

Centre Handbook



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Section 1 Welcome to Qualsafe Awards

1.1 Introduction

Welcome to Qualsafe Awards (QA) and thank you for choosing us as a partner in your training business.

At Qualsafe Awards we take pride in the level of support and customer service we offer our Centres. This handbook gives you details of QA rules, policies, procedures and applicable regulations. This information will help you deliver QA qualifications and run your QA approved Centre, meeting all regulatory guidelines and requirements and delivering exceptionally high quality training to your customers.

This handbook introduces the quality assurance and compliance standards all Centres are required to meet and refers you to the relevant policies and documents to help you find more detailed information. If you need more information, we are available to offer support to our Centres, helping you to achieve high standards.

Centres should still be aware their ongoing approved status with us depends on their continued adherence to all the requirements set out in this handbook, as per the *Centre Terms and Conditions*, *Centre Agreement* and *Data Management Contract signed and agreed* as part of your approval application, a copy is available at:

www.qualsafe.org/qualsafe-awards-terms-and-conditions/

We recommend all Centres and their staff, including Trainers/Assessors and Internal Quality Assurers, become familiar with the contents of this handbook.

Our aim is to help you build your business by offering high quality nationally and internationally recognised qualifications for you to deliver to your customers.

This section sets out the values behind our business and the service you can expect from us. We have given as much information as possible to make sure you gain the best understanding of us as your partners, as well as setting out what we offer Centres, including the best service possible.

Since becoming an Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) recognised Awarding Organisation in 2010, Qualsafe Awards has invested a lot of time and resources to make sure we offer the qualifications, systems and support our Centres need, while still complying with the General Conditions of Recognition.



1.2 Who's who at Qualsafe Awards

At Qualsafe Awards we have a number of key roles you may be interested to know about, as shown below.

Governing Body

Qualsafe Awards is a trading name of Qualsafe Limited and the Governing Body is comprised of the Qualsafe Limited Board, plus two independent members. The Governing Body has the overall responsibility to make sure QA complies with our regulatory obligations and provides assurance of the same to Ofqual by way of our annual Statement of Compliance.

Chief Executive

The Chief Executive of Qualsafe Awards is Anita Goodfellow. Anita joined the Qualsafe group in October 2009 with over 20 years' experience in professional healthcare and first aid industries, including being Training Manager for the West Yorkshire Ambulance Service. She is passionate about the training industry and ensuring quality.

Operations Director

James Robinson is our Operations Director and he manages all departments in QA contributing to awarding operations. James joined QA in 2014 and has extensive experience of working in both an awarding and training capacity, helping him to understand the needs of Centres as well as the requirements of regulatory bodies.

He is responsible for making sure QA offers and manages qualifications in line with regulatory requirements and that these are fit for purpose, valued and recognised by key stakeholders in the sectors they are designed for, which includes employers and industry bodies.

Responsible Officer/Head of Compliance/Data Protection Officer

Paul Griffiths is our Responsible Officer, Head of Compliance and Data Protection Officer. He is the authoritative point of contact for the qualification regulators and responsible for making sure we maintain ongoing compliance with all applicable regulatory and legislative requirements, e.g. Ofqual's General Conditions of Recognition, Data Protection Act 2018. Paul works closely with all QA departments with a view to revising policies and processes in line with any changes to regulatory requirements. He is also responsible for providing support, advice and guidance to our CEO and Operations Director when carrying out our programme of continuous improvement activities.

Paul leads any QA investigations into suspected or actual malpractice or maladministration and he is supported in this activity by the Head of Quality Assurance, the Operations and Compliance Manager and the Operations and Compliance Team Leader.

As Data Protection Officer, Paul is also responsible for managing and responding to any Subject Access Requests individuals may make regarding the personal data QA holds about them.

Compliance and Investigations Manager

Karen Murdock is the QA Compliance and Investigations Manager and leads and supports investigations into actual and potential cases of malpractice and maladministration, ensuring full compliance with Ofqual's Conditions of Recognition.

Karen is responsible for producing clear investigation reports, driving preventive actions, and embedding risk-mitigation strategies across the organisation. Karen also supports the Head of Compliance in conducting regular internal audits, supports regulatory submissions, maintains accurate compliance records, and contributes to the ongoing development of robust policies, procedures, and governance practices.

Quality Assurance Manager

Racheal Romanczuk is the Quality Assurance Manager and has worked for Qualsafe for several years within the operations and quality assurance teams.

Racheal manages the remote External Quality Assurance (EQA) team, as well as the internal CASS Officer and Quality Assurance Coordinator. The role of the Quality Assurance teams is to undertake monitoring and provide continued support to oversee the effective delivery of Qualsafe's quality assurance processes across approved Centres.

Service Operations Manager

Marie Clegg has several years' experience in further education, working in multiple roles at Training Providers across different sectors. She has a passion for the highest customer service standards for clients and learners alike. Marie is the Service Operations Manager for Qualsafe Awards, overseeing teams who co-ordinate Centre approvals, Centre support, Centre administration, quality and audit. She is responsible for ensuring that all service levels are adhered to and that our Centres receive all the support they need.

Centre Support

Centre support is provided by several teams.

The Customer Relationship Executives (CREs) provide the day to day support our Centres need.

We aim to provide Centres with a named CRE contact to help build a better relationship between our businesses, as well as providing consistency of service to our Centres.

CREs provide continuous support and guidance to approved Centres ensuring access to all relevant policies, documentation and information required to maintain compliance.

They can answer queries, arrange log in details for the Customer Portal to be re-issued, answer queries on Assessment papers, certificates and registration, guide Centres through our annual audit requirements and generally provide support to Centres to make sure they get the most out of our services.

The CREs also conduct moderation activity of all evidence submitted by Centres, making sure they are continuing to meet our high standards and maintaining the consistency of the training Learners receive, regardless of which QA Centre they attend. As part of the audit process, this team provides feedback to the Centres, and if necessary escalate more serious issues to the Operations and Compliance Manager and/or the Quality Assurance Manager.

The Centre Support Team issue qualification certificates after they are requested by Centres via the Customer Portal and they provide general administrative support to other Qualsafe Awards functions.

The Centre Support Team also perform the initial check of the Centre and Trainer/Assessor/Internal Quality Assurer Applications we receive. This team does a thorough check of the applications received to make sure they meet our criteria, raising queries with Centres as quickly as possible when necessary and issuing Centre Approval Certificates as soon as all requirements have been met.

Quality Assurance

The Quality Assurance Team consists of:

- External Quality Assurers

Qualsafe Awards use a number of EQAs who visit our Centres to perform external quality assurance checks and offer guidance and support.

The EQAs carry out annual monitoring processes which may include Centre visits or using technology for remote monitoring, see *Section 7 Quality assurance* for more about quality assurance.

- Quality Assurance Administration Team

Our Quality Assurance Administration Team monitor EQA activity, arrange visits with Centres and publish EQA reports. Once a report has been published they pass details of the report to your CRE.

1.3 Qualsafe Awards

Mission Statement

Our Mission Statement is:

Quality in education

We are committed to providing a cost effective, professional service with high quality standards and exceptional customer care. We will use the latest technology to ensure a fast, efficient service. Our aim is to help Learners achieve and our Centres succeed.

We will endeavour to meet our Mission Statement and always put the needs of the Centres and Learners first, without compromising on the quality of our qualifications and service.

If you feel there is anything else we could help you with, or a way in which we could improve our service, please do not hesitate to contact us:

info@qualsafeawards.org

Responsibilities

At Qualsafe Awards, we want all our approved Centres and Trainers/Assessors to provide excellent service to their customers and make sure all Learners experience the same high level of training and assessment, regardless of which QA Centre they choose to deliver their training.

We are responsible for meeting the requirements of our regulators (see 1.4 Our regulators) and for making sure our Centres meet the regulators' and our requirements.

Our responsibilities include:

- Developing and designing a range of high standard qualifications
- Setting high quality standards for our Centres
- Making sure our Centres maintain high standards of qualification delivery and Learner assessment

Logo

As an approved Centre you receive a copy of the QA logo to use on your marketing and other documents.

The use of our logo is restricted and closely monitored to make sure it is not misused, so Centres must make sure they follow our requirements:

- The colours, wording or font of the logo must not be altered in any way
- Borders must not be added to the logo
- The logo must not be stretched, skewed, distorted or cropped in any way
- Use of the logo is restricted to authorised marketing and promotional materials, such as:
 - Stationery, e.g. letterhead, business cards and compliment slips
 - Websites and email signatures
 - Marketing material advertising QA accredited qualifications, such as leaflets, brochures and tender documentation
 - Exhibitions and advertising events, e.g. on banners and leaflets advertising QA accredited qualifications
- On termination of Centre approval, for whatever reason, the Centre must remove the QA logo from all marketing, promotional and organisational material including but not limited to websites, email signatures, leaflets, brochures, banners, stationery and tender documents

All Centres must make sure the QA logo is not subject to misuse, including:

- Using the logo on materials advertising qualifications or courses that are not accredited by QA
- Producing their own certificates for qualifications, see *Section 6 Certification*
- Using the logo on certificates produced by another Awarding Organisation for a qualification they accredit
- Use by a Trainer/Assessor/IQA or other person or business not approved by QA

Customer Portal

The Customer Portal we have developed is a private, secure website to increase collaboration and communication with our Centres.

Centres can use the Portal to:

- Download documents, including Qualification Specifications, Assessment papers, etc
- Upload Learner results
- Request certificates
- Manage quality assurance, see *QA Quality Assurance Portal Guide*

As an approved QA Centre, your Centre Administrator receives an email with a link to our Customer Portal along with a username and password. They click on the link to activate the account and log on using the details provided. They have full access, can change the password and set up new users that can access certain areas only, for example:

- Centre – giving permission to view Centre details
- Contacts – giving permission to view Centre contacts and, when required, set the contact permissions
- Courses – giving permission to view recent courses and/or submit Learner information
- Answer papers – giving various permissions so the user can purchase qualifications or view, print, request, manage or reassign answer papers

This list is not exhaustive, the Portal is continually being improved and these are just some of the functions available to our Centres.

The Portal is designed to be as user friendly as possible and there is a help link at every stage for you to find full details of how to use the system. Our CREs can also offer telephone support and can assist you to use the Portal.

Centres can decide to appoint one person to order all assessment answer papers/workbooks and request certificates or they can delegate this to their Trainer/Assessors.

Qualsafe Awards do not control who in your Centre has access to the Customer Portal or what permissions they have, other than the Centre Administrator who automatically receives full access. While this provides full control to our Centres, please note it also means it is important for you to make sure all log in and password details are kept secure and any permissions for staff are removed immediately if they leave your organisation.

We recommend a Centre Administrator retains control over downloading Assessment papers/workbooks and requesting certificates, etc. until they are fully comfortable with the system. Only when they are confident they can maintain the necessary controls for the security of assessment documents and record keeping requirements should they allow other users access to the Portal.

Documentation

To aid Centres in their responsibility to meet all the requirements set out in the *Centre Terms and Conditions, Centre Agreement, Data Management Contract* and this handbook, we have a set of policies, procedures and other documents for use by Centres.

Some of these documents are compulsory and must not be changed, however some may be adjusted to better fit your Centre's needs.

QA documents

Documents to be used as provided:

- Practical assessment papers
- Theory assessment papers (multiple choice question papers, answer papers and marking guidance)
- Learner Workbooks
- Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form
- Internal Quality Assurance Trainer Observation Form
- Internal Quality Assurance Desk Based Review Form
- Reasonable Adjustment Form
- Special Consideration Request Form
- Training commitment
- Learner Agreement

Centre documents

If you want to use alternative assessments, policies, procedures or forms to the ones provided by us, you need to submit them for approval prior to use.

Centres cannot use a non-approved policy or procedures until we have approved them, doing so would be a breach of the *Centre Terms and Conditions and Centre Agreement* and could affect your Centre's approved status.

Documents you can customise for sign off by QA:

- Learner Evaluation form
- Learner Register
- Delivery/Lesson Plans

Policies

We also gave you a template you could adopt as your Equality & Diversity Policy in your application approval email. This is not compulsory but is provided to help Centres who have not had experience drafting such a document.

Centres using their own policies must submit these to QA for approval. QA reserves the right to charge for reviewing and approving alternative policies, procedures and documents Centres want to adopt when there is a QA version available. The level of charge depends on the level of review needed and the time that would take. We will advise the Centre when they request approval, prior to starting the review.

Any Centre that cannot comply with any QA policies and procedures as available on our Customer Portal should contact their CRE for assistance. Any queries they cannot deal with will be escalated to the Operations and Compliance Manager and/or the Head of Quality Assurance.

Fees

Qualsafe Awards strives to provide a quality service at competitive rates. Information about our Fees and Charges is available on our website at:

www.qualsafe.org/become-a-centre/fees-and-charges

1.4 Our regulators

Ofqual

Ofqual was formally established in April 2010 by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act (2009). Ofqual regulate qualifications, examinations and assessments in England. They are responsible for regulating assessments and qualifications taken by Learners of all ages, including National Curriculum assessments, GCSEs, A levels, the Diploma and vocational qualifications.

Ofqual are responsible for making sure:

- Regulated qualifications reliably indicate the knowledge, skills and understanding Learners have demonstrated
- Assessments and exams show what a Learner has achieved
- People have confidence in their regulated qualifications

For further information, see *The Science Behind Compliance Ofqual References* leaflet on our Customer Portal.

Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment

The Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) has responsibility for the regulation of qualifications in Northern Ireland. They are responsible for the accreditation and quality assurance of all qualifications offered in Northern Ireland, including GCSE, GCE and Professional and Technical (Vocational) qualifications.

Where appropriate CCEA Regulation works closely with the Qualifications Regulators in England (Ofqual) and Wales (Qualifications Wales).

Qualifications Wales

Qualifications Wales has been established through the Qualifications Wales Act 2015 as the regulator of non-degree qualifications and the qualifications system in Wales. It is a Welsh Government Sponsored Body, independent of government, and is accountable to the National Assembly for Wales.

Qualifications Wales has responsibility for regulating non-degree qualifications, including general qualifications, such as GCSEs and A levels and vocational qualifications.

Use of regulator's logos

Ofqual

Centres must NOT use the Ofqual logo under any circumstances without the prior written permission of Ofqual.

Under the Ofqual regulations, their logo can only be used by Awarding Organisations (AOs) and only on Qualification Certificates.

Note: the Ofqual logo is not included on non-regulated qualification certificates.

CCEA

The certificates for those qualifications regulated by the CCEA can include the CCEA logo. As with the Ofqual logo, the CCEA logo can only be used by AOs on qualification certificates and cannot be used by Centres without the express written permission of the CCEA.

Qualifications Wales

Under the partnership with Ofqual, AOs may use the Qualifications Wales logo on qualification certificates. As with Ofqual and CCEA above, the Qualifications Wales logo cannot be used by Centres without the express written permission of Qualifications Wales.

1.5 Endorsements

QA is open to seeking endorsement for its qualifications from industry bodies and commercial organisations with a view to enhancing the reputation of qualifications and increasing their profile in certain sectors.

The Faculty of Prehospital Care (Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh)

The Faculty of Prehospital Care provides a bespoke service to endorse courses offered by corporate organisations. Endorsement by the Faculty will only be confirmed once any qualification has come under full scrutiny and they are content that the qualification complies with all educational and teaching standards of the Faculty.

The Faculty currently endorses the QA Level 3 Certificate in First Response Emergency Care (RQF) qualification.

Section 2 Regulated qualifications

2.1 Why are qualifications regulated

Qualifications are regulated to make sure:

- They are sufficiently valid and trusted
- They reliably indicate the knowledge, skills and understanding Learners have demonstrated
- Assessments and exams show what a Learner has achieved
- People have confidence in their regulated qualifications

Qualsafe Awards is approved by Ofqual to develop and offer regulated qualifications in England, Qualifications Wales in Wales and CCEA in Northern Ireland.

We have included some basic information about delivering and assessing qualifications, further information is available in the Qualification Specifications and our guides to assessing.

2.2 Regulated Qualifications Framework

The Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) sets consistent measures with qualifications indexed by their level and size. This makes it easier to see how qualifications relate to each other, by setting:

- consistent measures of size – how long it typically takes to study and be assessed for a qualification
- level of difficulty – level descriptors are more outcomes-focused, covering both academic and vocational qualifications, and setting out the ‘skills’ and ‘knowledge’ you might typically expect of someone with a qualification at that level

2.3 Register of regulated qualifications

This is a website shared by Ofqual and CCEA showing the qualifications and Awarding Organisations they regulate. You can use the site to find out about the size, level and content of a regulated qualification at:

<https://register.ofqual.gov.uk>

2.4 Recognition of Prior Learning

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a process for recognising learning from previous training, qualifications or experience to avoid duplication of learning. It considers whether a Learner can demonstrate and prove that they meet the assessment requirements for a unit through knowledge, understanding or skills they already possess and do not need to develop through a course of learning. For further information, please see the QA *Recognition of Prior Learning Policy*.

Section 3 Approved Centre requirements

3.1 Introduction to Centre responsibilities

Our responsibilities to our regulators include making sure our approved Centres meet the regulations and other requirements including maintaining adequate resources.

As part of your responsibilities as a QA approved Centre, and as agreed in your *Centre Terms and Conditions and Centre Agreement*, you must make sure you maintain sufficient staff, resources and systems necessary to support the assessment of units and, when necessary, the recording of exemptions.

How you meet these requirements depends on the size and complexity of your training organisation and is an area that should be regularly reviewed to make sure you are able to meet your responsibilities to your Learners, to us as your Awarding Organisation (AO) and to the regulators of our qualifications. If your Centre operates a partnership arrangement between organisations, you must make sure all parties strictly adhere to all QA's requirements and the qualification regulations.

The Qualification Specification for each qualification includes information about its requirements such as TQT, Trainers/Assessors, Internal Quality Assurers (IQAs), venue, equipment etc. Qualification Specifications are available on the QA Customer Portal.

The other resources you need to make sure you have in place prior to starting delivery of qualifications are:

- Staff
- Record keeping
- Systems (IT)

3.2 Staff roles and responsibilities

The main roles and responsibilities are:

- Head of the Organisation/Centre
- Responsible Person
- Centre Administrator
- Accounts Contact
- Internal Quality Assurer (IQA)
- Trainer/Assessor

Head of the Organisation/Centre

The Head of the Organisation/Centre is the most senior role in the organisation. Their duties may include responsibility for the company's performance, budgets, enforcing the company policies, for the day to day running of the company and its strategic direction.

Note: if the Head of the Organisation/Centre is also the Responsible Person their responsibilities also include those shown below.

Responsible Person

All Centres are required to have a Responsible Person as shown in your Application, who may also be the day-to-day contact between QA and your Centre.

The Responsible Person must have a senior position in your organisation to be able to make decisions and take responsibility for the Centre's adherence to all the relevant requirements set out in this and other QA documents. The Responsible Person is ultimately responsible for making sure all invoices are paid in accordance with the *QA Invoicing Policy*.

We must be able to:

- Rely on any statements the Responsible Person makes as being accurate and made on behalf of the Centre, and
- Treat any statement, request or notice we issue to the Responsible Person as having been given to the Centre. Any regulatory, procedural or policy changes made by QA or our regulators will be issued to the Responsible Person and will be assumed to have been received and understood by the Centre.

The Responsible Person also is responsible for making sure all Trainers/Assessors/IQAs:

- Meet the QA and regulatory standards and are fully aware of their responsibilities regarding the delivery and assessment of each unit/qualification, e.g. up to date subject certification, frequency of staff's Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, etc.
- Are provided with the appropriate training equipment, materials and documentation for the delivery and assessment of each unit/qualification.

Note: if the Responsible Person is also the Centre Administrator their responsibilities also include those shown below.

Centre Administrator

Centre Administrator is the single point of contact for day-to-day dealings with QA. Their responsibilities include:

- Ensuring effective record keeping, see 3.5 *Record keeping*.
- Making sure all relevant staff are kept up to date with the latest regulatory guidelines and standards, as communicated by QA.
- Making sure all staff are aware of the relevant policies and procedures related to the continued approval as a QA Centre on both our Customer Portal and our website, e.g. *QA Access to Assessment Policy*, *QA Safeguarding Statement*, etc
- Making sure QA are updated about any changes to key personnel or contact details.
- Making sure the Centre adheres to the *QA Conflict of Interest Policy* and that any identified conflicts are disclosed and appropriately avoided or mitigated. This includes emphasising to training and quality assurance staff that if a conflict of interest arises which is related to course delivery, then the conflict must be mitigated through some independent scrutiny of course delivery/Learner assessment (e.g. an internal quality assurer observes the activity)
- Making sure the assessment, verification and monitoring procedures are adhered to within the Centre and any satellite sites, liaising with the IQA on the same.
- Making sure the Centre has access to the QA Customer Portal and is able to download assessment and answer papers and upload Learner Registers as appropriate.
- Ensuring the security of all assessment documentation both before and after the assessment and quickly reporting any actual or potential breaches of security to QA. Approved Centres are provided with a PDF password which allows them to access assessment documentation which is password protected by QA.
- Making sure the Centre has access to the Learning Records Service (LRS) in order to obtain Unique Learner Numbers (ULNs) for their Learners on request, or arranges QA assistance with this requirement, including the payment of the relevant fee for that service.
- Making sure all requests for ULNs are fulfilled and that the ULNs are provided to QA as part of the certification process.

- Making sure all requests for certificates are uploaded to the QA Customer Portal in a timely manner and that, following receipt of those certificates, they are distributed to the Learners promptly and securely.
- Making sure all documentation required for QA monitoring is available for inspection on request, including Learners' work, practical assessment papers, Learners' answer papers, feedback and evaluation forms, internal quality assurance records, etc.
- Making sure the Centre can hold and transmit securely the details of assessment outcomes.
- Resolving any issues highlighted as a result of QA monitoring, as detailed in the agreed action plans.
- Making any requests for Reasonable Adjustments on behalf of Learners to QA in good time prior to the commencement of the relevant course.
- Authorising and co-ordinating all requests for certification, including duplicate certificates if necessary.

Accounts contact

The Accounts contact is initially responsible for making sure all invoices are paid in accordance with the *QA Invoicing Policy* (ultimate responsibility lies with the Responsible Person for the Centre).

Internal Quality Assurer

Centres must appoint an appropriately qualified and QA approved Internal Quality Assurer (IQA) for each qualification to be responsible for ensuring consistency, quality and robustness of internal training and assessment, see *Section 7 Quality Assurance* and the qualification specification for full details of this role.

Each IQA must submit a personal portfolio (including photocopies of certificates) which contains all the evidence to support their application.

Trainer/Assessor

Centres must make sure all Trainers/Assessors have the knowledge and skills to train and be able to demonstrate occupational competence relevant to the qualification being delivered. The criteria for each qualification is in the Qualification Specification which is provided to Centres on request or with the Trainer/Assessor Application pack.

Each Trainer/Assessor must submit a personal portfolio (including photocopies of certificates) which contains all

the evidence to support their application. As part of the application, Trainers/Assessors sign to agree to abide by the QA *Trainer Code of Conduct* which sets out the duties and responsibilities of the Trainer/Assessor.

The Centre's IQA should observe all Trainers/Assessors in line with our quality assurance and Centre quality assurance guidance, see *Section 7 Quality Assurance*.

Once approved, Trainers/Assessors are able to deliver (and if applicable, assess) their chosen qualifications for any QA Centre. This enables Centres to have a pool of pre-approved Trainers/Assessors if they need extra resources.

If you have any queries regarding quality assurance, contact Centre Support or Quality Assurance on

Tel: 0330 660 0899

Email info@qualsafeawards.org or qualityassurance@qualsafeawards.org

3.3 Multiple Centres

If any organisation wants to run multiple Centres, they must set up each one as a separate Centre. For details of additional Centre Approval fees contact Centre Support on:

Tel: 0330 660 0899

Email info@qualsafeawards.org

In this instance, multiple Centres refers to separate Centres, it does not refer to Centres who use multiple training sites/venues.

3.4 Changing your Centre information

If you need to change your Centre information, for instance if you have updated your brand or moved offices, please provide us with your new details. We may charge an administration fee for this, see the *Fees and Charges List* available on the Qualsafe website.

3.5 Record keeping

All Centres are required to make sure they have adequate record keeping procedures in place. Learner records must be kept for a minimum of three years and be made available on request to QA, our representatives, or the qualification regulators.

The records may be kept either electronically or in paper-based files, however all records should be kept securely, particularly the Learner and Learner assessment records which are subject to Data Protection legislation. Centres who keep electronic records should also keep secure back-up copies.

The Qualification Specifications, QA policy documents, assessment and Centre quality assurance guidance contain more detailed information.

Data Protection legislation

The records are subject to Data Protection legislation and should be kept in line with the Data Protection requirements. Centres are required to abide by the content of the QA *Data Management Contract* to which they have signed and agreed. QA and approved centres act as Joint Data Controllers for the information that is shared through the course of normal business. In meeting the requirements of the *Data Management Contract*, QA and approved Centres ensure that they are maintaining compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

3.6 Systems (IT)

All Centres must have internet access and adequate IT systems and resources to be able to download Assessment papers, upload Learner Registers and request certificates, along with other internet based tasks. This includes a secure internet connection, a computer/laptop, appropriate software, such as Acrobat Reader, Microsoft Excel, etc. and a reasonable quality printer to print off the Assessment papers.

Centres who keep their records electronically must have safe and secure back-up copies.

Section 4 Learner registration

4.1 Learner registration details

QA Centres must have a Learner registration process which makes sure they collect all relevant data required for certification and keep the data in line with Data Protection legislation. The Learner details which should be requested by Centres are:

- Full name
- Address
- Date of birth (DoB)
- Email address
- Unique Learner Number (ULN) (if needed)

Centres must be aware that Learners registering for certain specific qualifications **must** provide a date of birth, as this information is used as a security check when validating certificates. In such cases, QA may refuse to certificate Learners undertaking these qualifications if a date of birth has not been provided (please refer to the individual QA qualification specifications for further details on this, where applicable).

Each Learner must be registered in a way that permits the Learner to be clearly and uniquely identified. Trainers must sign the Learner register to confirm they have seen photographic identification for each Learner.

In signing the Learner Register, Learners are also consenting to abide by the requirements of the *QA Learner Agreement*. This Agreement outlines QA's expectations of Learners and their responsibilities in terms of performance and behaviour throughout any QA course. Centres must make Learners aware of the *QA Learner Agreement* when completing the Learner Register and they must also make them aware that if they do not meet the responsibilities outlined in the Agreement then they may have Learner sanctions imposed on them (please refer to the *QA Sanctions Policy* for further details). Learner responsibilities with respect to the assessment process are also included in the Agreement and further details on these can be found in the *QA Plagiarism Policy* (freely available on the Downloads section of the QA website).

Your Centre must have a secure area (manual and/or electronic) for holding Learner details, registration forms, Learners' work, unique answer papers, practical assessment papers, records of any reasonable adjustments or special considerations and the assessment outcomes.

Data should be stored in a secure way but be easily retrievable when required by authorised staff and for monitoring purposes.

Centres should also make sure Learners are aware of the Centre's Equality and Diversity Policy.

4.2 Unique Learner Numbers and Personal Learning Records

A Unique Learner Number (ULN) is a 10-digit reference number used alongside and to access the Personal Learning Record (PLR) of anyone over the age of 13 involved in UK education or training.

Having a ULN is a mandatory requirement for all Learners registered on to publicly-funded qualifications. The PLR allows Learners access to their past and current achievement records. These can be shared with schools, colleges, further education training providers, universities or employers when making an application to further their education, training and employment. Achievement of credit, or a qualification, can only be added to a Learner's PLR by the Awarding Organisation issuing the certificate.

Due to the administration required, QA may charge an additional fee for updating the PLR, see our *Fees and Charges*. Centres may wish to pass this charge on to Learners depending on the qualification being taken and the fee structure.

Learners do not have to have their achievements added to their PLR.

Centres must make sure they record Learners requesting a ULN and pass this information to QA during certification requests.

Centres need to register with the Learning Records Service (LRS) at www.gov.uk/government/publications/lrs-registration-documents to obtain ULNs for their Learners.

Once registered with LRS, you can register any Learner who wants a ULN.

Note: if a Centre does not want to register with the LRS, we can obtain ULNs on their behalf. Forward the Learner details to us and we'll obtain the ULN and tell you for your Learner records. We charge an administration fee per ULN obtained or checked, see our *Fees and Charges*.

Privacy notice for Learners requesting a ULN

Centres must tell any Learners who request a ULN how their information will be used. The LRS suggests the following wording be used in pre-course literature/ Learner application form:

‘The information you supply will be used by the Skills Funding Agency, an Executive Agency of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, to issue you with a Unique Learner Number (ULN), and to create your Personal Learning Record. For more information about how your information is processed and shared refer to the Extended Privacy Notice available on Gov.UK.’

Note: Centres asking QA to obtain the ULNs for their Learners must include this privacy notice in their documentation for Learners who request a ULN.

Section 5 Delivering and assessing qualifications

5.1 Delivery/Lesson plans

For some qualifications, QA provides Lesson plans which Centres are encouraged to use when delivering our qualifications. We understand you may already have your own Delivery or Lesson plans which you intend to continue using.

Any Lesson/Delivery plans not provided by Qualsafe Awards must be submitted and signed off by us prior to being used.

All plans should include:

- An overview showing all the required criteria/subjects are being covered
- A timetable confirming any minimum direct contact teaching/guided learning hours are being met

Centres should refer to the Qualification Specification for details of the required criteria/subjects and Total Qualification Time (TQT).

For any more detailed or complex Lesson plans, we may charge £20 per hour for these to be checked by a vocationally competent consultant prior to signing off. We will contact Centres submitting such plans before any charges are incurred.

5.2 Learner to Trainer/Assessor ratio

In many cases, a Trainer delivering a qualification will also invigilate the assessment. It is therefore important to make sure classes are kept to a size that enables the Trainer/Assessor to carry out their responsibilities effectively.

Each Qualification Specification includes details of the maximum Learner to Trainer/Assessor ratio Centres must use. These ratios are to protect the integrity of the assessment process and reflect an accepted maximum number of Learners a Trainer/Assessor would be able to effectively train and assess.

5.3 Managing Learner assessments

RQF qualifications consist of components or one or more unit. Each component/unit may have one or more type of assessment and we use a variety of assessment methods.

Note: Centres must use assessment papers provided by Qualsafe Awards, if available to ensure the integrity and consistency of assessments, regardless of whether it is a practical or theory assessment. Any Assessment papers not provided by Qualsafe Awards must be submitted and signed off by us prior to being used.

Assessment papers for regulated qualifications

The term 'Assessment papers' refers to the following documents collectively:

- Practical assessment papers, including Skills test papers
- Theory/Multiple Choice Question papers
- Marking Guides
- Uniquely numbered Answer papers
- Learner Workbooks

The ones we provide are downloadable from our Customer Portal.

Ofqual do not stipulate assessments must be written, but they do stipulate that we must be able to show evidence of the consistency of the assessment and that it covers all learning outcomes of a unit/qualification.

All assessment papers must show the

- Learner's name
- Centre name
- name of the person invigilating the assessment (usually the Trainer/Assessor)
- signature of the Trainer/Assessor or whoever invigilates the assessment where required
- date the assessment was completed.

These details will be checked during the quality assurance process and all Learner assessment paperwork must be kept for a minimum of three years. Centres are permitted to securely retain Learner assessment paperwork from completed courses in either hard copy or electronic format.

Practical assessments

We design and develop practical assessments for the Trainer/Assessor to use while assessing the Learners. To keep administration to a minimum, you can record multiple Learner names on one paper.

Centres download the practical assessment papers from our Customer Portal for the approved qualifications they plan to deliver. The multiple Learner practical assessment papers do not have a unique identification number, however it is important Learners' names are written clearly to make sure they can be matched with the multiple choice question papers and the Learner Register for that qualification.

Some practical assessment papers are intended for individual Learners and these papers are **uniquely** numbered, giving each Learner a unique identifier for our computer systems. You must order and download the papers before the course. Record one Learner's practical assessments per assessment paper.

For further information, see the assessment guidance for that qualification.

Theory assessments

Many qualifications include a theory assessment Learners complete to confirm their competence in the subject.

In order to ensure the consistency of assessments and make marking papers quick and easy for Centres, we have produced theory/multiple choice question papers for some of our qualifications. Centres cannot change these.

Any theory assessment papers not provided by Qualsafe Awards must be submitted and signed off by us prior to being used.

When we produce a theory/multiple choice question paper, we create a bank of papers for each unit. Each unique answer paper clearly states which question paper should be issued to the Learner for that assessment. It is vital that the matching question paper is issued to the Learner. Centres download the assessment papers from our Customer Portal.

When assessment papers are ordered and downloaded, our system varies which question paper is used. This means some Learners may receive different question papers at the same sitting. The Trainer/Assessor should make sure the question paper handed to the Learner matches the one specified on the unique answer paper.

Access to different question papers also means that if a Learner needs to re-take an assessment, they can have a different set of questions.

Workbooks

For some qualifications, the theory assessments are in a workbook, one for each Learner with a unique Learner number. The Learner records their answers in the workbook.

Qualifications with multiple units may have a workbook for each unit.

5.4 Assessment guidance

QA provides assessment guidance documents for our qualifications, for example:

- *Guide to Assessing...* for a specific qualification or a suite of qualifications, e.g. *Guide to Assessing Manual Handling Qualifications*

- *Multiple Choice Question Paper Guidelines*

This guidance shows how to invigilate and mark an assessment, including details about what to consider when making a Reasonable Adjustment or receiving a request for Special Considerations, see 5.6 *Access to assessment*.

All assessment guidance documents must be read and understood by the Trainer/Assessor prior to delivering the assessment to make sure no mistakes are made which could invalidate the results. Every effort has been taken to make these guidance documents as clear as possible, however, if the Trainer/Assessor has any queries, contact us as soon as possible before the assessment.

5.5 Managing assessment security

We take the security and integrity of our assessments and assessment materials very seriously. If any Centre identifies any issues regarding the security of assessment materials or Learner assessment paperwork, they should notify QA immediately.

The Responsible Person for the Centre must ensure that all Centre staff, Trainers/Assessors/IQAs and any sub-contracted or third party Trainers/Assessors/IQAs are fully aware of their responsibilities with respect to the management and security of assessment materials and Learner assessment paperwork.

It is the responsibility of everyone involved in Learner assessment to ensure the security of all assessment materials – including the question and answer papers and the marking guides – both before and after any assessment takes place. In particular:

- Assessment papers must be downloaded and printed in a secure environment, allowing enough time in case there are problems with printing
- When assessment papers are downloaded, you must:
 - carefully check the downloads (or materials received by post) and notify QA of any discrepancies/problems immediately. Papers should be sealed in non-window envelopes ready for use
 - make sure assessment papers are stored securely until the assessment (e.g. in a locked cabinet or cupboard). Only open the envelopes immediately before the assessment
- The Trainer/Assessor must collect **all** Learner work and related assessment materials before Learners leave the room

If assessment papers are requested by post, we will send these out in sealed packets (by courier if

necessary). There may be additional fees for assessment papers sent by post.

The clean question papers can be re-used rather than printing them each time, however the security of these question papers must be maintained.

There will be occasions when Trainers/Assessors deliver a course and assess Learners at locations other than the Centre at which they are registered. In such cases, if a Trainer requires to send Learner assessment paperwork by post to the Centre at which they are registered, then we recommend that scanned copies of the paperwork are taken and stored electronically prior to sending the hard copies in the post (in case these are lost in transit). We would also recommend using Recorded Delivery to send any hard copies of Learner assessment paperwork in the post.

Further information on managing the security of QA assessments is available in

- *Guide to Assessing...* for a specific qualification or a suite of qualifications, e.g. *Guide to Assessing Manual Handling Qualifications*
- *Multiple Choice Question Paper Guidelines*
- *Code of Conduct for Approved Trainers, Assessors and Internal Quality Assurers*
- *QA Plagiarism Policy*

Learners who register for QA qualifications are required to abide by the content of the QA Learner Agreement and this includes the requirements to maintain the integrity and security of the assessment process.

5.6 Access to assessment

Qualsafe Awards is committed to equal opportunities for all who participate in our programmes, assessments and tests. Centres should take all reasonable steps to identify any special assessment requirements for Learners prior to assessment taking place.

Centres can make sure they do not unfairly exclude the assessment needs of a particular Learner by checking the *QA Access to Assessment Policy* to determine if it is appropriate to make a:

- Reasonable adjustment, or
- Special consideration

Centre staff should refer to the Qualification Specification and assessment guidance to ascertain whether there are any minimum standard requirements a Learner must meet during their assessment for a particular qualification.

Centres should take all reasonable steps to identify and support any specific assessment needs before the Learner takes an assessment. Centres should contact us as soon as possible if they need support to make a decision.

Centres should use the forms available on the Customer Portal to record and provide full details of the reasonable adjustments or special considerations required by Learners.

5.7 Language translation

In order for any Centre to make a request for QA:

- Qualification specifications
- Guidance documents
- Lesson plans
- Learner assessments and/or reference materials

to be made available in any language other than English (including indigenous languages such as Welsh or Gaelic) and/or to request

- that the Centre be permitted to modify any Learner assessment using a language other than English

approved Centres are required to complete and submit a *Language Translation Request Form* to QA. Further details on the process for making a language translation request can be found in the *QA Language Policy* and copies of both the policy and the form can be found on the QA Customer Portal.

Centres are required to make all language translation requests through this process, with the exception of those that are driven by disability (e.g. British Sign Language) which must still be requested through the process for making a Reasonable Adjustment.

Any language translation requests received by QA will be reviewed for suitability and viability prior to approval. Centres should be aware that dependent on the work required to facilitate any request, there may be an associated cost (e.g. where translation or production costs are incurred).

Section 6 Certification

6.1 Content of certificates

Qualsafe Awards strives to make sure our Centres' brands are foremost on any certificates we produce for them, however, there are regulatory restrictions which mean we are limited to a set layout for our Certificates (hard copy and e-certificates).

We have made sure these include the Centre's logo prominently at the top of the certificate and that the Centre's contact details are included, but ours are not.

Our qualifications produce either one or two certificates:

- All qualifications have one for the qualification
- Some qualifications also have another certificate listing the units, which Centres can purchase if required

6.2 Requesting certificates

After your Centre delivers a QA qualification you upload the Learner details to our Customer Portal to request certificates. There are Help screens to refer to during the process to make this as easy as possible, but the basic process is:

1. Trainer/Assessor completes course and passes results to Centre Administrator;
2. Centre Administrator logs on to our Customer Portal:
 - a. Selects Submit Results;
 - b. Enters Learner details and results from practical and/or theory assessments;
 - c. Clicks Submit, a Warning dialogue box appears asking you to confirm you want to submit as details cannot be changed after, clicks to submit results;
 - d. Enters any special instructions, for instance send all certificates to a single client, e.g. if an on-site course, etc.

Centres should request their certificates as soon as possible following an assessment to make sure all certificates are issued promptly. Note: It is the Centre's responsibility to make sure all spellings are correct when submitting Learner details, if an error occurs there will be a charge to reprint each certificate.

6.3 Production/issue of certificates

All certificates are produced and issued to Centres within 10 business days of request but will normally be issued within 3-5 business days.

Certificates are issued to your Centre for distribution to Learners and it is your Centre's responsibility to make sure this is done promptly and efficiently. Centres are permitted to have only one delivery address for certificate distribution.

Note: It is an Ofqual regulation that certificates are issued in a timely manner to Learners and therefore it is very important Centres adhere to this requirement.

IT IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED for Centres to produce their own certificates for Qualsafe Awards accredited qualifications. It is a serious breach of the regulations and requirements of being an approved Centre and could affect the Centre's approved status. Any such certificates would be invalid and the Learners would have to be re-assessed, at the Centre's expense before we could certify that qualification.

6.4 Replacement certificates

Should a certificate be mislaid, damaged or a name on a certificate be misspelled*, you can request a replacement for a nominal administration charge (see our *Fees and Charges*). Learners and Centres wishing to request a replacement certificate should contact their CRE with the details. Please be aware you may be asked to provide the copy of the original certificate.

All replacement certificates are produced and issued within 10 business days of the request (should the request be approved) but will normally be issued within 3-5 business days.

6.5 Certificate verification

We provide a free online tool that allows Centres, Learners and employers to verify the authenticity of QA certificates. To use this tool, visit www.qualsafe.org/certificate-verification/ and enter the Learner's name, certificate number and date of achievement. Please note that the Learner date of birth will also be required to validate certain qualification certificates, where this is deemed mandatory by the sector in which the Learner operates.

6.6 Direct Claims Status

As part of our administration audit procedures we require Centres to submit their course paperwork to us for review/auditing. If on completion of the review everything is compliant, we issue the certificates for the Learners.

We require a minimum of three compliant review/audits from the Centre before we grant Direct Claims Status (DCS).

Once a Centre is granted DCS we no longer require course paperwork for auditing before they can claim certificates for their Learners. This means Certificates can be issued sooner.

Section 7 Quality assurance

7.1 Introduction to quality assurance

Qualsafe Awards is committed to quality assurance and making sure our qualifications are continually monitored and reviewed to maintain the required standardisation and consistency in assessment practices. There are two main areas for quality assurance:

- Internal quality assurance
- External quality assurance

The combination of our quality assurance arrangements and those we require from our Centres makes sure all individuals involved in the delivery and assessment of our qualifications can be confident of their continued quality and suitability. In this way, we promote public confidence, maintain the national standards and protect the interests of Learners.

We publish several documents to assist with quality assurance, the main ones are:

- *QA Centre Quality Assurance Guidance*
- *QA Conflict of Interest Policy*
- *QA Trainer Risk Rating Guidance*

We require Centre staff to read and understand our key policies and procedures and to abide by their contents. Centres are responsible for keeping up to date with any information and guidance issued by QA and any communications regarding changes in policies, systems or procedures. Centres must also make sure they keep their staff informed of relevant information and/or changes.

7.2 Internal quality assurance

Requirement to have an Internal Quality Assurer

Our regulators require us to have robust arrangements with our Centres, including assisting in the monitoring activities and quality assurance. In order to meet these requirements, all our Centres must appoint at least one Internal Quality Assurer (IQA) for each qualification they are approved to deliver.

You may appoint more than one IQA per qualification, depending on the size and complexity of your organisation, however, you must have at least one IQA who meets the minimum qualification requirements for each qualification you deliver.

All IQAs must sign an IQA declaration stating they agree to abide by the *Centre Quality Assurance Guidance* provided with the Trainer/Assessor Application Pack.

Internal Quality Assurer role

The main role of the IQA is to quality assure the delivery of training and assessments in your Centre, ensuring consistency and quality of internal training and assessment in your Centre. IQAs are required to perform regular monitoring activities to make sure the Learners' experience is consistent regardless of which Trainer/ Assessor or venue is used for the training.

The IQA can also be a Trainer/Assessor at your Centre, however, to comply with the *QA Conflict of Interest Policy*, IQAs cannot quality assure a course for which they were the Trainer or Assessor.

The IQA must follow our *Centre Quality Assurance Guidance*, which include more information about responsibilities and minimum requirements for IQAs.

The Qualification Specification includes the minimum qualification requirements for IQAs. IQAs must be vocationally competent, so if your Centre wants to deliver different types of qualification, you may need more than one IQA.

Centres who may not have sufficient resources to appoint an IQA should contact our Centre Support on 0330 660 0899 as soon as possible and we will try to put you in touch with a nearby Centre who may be willing to share resources.

Note: Your Centre is responsible for any costs incurred as a consequence of utilising an outside resource. QA will not get involved in any negotiation of costs, etc. and will only act as an introducer in the first instance.

7.3 External quality assurance

External Quality Assurer role

Qualsafe Awards operates a system of ongoing monitoring and feedback activity for our Centres. External Quality Assurers (EQAs) are an important part of our quality assurance programme and have the overall purpose of maintaining national standards of qualifications and assessment practices.

EQAs will carry out quality assurance visits and these may involve physical visits to the Centre or they may be carried out remotely. For more information on this activity, please refer to the *QA Centre Quality Assurance Guidance*.

Chargeable investigations

There may be times when external quality assurance visits are deemed necessary following a specific report or incident that highlights a particular concern over the integrity of the unit or qualification being delivered by a Centre. In such cases, these visits will be chargeable to the Centre. See *QA Fees and Charges* for further details.

We may need to make a chargeable visit if:

- We receive a serious complaint
- There are concerns relating to a Centre's quality assurance
- There are serious issues relating to an actual or potential incident of malpractice or maladministration (see *QA Malpractice and Maladministration Policy*)
- There are concerns relating to a Centre's approach to access to assessment
- There is a breach of Qualsafe Awards policies and procedures or our *Centre Terms and Conditions and Centre Agreement*
- Any other non-compliance issue is identified

While the majority of visits will be pre-arranged, some may be unannounced, depending on the severity of the concern. Centres are required to allow access to their premises, staff and records on demand in such cases.

Section 8 Invoicing

8.1 Introduction

The *QA Invoicing Policy* covers all aspects of fees and charges levied by us to our Centres for our services. The *Invoicing Policy* can be found at: <https://www.qualsafe.org/become-a-centre/policies-and-procedures-for-centres>.

To see pricing information linked to Additional Charges, visit: <https://www.qualsafe.org/become-a-centre/fees-and-charges/#additional-charges>.

Section 9 Appeals, enquiries, complaints and whistleblowing

9.1 Introduction

We strive to give our customers the service they expect from a quality company and we expect the same of our Centres, but we know sometimes things go wrong. It is good business practice to make sure you have an efficient and effective appeals, enquiries and complaints process.

Appeals, enquiries and complaints may come from Learners, members of your staff or anyone who has dealings with your Centre.

Trainers or Learners should appeal/complain to their Centre before making an appeal or complaint to QA, we can only accept an appeal or a complaint after your Centre has had the opportunity to resolve it.

Centres may make appeals, enquiries or complaints to Qualsafe Awards.

We have procedures and policy documents you may find helpful, for instance:

- *QA Appeals Policy*
- *QA Customer Complaints Policy*
- *Training Commitment*

Also, from time to time, Learners, Trainers/Assessors, Internal Quality Assurers or Centre staff may wish to highlight compliance issues or perceived malpractice to QA on an anonymous basis to ensure that their identity is protected. The *QA Whistleblowing Policy* contains details of the process for submitting a whistleblowing report and how this will be managed by QA once received. Throughout this process, the confidentiality and anonymity of the whistleblower will be maintained.

All our Centres and their staff should read and understand the documents available on our Customer Portal.

If you have any queries, contact our customer service team:

Tel: 0330 660 0899

Email: info@qualsafeawards.org

9.2 Appeals against assessment decisions

Qualsafe Awards has endeavoured to make sure any assessments papers we provide are consistent and unambiguous. However, Centres may still occasionally receive appeals against an assessment decision from Learners who have received a 'Referred' mark. Please see your Centre's Appeals policy for further details of how to handle such appeals.

Glossary and abbreviations

Awarding Organisation	Recognised by the qualifications regulators to design, develop and make available qualifications. Independent training providers, who meet our criteria are awarded approval as QA Centres who can deliver our qualifications.
Centre Administrator	The Centre's main point of contact for QA.
Council of Curriculum Examinations and Assessments (CCEA)	Qualification Regulator for Northern Ireland.
Customer Portal (or Portal)	A private, secure website designed and operated by QA to increase collaboration and communication with customers.
Customer Relations Executive (CREs)	Provide the day to day support for our Centres. Conduct desk based reviews of all evidence submitted by Centres.
DoB	Date of birth
Desk Based Reviews (DBRs)	CREs carry out this external quality assurance activity, which includes moderation and may include a review of an approved Centre's internal quality assurance activity.
External Quality Assurer (EQA)	EQAs carry out quality assurance activities/visits. Previously External Verifiers.
Internal Quality Assurer (IQA)	IQAs carry out quality assurance activities for their Centre. Previously Internal Verifier.
LRS	Learning Records Service.
Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual)	Qualification, tests and exams regulator for England. Vocational qualification regulator for Northern Ireland.
PLR	Personal Learning Record.
QA	Qualsafe Awards.
Qualifications Wales	An independent organisation responsible for regulating general and vocational qualifications in Wales. The Welsh Government previously regulated all qualifications in Wales.
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning.
RQF	Regulated Qualifications Framework. Replacing QCF.
Responsible Person	The individual ultimately responsible for maintaining Centres, Trainer/ Assessors and Internal Quality Assurer's (IQAS) ongoing adherence to QA regulations and invoicing processes. Previously the Centre Co-ordinator.
ULN	Unique Learner Number.
United Kingdom Provider Registration Number (UKPRN)	The identifying number given to learning providers by the United Kingdom Register of Learning Providers (UKRLP).
United Kingdom Register of Learning Providers (UKRLP)	Centres will need to register with UKRLP in order to attain their United Kingdom Provider Registration number (UKPRN).