



CENTRE GUIDANCE ON APPLYING FOR PIABC LIMITED CENTRE AND QUALIFICATION APPROVAL

Reviewed: 28 October 2024

1. MAKING CONTACT

Centres seeking PIABC Limited approval to run qualifications should contact the PIABC Limited team at: piabc@iom3.org or by telephone: +44 (0)1476 513884 to discuss the application.

Where a centre applies to become a PIABC Limited approved centre to offer PIABC Limited vocational qualifications, it is required to meet PIABC Limited's centre and qualification approval criteria.

2. APPLYING FOR CENTRE AND QUALIFICATION APPROVAL

Centre Approval and Qualification Approval Forms are available from the PIABC Limited website (www.piabc.org.uk) or from the PIABC Limited team at piabc@iom3.org. As part of centre approval process centres need to use one qualification. For competence based qualifications the centre will need to identify Assessor and Internal Quality Assurer (IQA) and complete the Assessor/IQA Approval Forms available from the PIABC Limited team at piabc@iom3.org. For non-competence based qualifications centres need to send details of the Tutors/lectures using Tutors/Lectures approval form available from the PIABC Limited team at piabc@iom3.org.

3. FEES FOR CENTRE AND QUALIFICATION APPROVAL

For PIABC Limited's current Fees, please see the "Fees and Price List", which is available from the PIABC Limited website (www.piabc.org.uk) or from the PIABC Limited team at piabc@iom3.org.

4. DETAILS OF THE CENTRE AND QUALIFICATION APPROVAL PROCESS

PIABC Limited operates a two stage approval process one for Centre Approval and one for Qualification Approval:

- a) Centre Approval is concerned with the identification of a centre's capability to effectively manage and deliver educational and training programmes. When applying for centre approval this must be accompanied by the application of qualification approval for at least one programme.
- b) Qualification Approval is concerned with the specific information relating to the qualification(s) for which approval is sought. Qualification approval is for individual qualifications rather than collections of qualifications. In the first instance the initial Qualification Approval is for two qualifications and is carried out during the Centre Approval visit. Subsequent Qualification Approval is desk based.

These two processes for Centre and Qualification Approval for at least two qualifications are carried out at the same time during one approval visit lasting for a whole day. Where a centre has already been approved and wishes to add additional qualifications this will be a

desk-based approval or a shorter visit depending on the number and complexity of the qualifications for which approval is sought.

The **Centre Approval** documentation covers procedures and documentation that is used across the whole centre or section. It is recognized that due to the specific requirements and staffing issues of work-based learning programmes and competence-based programmes qualifications, in general, that many centres/colleges have separate sections that cover these two types of qualifications. Therefore in this case it is that section rather than the whole centre/college that is being examined. It is however expected that many of the section procedures e.g. fair assessment, equality and diversity, appeals and complaints procedures will be the same or very similar to those used by the wider centre/college. Any changes to the procedures or documentation should not disadvantage the candidates compared to other learners in the organisation.

5. COMPLETING THE DOCUMENTATION FOR CENTRE APPROVAL

The **Centre Approval** document should be completed by the person who is responsible for the quality (quality assurance coordinator) and management of the programme(s) and should be signed by the Head of Centre. The Centre Approval document is divided into five sections covering:-

1. Management Systems
2. Resources
3. Candidate Support
4. Assessment and verification
5. Monitoring and review (records)

The criteria to be met are shown on the left with some possible sources of evidence shown on the right. Having reviewed the evidence requirements the quality assurance coordinator should complete the approval document and prepare a **file of the evidence**. If items are held electronically access to these should be available. Essential evidence should include the following:-

1. Policies and procedures as listed
2. Clear structure with a list of roles and responsibilities
3. Self assessment procedures
4. Procedures for meeting staff and resource requirements
5. Recruitment procedures for staff and learners
6. Learner support
7. Assessment/examination procedures
8. Assessment documentation and recording
9. Internal quality assurance procedures for competence based qualifications only
10. Internal quality assurance documentation and recording for competence based qualifications only
11. Treatment of external reports
12. Feedback collection and processing

6. COMPLETING THE DOCUMENTATION FOR QUALIFICATION APPROVAL

The **Qualification Approval** documentation covers the specific aspects of the particular qualification. It should be completed and signed by the course leader/coordinator that is responsible for ensuring that all aspects of quality for that particular qualification, including the assessment of units, are met and maintained. For competence based qualifications this should be accompanied by completed PIABC Limited Assessor/IQA Approval Forms and a 2 page CV for all Assessors and IQAs. The Qualification Approval document is divided into sections that are specific to the particular programme and covers:-

1. Management of the programme
2. Resources to support the programme
3. Learner support within the programme
4. Assessment and verification arrangements within the programme
5. Monitoring and review within the programme

The criteria to be met are shown on the left and having reviewed these requirements the quality assurance coordinator should complete the approval document showing how the centre meets the criteria. As this is specific to the qualification the evidence should be precise and detailed. Items that are the same as those shown in the centre approval or on other Qualification Approvals should be referenced back to the centre file or to other Qualification Approval forms. If items are held electronically access to these should be available. Essential evidence should include the following:-

For all qualifications

1. Exact details of how this programme will be managed and delivered with named responsibilities
2. List of physical resources available for the programme
3. List of staff (e.g. Programme Co-ordinator, Lecturers, Tutors, Assessors, IQAs)
4. Marketing materials including selection criteria
5. Procedures for supporting learners should the centre no longer be working with PIABC Limited qualifications
6. Recruitment and induction procedures and details of how and when the candidate progress is reviewed and recorded
7. Programme review documents including how feedback from stakeholders is collected and used

For work based competence qualifications

1. At least one named Assessor who has completed the PIABC Limited Assessor/IQA Approval Forms (see Appendix 1) and included this with a 2-page CV. The Assessor/IQA Approval Form is available from the PIABC Limited team (piabc@iom3.org). This person should be available during the approval visit
2. At least one named IQA with completed documentation shown in 1 above. This person should be available during the approval visit
3. Assessment plans and recording documents
4. IQA strategy and IQA plans and recording documentation
5. Examples of assessment and assurance from other competence-based qualification would also be useful

See Appendix 1 for details of what is expected for Assessors and IQAs.

For non-competence based qualifications

1. Details of the qualifications and experience held by the person delivering the qualification. The Tutor/Lecturer Approval Form should be completed by this person(s) and they should be available on the day
2. Examples of teaching material
3. Examples of assessment material
4. Arrangements for examinations including how these are monitored
5. Assessment arrangements and how these are monitored/moderated

7. MANAGING THE APPROVAL VISIT

The Centre and Qualification Approval processes for at least one qualification will be carried out by a person appointed by PIABC Limited. Both processes will be completed during the same visit which normally takes a whole day. During the visit the PIABC Limited representative will expect to meet the person responsible for quality and see a portfolio containing all the evidence highlighted as being present or have access to this electronically. For work based competence qualifications they will expect to meet the Assessor(s), meet the IQA, see examples of tracking and recording documentation and procedures, see example of portfolios prepared by candidates undertaking qualifications for other larger awarding bodies.

For non-competence based qualifications they will expect to meet the person delivering the qualification and carrying out the assessment/examination.

During the approval visit PIABC Limited will check that the evidence provided allows the awarding body to have confidence that the centre can manage the programme(s) qualifications to ensure that national standards are met and maintained. Whilst this is by necessity a checking process it is not intended that it is an overly burdensome process or one that seeks to reject well tried and tested systems, procedures and documentation. It is our intention to work with the centre to provide increased opportunities to a wide range of candidates who have previously had no access to recognised high quality training or qualifications. At the end of the visit the PIABC representative will give clear verbal feedback on their findings and agree the actions that need to be put in place.

8. THE OUTCOMES OF THE APPROVAL VISIT

- Approval to recruit with no conditions but with possibly some recommendations that will be reviewed at the first External Quality Assurance or Centre Monitoring visit
- Approval to recruit with some conditions that must be met by the first External Quality Assurance or Centre Monitoring visit.
- Approval with conditions that must be met prior to recruitment. The centre will be given time to address any outstanding issues.
- Non-approval - the centre will be asked to re-apply in their own time.

9. FOLLOWING THE APPROVAL VISIT

PIABC Limited will produce a detailed written report of the approval visit in 15 working days. The report will set out in detail the evidence that was reviewed and the findings from that evidence. Where procedures and documentation are already in place and used for other awarding bodies these will be approved. The Centre and Qualification Approval forms will be signed by the Head of PIABC.

The outcomes of the visit as shown above will be added to the report as conditions of approval and the centre asked to confirm their acceptance of these conditions. Once this has been done the name of the centre will be added to the list of approved centres on the PIABC Limited website and the conditions placed on an action list to be checked prior to recruitment or at the first External Quality Assurance/Centre Monitoring visit.

In situations where there are significant shortcomings in the centre's ability to meet the centre and qualification approval criteria then approval will not be granted. 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. 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.

10. APPEALS AGAINST NON-APPROVAL OF CENTRE OR QUALIFICATION

Whilst PIABC Limited makes every effort to work with centres in order for them to gain approval it recognises that there may be cases where the centre disagrees with the decision.

If a centre wishes to appeal against a decision not to grant Centre or Qualification Approval the centre should follow The Appeals Process (for appeals against PIABC decisions). A copy of this document is available from the PIABC Limited team (piabc@iom3.org) or from the PIABC Limited website (www.piabc.org.uk).

APPENDIX 1

ASSESSORS

All assessments should be carried out by competent Assessors who have been approved by PIABC Limited. In order to be approved as an Assessor, prospective Assessors should complete the A/IQA 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 Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) and Sector Skills Bodies (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 candidate's. 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 awards and a full understanding of that part of the award 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.

Qualifications

- 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

Occupational Competence

- 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

Knowledge

- 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
- NVQ Code of Practice and how this should be applied
- Role of the Assessor
- Knowledge of appeals process
- Different types of assessment opportunities and types of evidence

Skills

Be able to:

- 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 (IQA)

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 IQA should complete the A/IQA 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 assuring related units in other qualifications.

PIABC Limited 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 Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) and Sector Skills Bodies (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 sectoral 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 internal quality assurance practice.
- A working knowledge of the qualifications they are internal quality assuring/verifying.
- IQA 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 IQAs. 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 activity
- 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 IV standards and how these should be applied
- Details of the requirements of awarding bodies
- Role of the IQA
- Internal verification procedures and practices
- Role of the External Quality Assurer (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
- 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 to maintain direct claims status
- Carry out structured candidate interviews