additional information section will information which may be helpful to the centre.

Note: NCFE reserves the right to reject and close an application at any time up to a centre becoming approved and if appropriate may not share the reason for doing so with the centre.

Version control

Date approved	July 26
Approved by	Principal EQA
Review date	July 27

Only approved versions of this document should be documented in the below table:

Version	Date	Revision authors	Summary of changes
v7.0	January 2021	EQA team	Branding update Document history and change history record added
v7.1	August 2021	EQA team	Reference to Form VQ/IA added to 3.1
v8.0	October 2022	EQA team	Alignment with AMR
v8.1	January 2023	EQA team	Risk rating criteria applied, and additional information added to strengthen existing requirements around resources
v8.2	May 2023	EQA team	Additional roles added to 2.19 for change of centre contacts
v8.3	August 2023	EQA team	Registered profession information added to appendices. Amended detail linked to criteria 3.1 to make it clear which policies are required
v8.4	October 2024	EQA team	International information added to 2.14 and 2.15 Registered professions appendices now include reference to the General Dental Council Safe Practitioner Framework
v8.5	September 2025	EQA team	Review for 25/26 session. Updated section and criteria numbers
v9.0	July 2026	Principal EQA	Reviewed for 2026/27 session. Removed dental and added AIQ
V9.1	October 2026	EQA team	Inclusion of SEND needs added to criteria 4.4