



CENTRE HANDBOOK FOR COMPETENCE BASED QUALIFICATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

PIABC Limited are keen to work with centres to make all the processes as easy and straight forward as possible whilst maintaining the rigour that ensures that national standards can be met and maintained and that the public, regulatory and accreditation authorities can have confidence in the quality of the qualifications being offered. It is not our intention to have specific PIABC Limited -documentation and procedures that repeat those already in place for other larger awarding bodies or developed as centre standard documentation and procedures. Therefore the approval and monitoring processes are about accepting and approving what is already present rather than asking for new procedures and documentation to be implemented.

This handbook has been prepared to meet and match the regulatory/accreditation requirements of Ofqual's "*General Conditions of Recognition (including the Centre Assessment Standards Scrutiny (CASS))*", CCEA Regulation's "*General Conditions of Recognition (including the Centre Assessment Standards Scrutiny (CASS))*", and SQA Accreditation's "*Regulatory Principles*". All aspects of procedures, documentation, administration, and quality systems must be present and adhered to in order to ensure that national standards are met and maintained and that the public can have confidence in the quality of the qualifications being offered.

USEFUL INFORMATION AND ADVICE

PIABC are committed to providing a quality service. If you wish to know more about the following information contained in this handbook, then please contact the PIABC team by either email: piabc@iom3.org or by telephone: +44 (0)1476 513884.

CHANGES TO THE PROGRAMME AND ITS DELIVERY

Changes to the programme and its delivery have been notified to PIABC Limited using "*PIABC's Centre/Qualification Approval Update*" available from the PIABC Limited team at: piabc@iom3.org.

CENTRE MONITORING/EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE ACTIVITIES

Once Centres have been approved, they will be monitored (either by a remote desktop activity or by a visit) at least once a year by an external quality assurer. This is the basic requirement for approving certification for candidates and for maintaining Centre Approval. The purposes of the monitoring procedure are to quality assure candidate achievement, to ensure that Centres continue to meet the criteria for approval and that information on Centres is up-to-date.

There are three elements to the monitoring process:

1. Updating the original “*Centre Approval Form*” and “*Qualification Approval Form(s)*” detailing changes made since the forms were previously completed, that have not yet been notified to PIABC
2. Quality Assurance of assessments for candidates
3. Report detailing the findings including compliance and listing any changes found to be necessary

In addition, Centres are also invited to submit copies of existing self-assessment and associated action plans detailing for example:

- Professional development undertaken
- Feedback from Internal Quality Assurance and other types of internal audit and monitoring
- Future plans for the provision, including projected candidate numbers for the future

Following the monitoring activity (either remote desktop or by a visit) PIABC Limited will issue a written report to the Centre within four weeks. If there are concerns about the integrity of PIABC’s qualifications, the report may, in accordance with the regulatory/accreditation authorities’ requirements make the following recommendations or apply the sanctions shown below and detailed on Page 23:

- Require increased monitoring of the Centre
- Require tasks set for candidates to be approved by the EQA
- Specify the need to re-assess candidates
- Place a moratorium on candidate registrations and on claims for certification
- Suspend/withdraw approved Centre status

It is a condition of Centre Approval that access for PIABC Limited, regulatory and accreditation staff, to carry out monitoring activities (either remote desktop or by a visit) is granted. We hope that you will comply with this and provide them with the information they need.

CENTRE SYSTEMS

Administrative procedures and documentation

Below is a list of the procedures and documentation that PIABC Limited expect the centre to have in place. These will be checked during the approval visit, rechecked during biennial centre re-approval, and could be examined again during External Quality Assurance monitoring activity (either remote desktop or by a visit). As stated earlier it is the aim of PIABC Limited to reduce the burden of bureaucracy on centres and so it is not PIABC Limited’s intention to develop repeat procedures and documents for those already present and being used effectively. PIABC Limited therefore seeks to approve what is already being used effectively and only to develop extra items where necessary. It is envisaged that all

procedures and documentation listed below will already be in place in experienced centres but may need to be developed in those centres new to running competence-based programmes. In this case PIABC Limited will work with the centre to develop the necessary procedures and documentation.

It is the responsibility of the centre to have in place the following:

Candidates - procedures and documentation for:

- registering candidates
- checking the suitability of candidates (skills scans)
- assessing needs (initial assessment)
- checking basic skills (initial assessment)
- supporting candidates
- assessing units with dates and signatures
- ensuring authenticity of work by having evidence signed by candidates and Assessors
- ensuring security of candidate work
- ensuring security of records
- tracking the progress of candidates
- withdrawing candidates
- informing awarding body of assessment outcomes in a secure manner
- claiming certification
- retaining assessment decisions for 3 years
- retaining candidate work for external quality assurance

Assessors - procedures and documentation for:

- selecting Assessors
- checking Assessor qualifications and CVs
- ensuring occupational competence
- checking and storing original certificates
- training Assessors
- ensuring that Assessors complete a Conflict of Interest form
- checking for any Conflict of Interest
- maintaining a record of Conflict of Interest
- showing allocation of Assessors to particular centres and candidates
- ensuring that occupational competence is maintained
- carrying out reviews and action planning
- carrying out and recording assessment decisions
- giving feedback to candidates
- observing assessment of practical competence
- monitoring and feeding back on the work of Assessors
- recording Continuous Professional Development (CPD)
- retaining records of assessment decisions for 3 years

Internal Quality Assurers (IQAs) - procedures and documentation for:

- selecting IQAs
- checking IQAs qualifications and CVs
- checking and storing original certificates
- training IQAs
- ensuring that IQAs complete a Conflict of Interest form
- checking for any Conflict of Interest
- maintaining a record of Conflict of Interest
- showing allocation of IQAs to Assessors
- carrying out observations of practice
- monitoring Assessor observation of practical competence
- verifying Assessor decisions
- giving feedback to Assessors
- carrying out standardization activities
- recording Continuous Professional Development (CPD)
- retaining records of internal assurance/verification decisions for 3 years

Centre - procedures and documentation for:

- all aspects of quality assurance
- all aspects of equality and diversity
- all aspects of health and safety
- all aspects of safeguarding
- all aspects of Conflict of Interest
- monitoring the work of Assessors and IQAs
- time tabling meetings
- recording and action planning meetings
- self-assessment of qualifications
- collecting candidate and employer feedback
- analysing and responding to candidate and employer feedback
- responding to External Quality Assurer (EQA) reports
- responding to reports from other external agencies
- recruiting and training staff
- informing awarding bodies about changes to staffing
- administering special considerations
- dealing with complaints
- dealing with malpractice and maladministration
- informing PIABC of about candidate withdrawal
- supporting candidates in the case of the centre no longer working with PIABC Limited

PIABC LIMITED QUALIFICATIONS

Programme specifications for all its qualifications is available on the PIABC website (www.piabc.org.uk) and from the PIABC Limited team (piabc@iom3.org).

CANDIDATE REGISTRATION

Centres must ensure that all candidates are registered with PIABC Limited by completing the “*Candidate Registration Form for Centres (CRF1)*”, which is available on the PIABC Limited website (www.piabc.org.uk) or from the PIABC Limited team (piabc@iom3.org). This should be done as soon as is practically possible, and in any event not less than **ten weeks** before candidates claim certification for all or part of the qualification.

FEES

Details of PIABC Limited’s fees (e.g. centre and qualification approval, candidate registration fees, replacement certificates) can be found in the “*Fees and Price List*” booklet, which is available on the PIABC website (www.piabc.org.uk) and from the PIABC Limited team (piabc@iom3.org).

QUALIFICATIONS OF STAFF

ASSESSORS

All assessments should be carried out by competent Assessors who have been approved by PIABC. In order to be approved as an Assessor, prospective Assessors should complete the “*Assessor/Internal Quality Assurer Approval Form*” available from the PIABC Limited team (piabc@iom3.org) and send this with a 2-page CV detailing their qualifications and experience in relevant areas. This may include assessing related units in other qualifications.

Below is the checklist used by PIABC Limited:

Assessor Checklist

In order to be approved by PIABC Limited prospective Assessors need to demonstrate that they have the relevant qualifications/experience and occupational competence to carry out the role. The following checklist has been prepared from information provided by Regulatory and Accreditation authorities and SSCs/SSBs.

Assessors should have the following:

- Technical *competence* in the areas, applications and scope covered by the units, relevant to the industry sector in which the assessment takes place. Technical competence is defined here as a combination of practical skills, knowledge, and the ability to apply both of these, in familiar and new situations, within a real working environment as evidenced by the ability to demonstrate the practical competences covered by the unit in the context of the industry sector in which assessment takes place
- Competence in the units they are assessing. This is shown through the Assessor having achieved the qualification they are assessing OR provide quality evidence to PIABC Limited that they are able to make valid judgements of the competence of candidates. This could be done through a combination of a) personal interview; b) review of

employment histories; and/or c) examination of the Assessor’s judgement during assessments.

- A working knowledge of qualifications and a full understanding of that part of the qualification for which they have responsibility.
- Assessor qualifications D32/D33, A1/A2, TAQA Level 3 Award in Assessing Competence in the Work Environment (England) or L&D Unit 9DI (Scotland) or be actively working towards these.

Below are the qualification, occupational competence, knowledge and skills that PIABC Limited would expect centre to be looking for and developing in their Assessors. It may be that people already have these characteristics but alternatively others may need to be developed. This is what we expect to see in those being approved as Assessors.

<p>Qualifications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least Level 2 qualification in own occupational area • Level 2 qualifications in Literacy • Assessor qualifications as shown above • Evidence of continuing professional development • Complete Level 3 Award in Assessing Competence in the Work Environment or L&D Unit 9DI within 18 months
<p>Occupational competence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have worked in a sector in which processes related to the qualifications being assessed forms an integral part of the business activity • Have worked as a team leader/trainer/inspector • Have evidence of maintaining skills and occupational competence
<p>Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The units in the relevant specifications • The Level 3 Award in Assessing Competence in the Work Environment or L&D Unit 9DI standards and how these should be applied • Assessment procedures and practices • Details of the requirements of awarding bodies • Role of the Assessor • Knowledge of appeals process • Different types of assessment opportunities and types of evidence
<p>Skills</p> <p>Be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify suitable assessment opportunities • Assess i.e. make judgements against the standards • Record these judgements accurately • Write clearly and legibly • Set realistic SMART targets at reviews for learners • Overcome the barriers of difficult learners

INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURERS (IQAs)

All Internal Quality Assurance should be carried out by competent IQAs who have been approved by PIABC Limited. In order to be approved as an IQA, prospective IQAs should complete the “*Assessor/Internal Quality Assurer Approval Form*” available from the PIABC Limited team (piabc@iom3.org) and send this with a 2-page CV detailing their qualifications and experience in relevant areas. This may include internally quality assuring related units in other qualifications.

PIABC Limited Internal Quality Assurer (IQA) Checklist

In order to be approved by PIABC Limited prospective IQAs need to demonstrate that they have the relevant qualifications/experience and occupational competence to carry out the role. The following checklist has been prepared from information provided by Regulatory and Accreditation authorities and SSCs/SSBs.

IQAs should have the following:

- Technical *understanding* in the areas, applications and scope covered by the qualification for which they are an IQA, relevant to the industry sector in which assessment takes place. Technical understanding is defined here as having a good understanding of the sectorial activities being assessed, together with knowledge of the relevant Health and Safety implications and requirements of the assessments, as evidenced by the ability to describe the practical aspects of the competence being assessed in the context of the industry sector in which assessment takes place.
- Either be working in the appropriate sector itself OR able to demonstrate that they possess practical and up-to-date knowledge of current working practices appropriate to the sector in which they are carrying out verification/quality assurance practice.
- A working knowledge of the qualifications they are internally quality assuring.
- Internal Quality Assurance qualifications D34 or V1, TAQA L4 Award in the Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice (England) or L&D unit 11 (Scotland) or be actively working towards these.

Below are the qualification, occupational competence, knowledge and skills that PIABC Limited would expect centre to be looking for and developing in their IQA. It may be that people already have these characteristics but alternatively others may need to be developed. This is what we expect to see or to be developed during training in those being approved as Assessors.

Qualifications

- At least Level 3 qualification in own occupational area
- Level 2 qualifications in Literacy
- Assessor qualifications i.e. D32 and D33 or A1
- Internal Quality Assurance qualifications as shown above
- Evidence of continuing professional development
- Complete IQA qualifications within 18 months

Occupational competence

- Have worked in a sector in which processes related to the qualifications being assessed forms an integral part of the business
- Have held positions of responsibility
- Have worked as an Assessor
- Have carried out assessment on a variety of different units/programmes
- Evidence of maintaining skills

Knowledge

- The units in the relevant specifications
- The IQA standards and how these should be applied
- Details of the requirements of awarding bodies
- Role of the IQA
- Internal Quality Assurance procedures and practices
- Role of the EQA and how to respond to report/actions
- Requirements/skills of Assessors
- Different types of assessment opportunities and types of evidence
- Knowledge of appeals process and handling complaints
- Knowledge of what constitutes a conflict of interest
- Knowledge of what constitutes malpractice and maladministration and how this should be dealt with
- Standardisation activities and how these can be carried out
- CPD opportunities for staff

Skills

Be able to:

- Offer Assessors first line support and training on assessment
- Observe the assessment process being carried out
- Communicate effectively with Assessors, candidates and EQAs
- Check the accuracy of Assessor decisions
- Check the clarity and completion of documentation
- Advise Assessors on diverse evidence and how this could be used
- Give clear feedback to Assessors on the accuracy of their decisions
- Advise Assessors on the quality of their feedback to learners
- Develop/monitor Assessors use of learner reviews
- Set targets for improvement in the assessment process
- Manage challenging situations
- Organise and run standardisation events
- Liaise with EQAs to plan visits and maintain effective relationships
- Itemise action plans following EQA recommendations and monitor compliance
- Carry out structured candidate interviews

THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Depending upon the circumstances there may be a number of stages prior to the actual assessment of candidates' evidence. Together with the candidate(s), the Assessor may be required to:

- identify opportunities for assessment of process or product
- establish an appropriate means of assessment
- agree arrangements for the assessment with the candidate (the centre should be able to provide a planning form for this purpose)

Candidates should be free to determine when they are ready to be assessed and in the case of written material should be able to re-draft work until they are satisfied that it is ready for submission.

As far as possible, a candidate's normal workplace activities should be used as the source of assessment evidence. It may be possible to assess a variety of standards from different units within the learning programme in an integrated assessment plan and thus the use of holistic observations/assessments is encouraged. The process must remain understandable to all involved.

Some assistance may be given to candidates in preparing materials for assessment. However, the distinction between providing support for candidates and actually preparing the materials for assessment must be maintained and candidates are required to sign an undertaking that the work submitted for assessment is their own. The Assessor also needs to sign to agree that the work has been produced by the candidate. This could be done by using the centre's own documentation that is also used for other competence-based qualifications or by developing a new statement. Where a candidate requires a significant amount of help e.g. all questions read to the candidate, or all writing completed by the Assessor this should be agreed with the EQA and the work annotated with details of the help given.

Assessors should always check with the IQA/EQA if they are uncertain. When judging evidence and making a decision accordingly, there are four conditions that should always be applied.

Assessment evidence should be:

- Valid
- Sufficient
- Current
- Genuine

Once these conditions have been satisfied, any decision(s) should be formally recorded and signed. The centre should have an internal recording system which may be used for other awarding bodies.

Feedback should be given as promptly as possible to the candidate(s), along with arrangements for further learning/training or practice if one or more of the above conditions has not been satisfactorily met.

Types of assessment evidence

Assessment is defined as the process of collecting and judging evidence of a candidate's workplace performance against the PIABC Limited standards. These standards have been written to meet the NOS devised by the relevant SSC/SSB.

Evidence provided by candidate's falls into two broad categories:

- Performance based
- Knowledge based

An example of performance evidence could be observation of a process, e.g. sawing or treating some timber, manufacturing an item, selling timber, re-grinding a knife, cleaning a machine, filling a carton, working on a packaging line, starting, running or stopping a polymer processing machine, completing documentation or a product such as a finished item processed to the quality required by the customer with completed documentation. These examples are not exhaustive, and others will/may better reflect the industrial setting and job role.

The majority of performance evidence should be produced by observation of the process, but products could also be used as additional evidence. Both types of evidence should complement each other and be related to the overall process. The candidate should be able to explain what they do and why it is done in such a way. In the situation of vocational education and training, a typical unit should consist of an observation of practical competence combined with oral/written questions to check that the candidate understands the theory supporting the practice. Only if this is known can a satisfactory outcome be assured. Additional evidence is required to confirm competence over time. There should be minimum of **three** holistic observations/assessments (or the equivalent in terms of time where the observation covers a whole shift and there is extensive additional evidence) that cover a range of units with one focusing more fully on one of the optional units.

Potential sources of evidence available to the Assessor through which workplace competence may be judged include:

- Observation of tasks
- Oral questions
- Written questions
- Photographs
- Products
- Assignments/projects
- Video evidence
- Audio tape interviews
- Witness statements by managers or supervisors
- Discussions with the candidate
- Walk and talk
- Prior experience/achievement
- Reflective accounts
- Role play/Simulation

It is expected that all assessments of practical competence will be carried out in the workplace usually through observation of the candidate's actual performance. Only in exceptional circumstances should simulation be used and then only in accordance with the SSC assessment strategy and the agreement of the PIABC Limited's Lead EQA. The assessment of knowledge can be carried out either in the workplace or outside.

Observation

The majority performance-based evidence for PIABC Limited competence-based qualifications should be assessed through observation of the candidate in a working environment. Some assessment of knowledge may also be gained during these observations as some knowledge may be inherent in candidate's performance of the practical work e.g. personal protective equipment (PPE). This knowledge can be confirmed by short oral questions during the observation process.

When carrying out observations' consideration should be given to the following points:

1. Candidates should be informed at the start of training of the assessment methods and when observations will occur and for which units of the qualification.
2. Observations should be low profile and carried out during the course of normal work.
3. Assessors should familiarise themselves with the required criteria prior to the assessment.
4. Regular observations should take place throughout the programme.
5. Candidates should be given clear feedback on their performance. This will help to establish the future training requirements.
6. Findings should be recorded promptly on appropriate documentation.
7. Observations/assessment should confirm that the candidate consistently works to this standard.
8. Comments made to candidates on their performance should always be constructive.

Oral questions

Many aspects of related knowledge can be assessed through oral questioning during an observation or by a professional discussion at a later date.

Points to be considered when questioning candidates orally include:

1. Questions should relate to the practical tasks currently being carried out by the candidate.
2. Questions should be open-ended i.e. not requiring an answer of yes or no to gain the maximum amount of information from the candidate.
3. The same questions should not be repeated in the course of one assessment session but questions on the same subject can be asked after a reasonable amount of time has elapsed and further training has been given.
4. Questions on the same procedure can be repeated when the task is being performed in a different set of circumstances.
5. It is important that questions are clearly understood by the candidate. Therefore it may be necessary either to rephrase them or ask further questions to obtain the required information.

6. Even if procedures are observed as being carried out correctly the Assessor should confirm that the candidate is aware of the knowledge supporting the particular activity. In these circumstances questions can be directed at why the candidate is performing the procedure in a particular way or how the candidate would perform the same task in a different set of circumstances.
7. Records of candidate responses and confirmation of their underpinning knowledge should be recorded as part of the observation.

Written questions

Where aspects of related knowledge cannot be assessed through observation of performance or oral questioning during the observation extra written questions will be needed.

Points to be considered when using written questions include:

1. Written questions should be used to assess those areas not fully covered by the observations or related oral questioning.
2. Written questions should relate to particular units or aspects of the process.
3. As with oral questions, written questions should be open-ended i.e. not requiring an answer of yes or no to gain the maximum amount of information from the candidate.
4. It is important that questions are clearly understood by the candidate. Therefore it may be necessary either to rephrase them or ask further questions to obtain the required information.
5. Written questions should be clearly marked with ticks and comments to show that the answers are correct.
6. Candidates should be reassessed on any questions answered incorrectly.
7. Assessors can ask written questions orally and record the answers for those who have poor written skills. The Assessor should annotate the work to show that this has occurred.

Photographs

Photographs are a good way of showing the candidate at work and the type of activities that are carried out.

Points to be considered when using photographs include:

1. Photographs should be annotated by the candidate and/or the Assessor to indicate what aspects of the process they show.
2. Assessors should annotate the photographs to confirm their authenticity and to agree what they show.
3. Candidates and Assessors should seek permission from the employer to use photographs.
4. Commercial sensitivity and all aspects of confidentiality should be protected at all times.

Products

For some aspects of these programmes it may be useful to use products and documentation.

Points to be considered when using products and documentation include:

1. Products and documentation should be annotated by the candidate and/or the Assessor to indicate what aspects of the process they support.
2. Assessors should annotate the products/documents to confirm their authenticity and to agree what they show.
3. Candidates and Assessors should seek permission from the employer to use products/documents.
4. Commercial sensitivity and all aspects of confidentiality should be protected at all times.

Other evidence

Whilst the methods listed above particularly observation and questioning will be the main vehicles for assessment PIABC Limited also supports the use of a wide variety of evidence as this helps to make the competence-based programme a meaningful and challenging learning experience and qualification.

Points to be considered when using different types of evidence include:

1. Evidence should be clearly related to be standards and the units.
2. Candidates should comment on what the evidence shows.
3. Assessors should clearly annotate the evidence with what aspect of the qualification is being evidenced.
4. Evidence should be authenticated by candidate as their own work.
5. Commercial sensitivity and all aspects of confidentiality should be protected at all times.

Simulations

The use of high quality, realistic simulations, which impose pressures that are consistent with workplace expectations and meet the requirements of the Sector Skills Council/Sector Standards Body assessment strategy (e.g. National Skills Academy for Food & Drink (formerly Proskills) for wood-based qualifications) should only be used in relation to the assessment of rare and/or dangerous occurrences, such as:

- Emergency scenarios
- Health, safety and the environment issues
- Rare operations at work
- The response to faults and problems for which no opportunity has presented for the use of naturally occurring workplace evidence of candidate competence

Simulations should be designed in relation to a realistic work environment i.e. a model environment, having an acceptable level of appropriate equipment and operating to professional standards. The realistic work environment should provide the opportunity for candidate assessment under conditions approximating as closely as possible to the workplace under the control of a qualified Assessor.

The EQA must formally approve the use of simulation to assess competence.

Witness statements

All witness statements should relate to the performance of specific tasks, or a series of tasks carried out on agreed occasions. General witnessing of practice is not permissible. The statements should be detailed and clearly related to particular aspects of the criteria. In order to ensure this level of clarity and to aid consistency it may be useful for the Assessor to prepare the statement for the witness to sign. Copies of witness signatures and their relationship to the candidate should be included in the evidence. Those acting as witnesses must be in a more senior position than the candidate.

The amount of evidence needed

Although there is no hard and fast rule about the amount of evidence needed to assess a candidate, two things in particular need to be born in mind.

- The need to ensure that there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate consistency of performance at the required standard
- The need to ensure that the different circumstances in which a candidates will be asked to perform are covered by the assessment

Therefore as a minimum, assessment/observation should take place on at least **three** occasions across a range of different conditions over a period of time. This does not mean that the same process should be assessed or observed three times but that there should be at least three holistic assessment/observations or the equivalent in terms of time. The main point here is that the assessments are sufficient to confirm competence and consistency.

Competent performance is more than just carrying out a series of individual set tasks. Many of the units contain statements that require the candidate to provide evidence that proves they are capable of combining the various features and techniques. Where this is the case, separate fragments of evidence would not provide this combination of features and techniques and will not, therefore, be acceptable as demonstrating competent performance. Also, it is not necessary to produce a separate piece of evidence for each element of performance and evidence should be matched to as many different assessment criteria in as many different units as possible.

Recording assessment decisions is an important part of the quality assurance process and therefore the IQA will need these records to ensure assessments are carried out both accurately and consistently.

STANDARDISATION

Standardisation is at the very core of the quality assurance process. It is the term used for IQAs looking at Assessor's work and for bringing the Assessors together to confirm that they all have a common understanding of the relevant NOS, learning outcomes and assessment criteria and what is required of candidates in order to meet these standards.

Centres should carry out a training standardisation exercise with all new Assessors as part of the recruitment or induction process. Standardisation should include discussion on work from both the mandatory and optional units. It could also take the form of work shadowing, observation and discussion on changes to awarding body or regulatory criteria. The purpose of standardisation is to ensure that all new and experienced Assessors, are able to make valid and reliable decisions. Standardisation will allow the internal quality assurer to judge the Assessors performance, their level of skills and will also indicate the level of support that they may need. The experience of Assessors should be taken into account when planning Internal Quality Assurance. The work of all unqualified Assessors must be countersigned.

INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

Function

The purpose of Internal Quality Assurance is to ensure the quality of assessment practice across all Assessors within a centre by addressing the basic principles of consistency, transparency, validity and reliability in respect of the requirements of PIABC qualifications.

Who is the IQA?

The IQA is an experienced Assessor who should:

- be vocationally competent and have a level of experience and expertise to recognise likely sources of evidence and have an understanding of what is sufficient, valid and authentic evidence
- be familiar with their Centre's Internal Quality Assurance policy and the PIABC Limited qualification(s).

The role of the IQA has three main aspects:

- to quality assure assessment decisions
- develop and support Assessors
- assist in the management of quality of delivery.

Responsibilities of the IQA

The IQA should:

- create, in accordance with the Centre's policies, appropriate documentation to support the Internal Quality Assurance process
- plan, in consultation with Assessors, the sampling process which should include:

- all Assessors
- all locations
- all types of evidence
- the full range of assessment decisions
- both interim and final decisions
- observation of assessment of practical competence
- interviews with candidates
- adjust the sample to take account of Assessor experience
- ensure that the work of new Assessors who do not hold the D32/33, A1, TAQA Level 3 Award in Assessing Competence in the Work Environment (England) or L&D Unit 9 DI (Scotland) awards is countersigned by an experienced Assessor
- check the assessment has been fair, the evidence appropriate, and give effective feedback to the Assessor
- ensure the security of assessment materials during and after administration of the assessment
- ensure that arrangements are in place for considering requests from candidates with special assessment requirements for reasonable adjustments in assessment and report on specific cases to the EQA

The IQAs should give necessary support to the Assessor as follows:

- ensure Assessors have the necessary qualifications and experience
- ensure Assessors receive an induction
- ensure Assessors receive all related documentation
- ensure Assessors are given sufficient time to carry out the assessment/s in a safe and secure environment
- ensure consistency between Assessors in assessment procedures and standards
- ensure regular standardisation meetings are held to discuss all issues relating to internal assessment e.g. quality of assessment, consistency across centres
- ensure that Assessors have the opportunity to undertake appropriate CPD
- ensure that Assessors have the opportunity to maintain their occupational competence
- ensure the Assessor is advised on provision required for candidates with special assessment requirements
- ensure Assessors are familiar with the complaints/appeals procedures

Where an IQA finds inconsistency in assessment, the assessment decision can be reviewed and adjusted, or arrangements made for re-assessment of the candidate(s).

PIABC Limited Process

The IQA will be expected to provide evidence to PIABC Limited's EQAs that Internal Quality Assurance has taken place.

The number of IQAs will be at the discretion of the Centre.

PIABC Limited will not allow IQAs to verify their own assessments.

EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

Introduction

Qualified and experienced EQAs are appointed by PIABC in accordance with Ofqual's "*General Conditions of Recognition (including the Centre Assessment Standards Scrutiny (CASS))*", CCEA Regulation's "*General Conditions of Recognition (including the Centre Assessment Standards Scrutiny (CASS))*", and SQA Accreditation's "*Regulatory Principles*" to monitor the quality of assessment and Internal Quality Assurance at centres and to advise and make recommendations to PIABC Limited in respect of the performance of centres and their candidates. They are selected by PIABC Limited as its representative to liaise with centres to establish standardisation of quality of delivery and assessment of evidence of learning.

All EQAs will be required to sign the "*PIABC External Quality Assurers Code of Practice*" and to agree to uphold the conditions set out in the code.

Role of the EQA

The role of the EQA is to ensure that the Centre has provided candidates with access to fair and reliable assessment opportunities and that PIABC qualifications are delivered in accordance with the standards agreed in the Centre and Qualification Approval documents developed from Ofqual's "*General Conditions of Recognition*", CCEA Regulation's "*General Conditions of Recognition*" and SQA Accreditation's "*Regulatory Principles*". Continued compliance with all aspects of the Centre and Qualification Approval will be monitored during External Quality Assurance/Centre Monitoring activity (either desktop or visit).

During visits EQAs will wish to sample all aspects of the assessment process and ensure that National Standards are being met and maintained. They will need to do this prior to claims for certification being made. In addition, they will offer guidance and advice to centres, staff and PIABC in order to support continuous improvement. They also act as a general channel of communication between PIABC Limited and the centre.

External Quality Assurance Visits

Following approval, PIABC Limited will appoint an EQA to be responsible for that centre. The EQA will carry out at least one monitoring activity (either remote desktop or visit) annually. These monitoring activities (either remote desktop or visit) are triggered by the centre registering candidates. The number of monitoring activities (either remote desktop or visit) may be increased where centres have large numbers of candidates on different programmes or where the centre has been judged to be a high risk. During the first visit the EQA will expect to see that actions from the centre and qualification approval processes have been met. In subsequent monitoring activities (either remote desktop or visit) the EQA will expect to see that actions agreed following the previous activity to the centre have been addressed, that the centre continues to meet the approved centre and qualification criteria, PIABC Limited's specifications, and that any changes to the programme and its delivery have been notified to the awarding body using PIABC Limited Centre/Qualification Approval Update available from the PIABC Limited team at: piabc@iom3.org.

During each visit, the EQA will want to:

- Meet managers who are responsible for the quality of the programme(s)
- Meet a representative number of assessors and Internal Quality Assurers (IQAs) to discuss amongst other things the extent to which candidate work meets national standards
- Observe candidate's practical competence being assessed where possible
- Where possible choose at least two samples from each qualification being considered
- Examine a range of completed and partially completed portfolios dependant on the current number of registrations (six samples for less than 50, 12 samples for 50 to 100. A minimum of six is always used but where it is felt that more evidence is needed the sample can be increased e.g. inconsistencies, increased numbers of candidates or programmes, new centres or new assessors
- Over a period of time examine work from all locations
- Over a period of time examine work from all assessors
- Check for consistency between assessors by examining the same unit for different assessors
- Observe IQAs at work
- See evidence of standardisation activities
- Audit a sample of assessment and internal quality assurance decisions
- Examine a sample of assessment and internal quality assurance documentation and records
- Check staff turnover and discuss possible reasons
- Check centre's own arrangements for checking staff competence (e.g. IQA internal audits and quality observations of practice)
- Check CPD files and the centre procedures for updating occupational competence.

The External Quality Assurer will:

- Confirm that assessments have been carried out according to the agreed assessment and IQA procedures
- Confirm that assessment and IQA evidence is authentic, valid and that national standards are being met and maintained
- Confirm that candidates and assessors have signed and dated statements of authenticity
- Consider all instances where requests have been made for reasonable adjustments for verified assessments
- Audit procedures within the centre/s
- Monitor the effectiveness of PIABC Limited procedures for ensuring external quality assurance
- Check that claims for certification are authentic, valid and supported by auditable records
- Provide evidence for PIABC Limited to manage risk.

Where an EQA finds inconsistency in assessment, they should take extra samples until they can determine the exact nature of the problem. Following extra sampling the assessment decision can be reviewed and adjusted or arrangements made for re-assessment of the candidate(s). Where there are concerns about the standards sanctions from *“NVQ Code of Practice (2006) – Sanctions for non-compliance with the approved centre criteria”* Appendix 1

will be applied (*Note: this is not applicable for SQA Accredited Qualifications*) and certification should be withheld and an action plan with dates for completion put in place. Where the concerns are serious and show that national standards are not being met and maintained extra External Quality Assurance visits may be required and certification suspended until the issues have been resolved.

Sampling Strategy

PIABC's sampling will ensure that all centre marked assessments remain fit for purpose and that criteria against which candidates' performance is differentiated are being accurately and consistently applied for this qualification regardless on assessor, candidate, or centre.

Sampling assessments and IQA decisions is perhaps the most important part of the EQA's role and is the central feature of any External Quality Assurance monitoring exercise. EQAs should sample:

- Assessment decisions from all qualifications
- Assessment decisions from a range of candidates and assessors
- Assessment plans and records
- Feedback to candidates
- Records relating to those decisions
- Over time work of all assessors
- Over time work from all locations
- Internal Quality Assurance sampling plans and records
- Internal Quality Assurance decisions and feedback to assessors
- Candidate records
- Assessment records

The EQA will have a sampling strategy that has been agreed with PIABC Limited and the centre, that will include all the items listed above.

As IQAs sample a much wider range of assessment decisions than the EQA, they will ensure that IQAs have complied with their agreed assessment sampling strategy.

It is vital that the selection should be representative of elements (assessments, IQA decisions, reports and records) on which the EQA has to make a judgment. In developing the strategy, a risk-based approach will be used. Although it is not possible to entirely eliminate problems, even if all decisions are scrutinised, the aim should be to identify the risks in the process and to select a sample which minimised these risks.

The EQA must aim to see as wide a range of evidence as possible including assessment evidence from each assessor, IQA and the associated paperwork. Where assessment takes place at different sites, evidence from each site should also be considered where possible. Within these general guidelines, a sample will be selected that takes into account considerations such as:

- Whether the centre is new to the qualification and/or competence-based systems in general
- If the qualification has been recently introduced
- The track record of the centre and the results of previous EQA and centre monitoring visits
- The quality of IQA sampling plans and records
- The different parts of the qualification and the assessment process
- The different types of assessment used, and evidence gathered
- The EQA's knowledge of the qualifications and its units and any areas of difficulty
- The EQA's knowledge of the centre and its staff

Remote Desktop Monitoring Activity

A remote desktop monitoring option is available for established centres where only a small number of candidates are registered as PIABC does not want to add additional financial burden to its centres which can be caused by EQA full monitoring visits. This type of activity may also be used in exceptional circumstances (e.g. a pandemic).

During the remote desktop monitoring activity, the EQA will monitor the quality of policies, procedures, and centre systems with particular emphasis on assessment and quality assurance practice. The main focus of EQA however is the detailed examination of candidate evidence including assessment of the observation of practical competence, the examination of additional evidence, interviews with supervisors and candidate interviews. During this exercise the EQA will be able to agree to certification claims and sign off documentation relating to certification claims.

All EQA Monitoring Activities (Remote Desktop or Visit)

PIABC will appoint External Quality Assurers to visit centres in order to ensure the maintenance of standards of quality. The scope and frequency of assessment monitoring activities will be in part determined by the centre assessment standard strategy for a particular qualification. PIABC's monitoring strategy will ensure that all centre marked assessments remain fit for purpose and that criteria against which candidates' performance is differentiated are being accurately and consistently applied for this qualification regardless on assessor, candidate, or centre.

The role of the EQA during all EQA monitoring activities (either remote desktop or visit) will be to:

- Advise on the interpretation of national standards,
- Provide guidance on assessment and assessment tasks
- Inform centres about PIABC systems and requirements
- Update centres on general awarding body and regulatory body information and developments.
- Agree to certification claims
- Sign off documentation relating to certification claims
- Arrange for subsequent certification claims to be sent to the EQA (paper copy) and PIABC Limited (electronic copy)

- In the case of the EQA being unable or unavailable to sign the certification claim this will be carried out by PIABC Limited's Business Compliance and Administration Manager

Reporting and Actions

At the end of the monitoring activity (either remote desktop or visit) the EQA will give feedback to the centre and detail any actions with agreed timescales for completion. Following visits EQAs will produce a report for the centre within 15 working days detailing their findings and action that needs to be taken, along with a timescale. These actions will be recorded by PIABC Limited and will be followed up by the EQA. The report may also recommend to the awarding body that sanctions are imposed on the centre.

Potential Conflict of Interest

EQAs will not review the work of any centre in which they have a personal interest and are required to sign a "*Declaration of Conflict of Interest*" statement annually. EQAs are also required to sign the PIABC Limited "*EQA Code of Practice*" which covers all aspects of their work as EQAs. They are not allowed to accept paid consultancy, recommend their own products, or recommend other consultancy in the centre where they act as a PIABC Limited External Quality Assurer. Accept any paid inducements, gifts or overly expensive meals.

The Lead External Quality Assurer

A Lead External Quality Assurer will be responsible for overseeing the training and development of External Quality Assurers and for ensuring standardised approaches and decisions between External Quality Assurers. All cases where reasonable adjustments have been agreed for candidates with particular assessment requirements will be reported to the Lead External Quality Assurer in order to ensure consistency of treatment. Should any problems arise, these will in the first instance be referred to the Lead External Quality Assurer for investigation and possible resolution.

Monitoring External Quality Assurers

In order for the EQA to perform well, PIABC Limited will:

- Only work with EQAs who are appropriately trained and experienced
- Ensure that all EQAs hold or gain L&D Unit 9D, D35, V2 or TAQA qualifications
- Provide detailed induction guidance and training about PIABC's policies and procedures
- Monitor the work of EQAs EVs through the Lead EQA who will also provide an annual appraisal report on their work and recommend individual action as required
- Provide regular updates on PIABC Limited, the regulatory authority and on good EQA practice
- Organise annual standardisation meetings

SANCTIONS

Whilst PIABC Limited maintains excellent communications and seeks at all times to work with and support centres it does recognise that there may occasionally be the need to impose sanctions.

Reason	Sanction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EQA judges there to be insufficient high quality candidate evidence • Changes to candidate job roles • Failure to complete actions within agreed time scales • Failure to respond to requests for information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased monitoring of the centre either by remote sampling or additional visits. • Place a moratorium on candidate registrations and on claims for certification
Reason	Sanction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EQA judges there to be insufficient high-quality candidate evidence • EQA judges tasks to be inappropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All assessment tasks to be approved by EQA • Place a moratorium on candidate registrations and on claims for certification
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candidate appeals • EQA finds some decisions to be invalid or unreliable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specify re-assessment of particular tasks, units or candidates • Place a moratorium on candidate registrations and on claims for certification
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to complete actions following requests above • Repeatedly fail to respond to communications, requests for information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place a moratorium on candidate registrations and on claims for certification • Suspend/withdraw approved Centre status • Inform regulatory and accreditation authorities

ACCESS TO ASSESSMENTS - ARRANGEMENTS FOR CANDIDATES NEEDING REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS AND/OR SPECIAL CONSIDERATION IN THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

In carrying out assessments, PIABC Limited's policy is to give all candidates equal opportunity to demonstrate attainment and to provide candidates with disabilities, learning difficulties and other problems the same access to assessment as other candidates.

The principles of the policy are that:

- Special assessment arrangements do not give unfair advantage over other candidates
- Arrangements are determined according to the particular disability or learning difficulty

- Users of certificates are not misled about candidate attainment

In order to maintain these aims PIABC Limited maintains contacts with professional bodies interested in the occupational and educational opportunities for people with disabilities and learning difficulties. Arrangements are regularly reviewed and take account of feedback from these bodies and from centres and candidates.

PIABC Limited's vocational courses and qualification are developed to the NOS established by the SSCs/SSBs or levels of attainment specified by statutory organisations or special advisory groups. Assessments are designed to measure only the skills, knowledge and understanding, which are expressly, stated in the qualification documents. PIABC Limited carries out the assessment practice and procedures to ensure the required standards are met but will not undertake to alter these standards without consulting the relevant organisation as this would undermine the credibility of the qualifications. Issues relating to the standards therefore need to be referred to the appropriate responsible body.

Variation of assessment arrangements

Assessment arrangements may be varied however, where the standards permit, for candidates with particular requirements. These requirements may take the form of reasonable adjustments for candidates whose needs are covered by The Equality Act 2010 or special conditions/extenuating circumstances for those whose needs result from temporary disability or indisposition such as short-term illness. Special considerations will be used for those where circumstances on the day affect their performance in assessments.

The nature of any special arrangements depends largely upon the qualification being followed and the assessment strategy employed.

Verified assessment

Arrangements concerning locally organised and other non-scheduled assessments must be agreed between the Centre and the Awarding Body, EQA/Moderator in accordance with the course/qualification documents under the general responsibility of PIABC Limited. As competence-based assessments are all negotiated with the candidate rather than on a set date it is unlikely that there will be any need for extenuating circumstances or special considerations to be used. Assessments can be rescheduled to suit the needs of the candidates. The nature of the work makes it unlikely that candidates with certain disabilities would gain employment and thus be eligible for assessment

Reasonable adjustments

Please read the following guidelines before completing form Ext.ec/49 Application for Reasonable Adjustments

Categories of need

In general, variation in assessment arrangements may be needed for:

- physical disability
- hearing impairment
- specific learning difficulty

- medical conditions
- use of English as a second language

Physical impairment permanent or temporary: In cases of physical impairment resulting from, for instance, spina bifida, paraplegia or temporary incapacities arrangements may include a writer and mechanical/electronic aids.

Hearing impairment: Arrangements may include the use of a communicator and the use of mechanical/electronic aids by the candidate. In addition candidates whose hearing loss results in a possible linguistic disability may be provided with written questions with appropriate modified wording, as recommended by a specialist teacher of the deaf.

Learning difficulties: In the case of candidates with specific learning difficulties of a dyslexic or similar nature, arrangements may include a writer and/or a reader tapes and typescripts of answers.

Arrangements for candidates with other learning difficulties may include a writer and/or a reader, and other audio/visual aids as appropriate to the needs of the individual.

Medical conditions: In cases of candidates with medical conditions such as epilepsy, diabetes and respiratory disorders individual cases will be considered on their merits.

Bi-lingual dictionaries and translators: Translators/interpreters are not allowed for candidates whose first language is not English. However, bi-lingual dictionaries may be allowed. Electronic bi-lingual dictionaries or translators may not be used.

Please contact the PIABC Limited team (piabc@iom3.org) with specific requests that do not fit into the categories above.

Applying for reasonable adjustments

Verified assessment: Arrangements must be agreed locally with the External Quality Assurer/Moderator, according to the guidance provided in this document. Centres should complete form Ext.ec/49 and send a copy to their EQA as soon as candidates register with PIABC Limited.

Special requirements: Applications for assessment logs in alternative formats should be made to PIABC Limited when the candidate is registered for the programmes.

Recording: All candidates needing reasonable adjustments must be identified on the entry form, using one of the category codes (see below) entered in the candidate category box. This form must accompany all completed assessed materials.

Local evidence: Centres must establish individual candidate's needs in good time and in the event of an awarding body audit, be confident that the syllabus and assessment requirements have been met. Medical or professional evidence is necessary at all levels and must be retained at the centre as either originals or authenticated (i.e. signed following the submission of the original) copies.

Entry category codes for candidates with particular requirements:

Category	Description
01	Reader and writer - hearing impairment
02	Reader and writer - learning difficulties
03	Reader and writer - physical impairment permanent or temporary
04	Reader and writer – visual impairment
05	Reader – hearing impairment
06	Reader – learning difficulties
07	Reader – physical impairment permanent or temporary
08	Reader – visual impairment
09	Second language (use of non-technical language dictionary)
10	Extra time only – hearing impairment (25%)
11	Extra time only – learning difficulties (25%)
12	Extra time only – physical impairment permanent or temporary (25%)
13	Extra time only – visual impairment (25%)
14	Extra time only – English as a second language (25%)
15	Writer – hearing impairment
16	Writer – learning difficulties
17	Writer – physical impairment permanent or temporary
18	Writer – visual impairment

Reader and writer above covers any communication medium to or from the candidate including use of magnification, overwrite facilities, signers, tape recorders and word processors.

Issue of aegrotats: Following discussion with the PIABC Board and the Assessment Boards it has been agreed that PIABC Limited will not allow the issue of aegrotats for any of its qualifications. Programmes covered by this handbook are competence-based qualifications where candidates are required to demonstrate their competence in a particular job role and also to provide diverse evidence of that competence. The Assessor will then judge whether the evidence is sufficient to show competence. Since much of this evidence is gained by observation of the candidate in the workplace it is not possible to assume competence without that observation. It will be up to the Assessor and IQA to determine what extra evidence is required.

PLAGIARISM

There are several definitions of plagiarism, but they all have in common the idea of taking someone else's intellectual effort and presenting it as one's own. The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) define plagiarism as: *"unacknowledged copying from, or reproduction of, third party sources or incomplete referencing (including the internet and AI tools)"*.

PIABC regards plagiarism as a very serious issue. Plagiarism refers to a candidate copying work and submitting it as their own. This can involve published resources (whether in print or on the internet), AI-generated content, essays, or pieces of work previously submitted for

assessments by others or manufactured artefacts. Copying can involve memorisation and reproduction of text.

In practice, severe cases are rare, but the following are examples:

- Downloading information/whole sections of text from the web, without reference to the original source or using quotation marks and without using the material to answer the question or to support your argument.
- Quoting, re-writing or scanning information from books, journal articles, etc., again without adequate reference.
- Copying information from colleagues and including this as if it were your own work (whether modified or not), e.g. individual reports, tutorial assignments, coursework scripts.
- Published resources (whether in print or on the internet), AI-generated content, essays, or pieces of work previously submitted for assessments by others or manufactured artefacts. Copying can involve memorisation and reproduction of text.

Plagiarism also incorporates the direct and unacknowledged translation of foreign language texts into English.

PIABC regards this as cheating and it can have serious consequences, even if it is unintentional. All suspected cases of plagiarism will be referred to the Business Compliance and Administration Manager for investigation. Based on the evidence obtained, a decision will be made in terms of what penalty, or penalties (see below) will be imposed.

PIABC has guidelines on the penalties that can be imposed:

<p>a) Evidence of plagiarism involving scripts containing minor components of information from third-party sources, without referencing.</p>	<p>Up to a 50% reduction in marks.</p>
<p>b) Evidence of plagiarism involving scripts containing major components of information from third-party sources, without referencing.</p>	<p>Up to a 100% reduction in marks and a ban on submitting work for a fixed or indefinite period.</p>

Judgements of what is “minor” and “major” are at PIABC’s discretion.

CERTIFICATION PROCESS

The Centre will be responsible for individual candidate registration and for providing PIABC Limited with their details as soon as possible and in any event no later than 10 weeks before certification is sought.

Issuing of Certificates

- PIABC Limited will issue the certificates to the Centre no later than 4 weeks after receipt by PIABC Limited of the relevant “*Candidate Completion Claim Form (CCCF3)*” showing completion of all units and approval for certification following a visit by the PIABC Limited External Quality Assurer.
- Paper copies of the “*Candidate Completion Claim Form (CCCF3)*” should be sent directly to the EQA for signing.
- Should the EQA be unavailable or unable to sign the forms this will be done by the PIABC Limited’s Business Compliance and Administration Manager.
- Candidates must apply to their Centre if they wish to receive a certificate for individual units of the qualification. PIABC Limited will issue the Centre with certificates no later than 4 weeks after receiving the application form from the Centre. The application form is available from the PIABC Limited team (piabc@iom3.org). This process must be discussed with and approved by the EQA.
- Centres will be responsible for issuing certificates to the candidates.
- Centres are required to check candidates’ names are correctly spelt on their registration forms.

Issuing Replacement Certificates

To safeguard against fraudulent or mistaken claims for certificates the following actions will be taken:

- Replacement certificates will only be issued on receipt of a completed Replacement Certificate Form, which is accompanied by the correct fee.
- Candidate’s details will be checked against the Candidate Registration Database.
- Photocopy of his/her birth certificate or passport is kept and filed with Replacement Certificate Form.
- New certificate is issued and marked “Replacement”.
- Issuing of new certificate is noted on Candidate Registration and Certificates Issued databases.

Security of Certificates

Certificates, which are individually numbered, are kept in the secure PIABC Limited office. Centres are required to store all certificates issued by PIABC Limited in a secure location.

Non-issue of Certificates by Centres

All non-issued certificates need to be returned to PIABC Limited after six months and not kept by the Centre.

MALPRACTICE & MALADMINISTRATION

What is Malpractice and Maladministration?

Malpractice would be deemed to be any deliberate activity, neglect, default or other practice likely to invalidate the qualification and/or validity of certificates or bring into doubt the integrity of the assessment and/or quality assurance process whether by the candidates, centre staff or any others involved in providing the qualification.

The most common instances of malpractice would include, for example:

- the evidence assessed is not entirely the learner's own work
- provision of scripts/answers covering either performance and/or knowledge
- the learner is still working towards the qualification after the qualification has been claimed
- the qualification has been claimed on the basis of falsified records
- requests for certification are made contrary to the regulatory bodies' Codes of Practice
- breaches of security
- false ID at registration and/or assessment
- collusion and/or cheating
- improper invigilation
- improper use of regulatory bodies'/awarding organisation logos
- signatures on blank forms
- discrimination against learners or employers
- assessment by unapproved assessor(s)
- inducements/bribery
- intimidation

Maladministration would be deemed to be any activity, neglect, default or other practice likely to invalidate the qualification and/or validity of the certificates or bring into doubt the integrity of the assessment and/or quality assurance process.

The most common instances of maladministration would include, for example:

- late registrations
- early certification claims
- incorrect certificate claims
- loss of learner's work
- poor/erratic record keeping

A copy of this policy is available directly from the PIABC Limited team (piabc@iom3.org).

PIABC Limited has procedures in place to deal with malpractice or maladministration on the part of candidates and Centre staff (please refer to the section of this document entitled "*Procedure for Dealing with Malpractice and Maladministration*").

During an investigation the candidate concerned will not be entitled to claim any PIABC Limited certificates. In the case of competency-based qualifications, the Centre or partner organisation involved, will be immediately suspended from making claims for certification pending the outcome of the investigation.

PIABC Limited reserve the right to withhold a candidate's results for all PIABC Limited qualifications they may be studying at the time of notification of the suspected malpractice or maladministration and to refuse to accept future entries and/or registrations.

Competency based qualifications

Centres offering competency-based qualifications should be particularly aware of the additional responsibilities they undertake on these schemes, for the assessment and internal quality assurance of candidates and for reporting their achievements to PIABC Limited.

PIABC Limited seeks to ensure the complete integrity of the assessment, internal quality assurance and certification processes in relation to competency-based qualifications and Centres are reminded that this policy and procedure applies equally to those awards in which Centre-based assessments are carried out.

Where PIABC Limited has reasonable grounds to doubt the integrity of the assessment process for competency-based qualifications this policy and procedure apply.

Centre responsibility

PIABC Limited expects Centre staff to co-operate fully with any investigations into malpractice or maladministration. Failure to do so may result in the Centre's approval status being permanently or temporarily removed.

The Centre is responsible for informing staff and candidates affected by the removal of any PIABC Limited services.

In cases of suspected malpractice or maladministration by candidates, Centre staff should make candidates aware that their final results may be void if the case is proven.

Centre staff who identify suspected cases of irregularity, malpractice or maladministration must immediately report their findings in writing with supporting evidence (please see "*Procedure for Dealing with Malpractice & Maladministration*").

PIABC Limited requires its Centres to report to it any malpractice or maladministration suspected after candidates have been registered, making clear any possible implications of a failure to cooperate for the issue of certificates and the future acceptance of entries.

PIABC Limited responsibility

PIABC Limited will ensure that all Centres, its own staff, and the regulators receive copies of this document "*Malpractice and Maladministration Policy and Procedure*".

PIABC Limited will carry out a full investigation of any allegations of malpractice or maladministration and provide a comprehensive report to the relevant parties.

In the case of competency-based qualifications, PIABC Limited will inform the regulators when commencing an investigation and provide an estimated timescale for its completion.

PIABC Limited will inform the regulators whenever it finds evidence that certificates may be invalid and agree appropriate remedial action with the regulators.

In the case of malpractice or maladministration by a candidate or Centre employee, PIABC Limited will instruct the appropriate Centre staff to investigate the issue in liaison with PIABC Limited appointed personnel.

“Suspected Malpractice & Maladministration Form” to be completed by the complainant and returned to PIABC Limited. A copy of this form is available at the end of the document or from the PIABC Limited Team (piabc@iom3.org).

PIABC Limited maintains authority to undertake investigations into alleged irregularities within their Centres.

On receipt of the form PIABC Limited will carry out an investigation and report its findings to the Centre and regulators. On receipt of the form, PIABC Limited will inform the Centre and the regulators of the estimated timescale for the completion of the investigation. This will normally be within one month of the receipt of the form.

The investigation will be carried out by a team independent of the management of normal working relationships with the Centre or External Quality Assurer involved.

The final report will contain:

- The origin of the complaint and mode of discovery
- The investigations carried out
- The evidence obtained
- The conclusions drawn
- The recommendations for action and the resolution of the matter

The report will be made available to the Centre concerned and if appropriate, the regulators. The report will be shared with other external parties if appropriate.

In the case of competency-based qualifications, if an investigation finds that certificates may be invalid PIABC Limited will inform the regulators and agree the appropriate action with them.

Where a decision is taken to invalidate certificates, PIABC Limited will:

- Seek to protect the interests of individual candidates in so far as is reasonable and possible in the circumstances
- Contact the candidates involved and notify them of the status of their certificates and of any arrangements for re-assessment and/or certification

- Ensure that the original certificates are cancelled on its database so that duplicates cannot be issued
- Inform the regulators of the details of the invalidated certificates and, where appropriate, make the information available to public funding bodies.

This policy is reviewed and revised regularly by PIABC Limited.

Appeals

A Candidate or a Centre wishing to appeal against the findings of the malpractice or maladministration investigation, or the penalties and sanctions imposed should contact the Business Compliance & Administration Manager in writing.

Appeals will be accepted from a Candidate or a Principal/CEO/Head of Centre or individual members of staff who are personally implicated in the decision and should be made in writing to the Business Compliance & Administration Manager.

Appeals Process

“The Appeal Process (For Appeals against PIABC Decisions)” should be followed (please refer to PIABC Limited’s *“The Appeal Process (For Appeals against PIABC Decisions)”*).

RECORDS RETENTION SCHEDULE

Student registration forms

Student registration forms should be retained for 10 years. Centres have discretion as to whether a database or paper record is retained.

Assessment and Internal Quality Assurance records

On completion of a competence-based programme all assessment and Internal Quality Assurance records must be retained for a period of 3 years.

Assessment materials

Portfolios are the property of the candidate and should be returned to them following the final External Quality Assurance visit.

Centres may wish to keep samples of work but there is no requirement to do so. Samples could be retained for the following reasons:

- Comparison of long-term standards
- Standardisation events by centres

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

PIABC understands that as an awarding body it has an important role to play in guaranteeing equality of opportunity in all the approved centres. It also recognizes that centres have a responsibility to ensure the equality and diversity of both the centre staff and the candidates registered by them.

What do we mean by Equality and Diversity? It means not treating one person less favourably than another or putting a person at a disadvantage by imposing requirements which are harder for some individuals to meet than others.

The Equality Act 2010 prohibits discrimination in employment or in the provision of training and education on the grounds of any of the protected characteristics listed in the act.

The purpose of this section, therefore, is to make clear the commitment of PIABC Limited in preventing discrimination and promoting equality and diversity in all spheres of responsibility. It does so not merely to satisfy legal requirements, social or contractual obligations, but in the belief that such a policy will secure maximum contribution from employees, centres and all personnel who come into contact with PIABC Limited.

As an awarding body

The awarding body is firmly committed to the principle that all Centres offering its qualifications will have in place an Equality and Diversity Policy that covers its responsibilities as an employer and a deliverer of qualifications in commercial and industrial settings.

Details of how effects of any barriers can be mitigated by PIABC Limited for candidates of its qualifications can be found in its “*Assess to Assessment: Arrangements for Candidates Needing Reasonable Adjustments, Special Considerations and/or Extenuating Circumstances in the Assessment Process*” document.

All centres must aim to provide an environment free from discrimination and harassment which results from the protected characteristics as laid down by the Equality Act 2010. Centres must show how this is embedded in their centre culture.

Centres are obliged to provide a safe working environment for disabled people and ensure, where possible, disabled persons are provided with equipment and facilities to enable them to carry out their duties. Centres are obliged to review, periodically, the duties and responsibilities of disabled learners and employees in the light of any changes in their condition.

Centres are obliged to recruit, train and promote employees/potential employees on the basis of ability and the requirements of the job.

The Centre will have regard to all appropriate legislation especially The Equality Act 2010.

To this end Centres must have in place methods to show the awarding body that:

- they actively oppose inequality, discrimination, harassment and oppression
- their Equality and Diversity Policy is reviewed, monitored and updated on a regular and systematic basis
- that employees have access to this policy and all related policies
- that learners are informed and have access to their centre's Learner Equality and Diversity Policy and all related policies/procedures

Equality and Diversity compliance will be examined as part of the centre annual monitoring.

Where problems are identified within a Centre an action plan will be agreed and monitored.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

It is the policy of PIABC Limited that centres not only to comply with the letter and spirit of the law regarding safe working but consider the provision of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and other relevant legislation as minimum requirements.

During centre and qualification approval PIABC Limited will ensure that all Centres applying to offer its qualifications have in place the policies and procedures to ensure that they conform to the requirements of the Health and Safety Work Act 1974.

Representatives of the awarding body will monitor compliance during annual centre monitoring and External Quality Assurance visits to centres.

Evidence of the following will be required:

- A Health and Safety Policy which covers its responsibilities as an employer and a deliverer of qualifications
- A procedure for monitoring the policy on a regular and systematic basis and how any revisions are made available to staff and students
- A named person responsible for the Health and Safety Policy
- Provision for staff training
- A separate statement or a statement within the policy, stating that staff and students must abide by the regulations
- A procedure for checking health and safety in the workplace

CANDIDATE ASSESSMENT REVIEW AND APPEALS PROCEDURE

As part of the qualification approval process, PIABC Limited expects all centres to have published an internal review and appeals procedure that candidates can use in respect of assessments either at the initial or Internal Quality Assurance stage. PIABC Limited aims to ensure that all assessments and assessment results are fair, consistent and based on valid judgements. However, PIABC Limited recognises that there may be times when a candidate may wish to question a decision. In order to deal with such situations, we have established a process which is designed to:

- Provide a means of reviewing and, where appropriate, revising assessment decisions
- Be fair to all parties
- Be readily accessible and easy to use
- Have realistic target time limits for each stage
- Keep the candidate informed of the progress of the enquiry or appeal

PIABC Limited are happy to advise you about this procedure.

Once candidates have exhausted a Centre's procedures, they are entitled to approach PIABC Limited if they are not satisfied.

Assessment Review

Step 1: If a candidate is concerned about an assessment result they should contact the Centre in the first instance and follow the procedures set out by that centre. These should include the Assessor, the IQA, Lead IQA and the Quality Assurance Co-ordinator.

Step 2: If the procedures under Step 1 are exhausted and the candidate is still not satisfied, they may contact PIABC Limited using form ext.ec/27. This form is available from the centre or from the PIABC Limited team (piabc@iom3.org). Using this form, the candidate can either ask for:

- an administrative check of results, or
- a re-assessment of work

The candidate should make sure that PIABC Limited receives the completed form within **20 days** of the centre providing the results of their own review conducted under Step 1.

If the candidate wants us to review their assessment, they should contact the centre as soon as possible and discuss the case with them. If the centre agrees, they may fill in the form and send it to PIABC Limited on behalf of the candidate. However, if the candidate would prefer to write to PIABC Limited directly, they should complete form ext.ec/27 and return it. This form is available from the centre or from the PIABC Limited team (piabc@iom3.org).

If the candidate requires an administrative check, PIABC Limited will let them know the outcome within 10 days of receiving the form. If they want a re-assessment PIABC Limited will try and let them know the outcome within 30 days. However, as the circumstances for workplace assessment can make re-assessment difficult to arrange, this period may be

extended. If this is the case, PIABC Limited will let them know after 15 days what the estimated time period will be.

There is no fee for an administrative check. However, there is a fee for re-assessment that is determined by the amount of work needing to be done. Please contact PIABC Limited directly to discuss this.

N.B. If you are concerned about a decision from the EQA, then you may go directly to Step 2.

Assessment Appeal

If the candidate is unhappy with the results of the previous steps and if these have been exhausted, they may appeal directly to the Business Compliance & Administration Manager.

The appeals process will consider whether the procedures used were consistent and applied properly and fairly in arriving at judgements. The procedures open to investigation include:

- The setting of the assessment
- Assessment and quality assurance/verification processes
- The outcome of the assessment
- Reviews, results and appeals arrangements

PIABC Limited will charge a fee for the appeal(s). The fee(s) will be refunded if the appeal(s) is upheld. A small percentage maybe retained to help offset administration costs.

There are 2 appeal stages:

Stage 1: Stage 1 will involve a review of the case by a senior member of PIABC Limited's staff (or nominee) who has had no previous involvement in the case.

The Stage 1 appeal request must be made in writing on the form (ext.ep/27) which is available from the PIABC Limited team (piabc@iom3.org). The form must be received by PIABC Limited within 20 days of the candidate being informed of the outcome of the Step 2 review which has been described above.

The outcome of Stage 1 will be reported in writing to the candidate within 10 working days of receipt of our receiving the request.

Stage 2: If you remain unhappy after Stage 1, you may write to request a Stage 2 appeal (also using form ext/ec/27). Again, this should arrive with PIABC Limited within 20 days of you being notified of the outcome of Stage 1. The receipt of your request will be acknowledged within 5 working days of PIABC Limited having received it.

This Stage involves the hearing of the case by a panel convened by PIABC Limited. The panel will comprise three members, at least one of whom will be an independent member (who has not been a member of PIABC Board or its committees, or an employee or examiner or external quality assurer of PIABC Limited, at any time during the previous two years).

The PIABC Limited Appeals Panel is not authorised to re-assess your work nor can it change the grades or decisions made in cases of plagiarism. It has powers to direct PIABC Limited to reconsider a case and may offer recommendations.

PIABC Limited will aim to undertake the appeal within 28 working days of receiving the request. However, if this is not possible, PIABC Limited will inform you of the date of the appeal within 15 working days.

You will be notified in writing of the outcome of the appeals hearing within five working days of the hearing; a copy of which will be sent to your Centre. A report will be published within 28 working days of the hearing.

Should the outcome of any appeal bring into question the accuracy of the results of other candidates, PIABC Limited will extend the enquiry to include any other candidates who may have been affected, and as a consequence of a change in result PIABC Limited will:

- notify the centre at once in writing.
- refund the candidate appeal fee (via the centre), if applicable.
- issue a revised statement of results and/or issue a revised certificate where necessary when the original certificate has been returned.

Independent Assessor

Should a centre or candidate remain dissatisfied with the outcome of PIABC Limited's appeals process, further, final recourse is available through the Regulatory/Accreditation Authority.

A Regulatory/Accreditation Authority does not make judgements on the quality of candidates' work and cannot change academic decisions but determines whether PIABC Limited has complied with both its own policies and the regulators' requirements.

Therefore, if a centre or candidate is dissatisfied with the outcome of PIABC Limited's appeals process, then it might be possible for the centre, on behalf of the candidate, to present a case to the Regulatory/Accreditation Authority. The Regulatory/Accreditation Authority must receive any application within three weeks of the final draft report detailing the outcome of the stage two appeal.

PIABC Limited will provide the complainant with the Regulatory/Accreditation Authority's name and address upon request.

CENTRE WITHDRAWAL FROM PIABC LIMITED

Withdrawal by a centre

If for whatever reason a centre decides that it no longer wishes to offer PIABC Limited qualifications the protection of the candidates is of paramount importance.

Reasons for withdrawal may include:

- strategic decisions by centres to use only one awarding body
- more suitable qualifications being offered by other awarding bodies
- cheaper products
- dissatisfaction with the service offered by PIABC Limited

In every case PIABC Limited would:

- require the centre to give reasons for withdrawal
- contact the centre to discuss the reasons for withdrawal
- the centre must inform PIABC Limited of the names and details of any candidates affected by the withdrawal
- the centre is expected to offer assistance to its candidates in enabling transference to another centre or completion of the qualifications as appropriate
- the centre must return to PIABC Limited any properties belonging to PIABC Limited
- the centre must stop using the PIABC Limited logo

Withdrawal of existing approval

PIABC Limited will regularly monitor the centre's ability to deliver the qualifications. This will be done through centre monitoring and External Quality Assurance visits. If a centre is not able to meet the full requirements of the approved centre and qualification criteria, then PIABC Limited will introduce appropriate sanctions and penalties and inform the centre of required actions (with timescales). In situations where there are significant shortcomings in the centre's ability to maintain the centre and qualification approval criteria then approval may be withdrawn. The centre will be advised of a developmental plan with agreed timescales with the aim of meeting the PIABC Limited approval criteria in the near future.

In instances where PIABC Limited considers that there is irretrievable breakdown in the management and quality assurance for the delivery of specified qualifications, PIABC Limited will withdraw centre approval for those qualifications.

In such instances:

- PIABC Limited will give the centre a reasonable period of notice (usually 3 months) to terminate its delivery of PIABC Limited qualifications.
- the centre may appeal against the decision by PIABC Limited to withdraw approval by following procedures laid down in this document.
- the centre is expected to aid its candidates in enabling transference to another centre or completion of the qualifications as appropriate.

- the centre must return to PIABC Limited any properties belonging to PIABC Limited.
- the centre must stop using the PIABC Limited logo.

PIABC Limited will still be entitled to be paid any money owed prior to withdrawal.

Should the centre feel that in their opinion they do meet the stated criteria and differ in this judgement, and then they may follow the procedures laid down in this document, to appeal for a review of PIABC Limited's decision.

Centre appeal against a decision not to grant approval or to withdraw approval

If a centre wishes to appeal against a decision not to grant approval or to withdraw approval, the centre should follow The Appeals Process - For Appeals against PIABC Decisions (please refer to PIABC Limited's "*The Appeals Process - For Appeals against PIABC Decisions*").

Fees

Where a centre instigates an appeal in relation to non-approval or withdrawal of approval, PIABC Limited will request the centre to meet at least some of the costs arising from undertaking further investigation into the appeal (e.g. additional visits to the centre, or the cost of the PIABC Limited Operational Group meeting specifically to consider the appeal). In any event, the maximum cost to the centre will not exceed £200.

ASSESSMENT IN WELSH AND IRISH (GAELIGE)

PIABC Limited's policy is to facilitate the promotion, delivery and assessment of all its qualifications including competence-based qualifications in Welsh and Irish (Gaelige) if there is a demand for this to be available.

Currently there is no demand, but this will be reviewed by the PIABC Board and if there is a need, they shall consider making the following available in Welsh and/or Irish (Gaelige): promotional materials; PIABC Limited policies and procedures; scheme documentation; standards; and certification.

The Board will also consider appointing staff with appropriate language skills to conduct assessments; provide administrative support; etc. and will provide training for them.

In making these arrangements, PIABC Limited will ensure that there is sufficient expertise to guarantee the comparability of Welsh and/or Irish (Gaelige) and English language assessments.

If Centres require PIABC Limited materials to be in Welsh/Irish (Gaelige) they should contact PIABC Limited as soon as the requirement for alternative language provision becomes known.

COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Here at PIABC Limited we believe that the needs of centre personnel and candidates are our top priority, and we are committed to providing quality services in the most effective and efficient way possible. However, we realise that, even in the best run organisations, there may be times when things go wrong, and you may not be happy with the service you receive.

If this happens or you feel that our services are not up to scratch, then let us know and we will do all we can to investigate and solve your problem as quickly as possible.

To help you make your comment or complaint in the most effective way and to the right person we have set up a procedure.

When you make a complaint, you will receive:

- An acknowledgment within 5 working days
- A full response within 10 working days

However, if the complainant takes the complaint to the second and/or third stages the process will take much longer.

Who can complain?

The complainant should usually be the centre who has been directly concerned with or affected by the conduct of the awarding body.

If the complaint is from a candidate, they should contact their centre in the first instance and follow the procedures set out by that centre.

Likely nature of complaints:

- Customer service (including administrative procedures)
- Quality assurance (including centre monitoring)
- Assessment issues (including access to assessment/examinations)
- Equality and diversity
- Registration
- Certification
- The administrative/outcome complaints procedure

Please note that the awarding body has separate policies and procedures for dealing with Malpractice and Maladministration (please refer to PIABC's "*Malpractice and Maladministration Policy and Procedure*") and Academic and Assessment Appeals (please refer to PIABC Limited's "*Assessment Review and Appeals*").

It is important that you make your complaint as soon as possible after the event you want to complain about happens - usually PIABC Limited will only investigate complaints that are either:

- made within 6 months of the event; or
- made within 6 months of you realising that you have something to complain about as long as that is not more than 12 months after the event itself.

In exceptional circumstances, these time limits may be waived if there is valid documented evidence for not complaining earlier.

Appeals regarding complaints should follow The Appeals Process - For Appeals against PIABC Decisions (please refer to PIABC Limited’s “*The Appeals Process - For Appeals against PIABC Decisions*”).

Contacting the regulator

If you have followed PIABC Limited’s complaints procedure and would still like to take your complaint further, you can contact the appropriate qualifications regulator:

CCEA Regulation	info@ccea.org.uk
Ofqual	public-enquiries@ofqual.gov.uk
SQA Accreditation	accreditation@sqa.org.uk

Scottish Public Service Ombudsman (SPSO) (*Users of public bodies in Scotland only*)

Users of public bodies (e.g. FE Colleges) in Scotland have the right to complain to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) as the final arbiter. Users have to exhaust the public body’s own complaints procedure before the SPSO will consider their complaint, and it must usually have been raised within the previous 12 months. The complaint cannot be under consideration in a court of law.

The SPSO defines a complaint as “an expression of dissatisfaction by one, or more, customers about an FE College’s lack, or lack, of action or about the standards or services provided by the FE College or on its behalf”. FE Colleges are required to implement a documented complaints process which makes it plain that candidates can complain, in turn, and once the previous stage has been exhausted, to the Centre, to PIABC Limited, to SQA Accreditation, and to the SPSO. It must explain the circumstances in which each of these can be contacted. The SPSO will not consider complaints about academic decisions, such as the outcome of an assessment. These types of complaints should be treated as an Appeal; therefore should follow PIABC Limited’s Assessment Review and Appeals Procedure.

THE APPEALS PROCESS – FOR APPEALS AGAINST PIABC DECISIONS

This procedure is for the following:

- Complaints
- Malpractice/Maladministration
- Centre and Qualification Approval
- Quality Assured Centre and Qualification Approval
- External Quality Assurance

- Removal of Centre and Qualification Approval

It is not for academic and assessment appeals (please refer to PIABC Limited's "*Assessment Review and Appeals*").

A Candidate or a Centre wishing to appeal against the findings, decisions, penalties, or sanctions imposed should contact the Business Compliance & Administration Manager in writing.

Appeals will be accepted from a Candidate or a Principal/CEO/Head of Centre or individual members of staff who are personally implicated in the decision and should be made in writing to the Business Compliance & Administration Manager.

Stage 1 appeal

This will involve a review of the case by a senior member of PIABC Limited's staff who has had no previous involvement in the case.

The stage 1 appeal request must be made in writing to the Business Compliance & Administration Manager within 20 days of you being informed of the findings, decisions, penalties, or sanctions.

The receipt of the request will be acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt by PIABC Limited. The outcome of Stage 1 will be reported in writing within 10 working days of your request.

Stage 2 appeal

If you remain unhappy after stage 1, then you may write to the Business Compliance & Administration Manager to request a stage 2 appeal. You will be asked to explain in writing exactly why you are still dissatisfied if you have not already done so. The letter should also include details of the original complaint, the actions taken by the centre and a copy of the centre's response. Again this should arrive within 20 days of you being notified of the outcome of the stage 1 Appeal. The receipt of your request will be acknowledged within 5 working days of PIABC Limited having received it.

This stage appeal involves a hearing of the case of a panel convened by PIABC Limited. This independent panel should be convened within 28 days of the receipt of the request. You will be notified in writing of the outcome of the appeal hearing within 5 working days of the hearing.

The panel will have three people - an independent lay person acting as chairman, the convener, and one other person. The panel will re-examine fully the concerns referred to it, talking to everyone involved, and getting any specialist advice it needs. It will then prepare a report setting out the results of its investigations, together with its conclusions and any appropriate comments or suggestions. The panel has the powers to direct PIABC Limited to reconsider a case and may offer recommendations. You will be given a copy of the report, and the Business Compliance & Administration Manager will write to tell you of any action being taken as a result of the panel's recommendations. This process will generally take no

longer than 28 working days from the receipt of the convenor's letter to yourself informing you that a panel meeting will take place.

The Business Compliance & Administration Manager does not have to set up a panel every time one is requested. The Business Compliance & Administration Manager will only do so if he/she thinks that a panel investigation is likely to resolve the problems you have identified. Either way, you will be informed of the Business Compliance & Administration Manager decision in writing, generally within 28 working days of your letter requesting a stage 2 appeals process. If he/she decides to set up a panel, he/she will tell you what matters the panel will investigate.

PIABC Limited will charge an administrative fee for appeal(s). The fee(s) will be refunded if the appeal(s) are upheld.

RECOGNISED PRIOR LEARNING/EXEMPTIONS

Centres who have candidates who wish to have prior learning or exemptions recognised and accredited against an individual unit(s) need to provide a portfolio of evidence to the PIABC Assessment Board using the "*Application Form for Recognition of Prior Learning/Exemptions*" (a copy of this form is available from the PIABC Limited team).

This portfolio should include:

- Details of the Unit for which credit/exemption is being sought.
- A comprehensive description of the experience for which recognition/exemption and accreditation is sought.
- Specific evidence of the achievements, which could be in an actual written, photographic or electronic format. If success in examinations is being put forward as evidence, please forward course details and contents together with the course certificate.
- In some instances, the Assessment Board may wish to talk to the candidate and/or carry out visits to further verify evidence. The visits may be charged to the candidate.
- Fees for Recognised Prior Learning are published annually on the PIABC Limited website www.piabc.org.uk and must accompany this form.

UNIQUE LEARNER NUMBER (ULN)

(This is not applicable for SQA Accredited Qualifications)

A centre must have in place procedures to obtain a candidate's unique learner number (ULN), when a candidate gives her/his permission. This ULN needs to be sent to PIABC Limited on registration of a candidate.

The unique learner number (ULN) is a 10-digit identifier that will eventually enable any student over the age of 14 in UK education and training - in England, Northern Ireland and Wales - to build a lifelong record of their learning participation and achievements. If a

candidate hasn't already got a ULN, then the centre needs to obtain permission from the learner to obtain one on their behalf. ULNs are issued and held by the Learning Records Service on the Learner Register (www.learningrecordservice.org.uk). *(UK only)*

PERSONAL LEARNING RECORD (PRL)

(This is not applicable for SQA Accredited Qualifications)

Personal Learning Record (PRL) is an authoritative record of all credit and qualifications achievements made by an individual learner. Achievement data from PIABC Limited and other awarding bodies recognised by Ofqual to deliver qualifications will be collected and held on the PLR. A centre must request a candidate's permission to obtain their Personal Learning Record and maximize opportunity for credit exemption. *(UK only)*

PIABC LIMITED AND THE UK GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATION (UK GDPR)

PIABC Limited is committed to protecting personal data and will process it in compliance with Data Protection law. For more information on how we process and protect data and rights under the new UK General Data Protection Regulation (from 25 May 2018). Please see our Privacy Notice <http://www.piabc.org.uk/privacy-policy>.