



Pearson



Licensed Higher Nationals Centre Guide

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Introduction

This guide supports the Pearson Higher National Licence Agreement for Universities offering Higher National qualifications under both Intellectual Property Licence (IP) and Trademark Licence (TM) from Pearson.

It provides practical support and information for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) operating under the IP or TM Licences, including guidance on becoming a Licensed Higher National Centre, and ongoing administration and communication requirements.

An HEI is defined as an institution with **Taught Degree Awarding Powers**, established with the primary aim of providing higher education.

What are BTEC Higher Nationals?

Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals are higher-level qualifications designed to support progression into employment or into completing a degree. Students taking a BTEC Higher National can expect to complete a thorough and engaging programme of study, which will equip them with the higher-level skills and competencies in their chosen discipline.

This reflects the requirements of professional organisations and, where appropriate, meets the requirements for National Occupational Standards (NOS) for each sector or industry.

Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals are available as Higher National Certificates (HNCs) at level 4 and Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) at level 5. They are internationally recognised qualifications with the potential for career progression and professional membership, and professional development for those already in employment. They may also be used as a component of Higher Apprenticeships with progression to Degree Apprenticeships, as well as other higher education courses.

The HNC is equivalent to the first year of a full-time undergraduate degree and the HND to the first and second year of a full-time undergraduate degree. On successful completion of level 5, students can progress to level 6 and achieve a degree.

What is the Pearson Licence Agreement?

Pearson Education Ltd is the owner, developer, and administrator of Higher National qualifications in England, Wales, and Ireland. The Pearson Trademark Licence enables HEIs to design, validate, deliver, and award their own Higher National Certificates and Diplomas.

To ensure that Higher National students continue to benefit from the same progression opportunities from Higher National programmes delivered under the Pearson Trademark Licence, HEIs must map their Higher Nationals to the core content of existing BTEC Higher National programmes. The aim of this design principle is to preserve recognition from employers and professional bodies. Universities must also identify student progression opportunities at the point of validation of the awards.

Pearson Intellectual Property Licence

The Intellectual Property (IP) Licence Agreement is an attractive option available to the universities who may wish deliver and award fully approved and regulated Higher National Certificates and Diplomas and Higher Technical qualifications (HTQs). It is standard for universities to deliver Higher Nationals under both IP and TM agreements.

Universities who want to use the BTEC (RQF) qualifications content will be asked to sign a Pearson Intellectual Property (IP) Licence Agreement protecting the use of Pearson's intellectual property in the awards and which specifies that the content cannot be used for any other purpose. The content is defined as: **Title of the Award** (excluding the use of 'BTEC' and 'Pearson'), **Unit Title and Content, Learning Outcomes, Assessment Criteria and Rules of Combination.**

Note: Universities will need to sign both Trademark and IP Licence even if they are taking the IP route only. The Trademark Licence allows universities to use our trademark "Higher Nationals" in the qualification titles and associated marketing materials.

The universities remain responsible for quality assurance and awarding of the qualifications delivered under the Intellectual Property Licence Agreement.

A copy of the IP Licence Agreement can be found [on our website](#). Two copies of the Licence Agreement are to be signed by your Vice Chancellor/Head of the HEI and returned to the Licensed HN team at LicenseHN@pearson.com accompanied by the required supporting evidence.

Once the application has been approved, a countersigned copy of the HEI Intellectual Property Licence agreement will be returned to you. If you wish to discuss this further, please contact LicenseHN@pearson.com.

Please note: If you wish to offer Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals (Ofqual regulated), where Pearson is responsible for the QA, you must seek centre and programme approval from Pearson. Please complete the [Centre Approval Form](#) and the Approvals Team will get back to you.

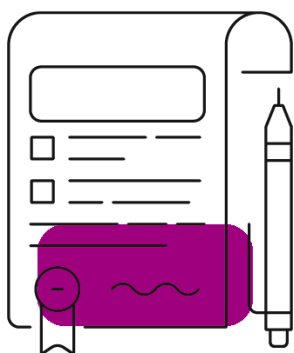
Pearson Trademark Licence

The HEI [Pearson Trademark Licence Agreement](#) is valid for five years. It will be sent to you for completion and signatures on successful approval of your centre.

The centre approval application must be accompanied by the required supporting evidence:

- confirmation of HEI status
- evidence of understanding, experience of development and delivery of BTEC higher level programmes as well as plans for the future growth of the portfolio
- named senior manager with responsibility for Academic Quality & Standards and specifically HNs under trademark licence
- published Quality Assurance documentation (e.g., Academic Quality & Standards Policies) and evidence of satisfactory external quality assurance records related to the programmes within the same subject area, for which you are seeking approval
- financial information

If any further evidence or clarification is required, you will be sent a request for further information.



Once the application has been approved, the Licence Agreement will be sent to you and must be signed by your Vice Chancellor/Head of the HEI and returned to our Licensed Higher National team at LicenseHN@pearson.com. A countersigned copy of the HEI Trademark Licence Agreement will be returned to you.

Qualifications offered under the Trademark Licence Agreement are awarded and certificated by the HEI and *not* Pearson. HEIs must therefore adhere to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education when awarding these qualifications. The Higher Nationals awarded by an HEI under the HEI Pearson Trademark Licence are not regulated by Ofqual.

Developing Your Own Higher-level Qualifications

The HEI Trademark Licence Agreement authorises your institution to develop its own centre-devised Higher Nationals tailored to meet local needs. It is the responsibility of your institution to set up your own validation panels to do this and to ensure that progression routes are available, and students are aware of them.

Important considerations when developing your own Higher National qualifications under this licence agreement:

- HEIs can use the trademark 'Higher National' but not the brand 'BTEC' or 'Pearson' within the title of the qualifications.
- Where a Pearson BTEC Higher National qualification already exists with a closely related title and/or content, the centre-devised programme under Trademark Licence must cover the same core content as in the equivalent BTEC Higher National programme. The aim of this design principle is to preserve recognition from employers and professional bodies and allow seamless progression to higher levels. Mapping of the core content is essential for programme approval. A [mapping guide](#) can be found on the [Licensed HN webpage](#)

There is no requirement for centre-devised Higher Nationals to mirror the current Pearson title exactly beyond the core content as above. However, many HEIs consider it good practice to align to nationally recognised qualifications to enable students who complete a licensed HNC to progress to an HND at another institution, if required at a later date. All Higher Nationals under Trademark Licence which are centre devised must follow the Pearson Higher National Academic Regulations ([Appendix 2](#)).

However, if you wish to use the entire content of a BTEC qualification, but still award the qualifications as your own, then please follow the guidelines for Pearson's Intellectual Property Licence in the next section.

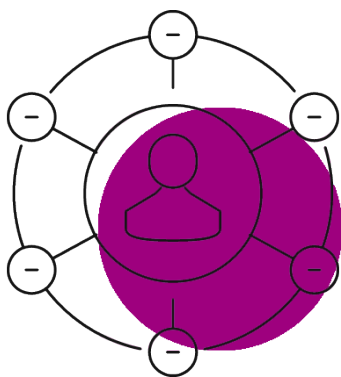
If you wish to develop your own Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs) please refer to the section on [HTQs](#) further on.

Becoming a Pearson Licensed Higher National Centre

If you wish to become an HEI Pearson Licensed Centre, please contact LicenseHN@pearson.com expressing your interest. You will then need to complete an application form and follow the customer journey ([Appendix 1](#)) processes. A copy of the Centre and Programme approval application forms can be found on the [Licensed HN webpage](#).

Collaborative Arrangements

These arrangements apply to both IP and TM Licences. Agreement clauses 2.1, 2.2 and 6. provide evidence of validating the collaborative partner when requesting the partner to be added to the Licence agreement and continue to provide the schedules and outcomes for the collaborative partner annually.



It is important to note that the collaborative partner falls under the License agreement of the HEI it is involved with, they are not approved to deliver Licensed Higher Nationals in their own right. All changes, issues and notifications regarding the approved collaborative partner must be communicated to Pearson via the HEI. HEIs are also responsible for all the key elements of the [Pearson Quality Assurance cycle](#) for their collaborative partners.

Licensed Higher Technical Qualifications

Higher Technical Qualifications, or HTQs, are technical qualifications offered at higher education level in *England only*. The approvals process is led by the Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education (IfATE), with employer review a central feature of this process. Our Higher Nationals (HNs) already approved as HTQs are available exclusively under our Intellectual Property (IP) Licence.

The benefits of using our approved HTQs under an IP Licence are:

- IfATE approval has already been granted
- There is no need for your institution to make a submission to IfATE
- All content has been fully developed and is ready for use
- The qualifications have industry/employer support

The approved HTQs can be validated, delivered, quality assured and awarded in the same way as your own qualifications (subject to the content and unit/module titles not being amended in any way).

Developing Your Own HTQ Under Licence

Universities may choose to develop their own HTQs. This can potentially be done under the existing Trademark Licence Agreement only.

If you would like to develop your own HTQ(s) for submission to IfATE using the Higher Nationals Trademark licence, it is important that you **contact us as early as possible** in the process to obtain advanced consent. Not obtaining the advanced consent may delay the approval process both with Pearson and IfATE.

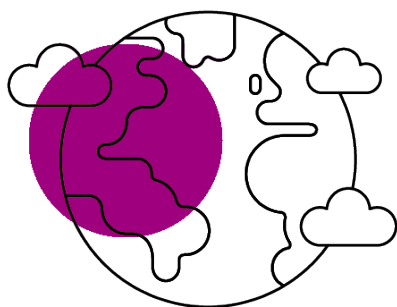
We will discuss with you the key pieces of information and guiding principles that need to be followed for Pearson to approve use of the licence for this purpose, including the principles relating to titling HTQs. You can find further information on different scenarios in our [HTQ consent grid](#) and our dedicated [FAQs for delivering Licensed HTQs](#).

The approval process for Licensed HTQ remains the same as any other Higher National under the Licence Agreement.

Licensed Higher Nationals for International Universities

International universities¹ with degree awarding powers can offer the Licensed Higher Nationals under the IP Licence Agreement only.

International universities can also take advantage of all the benefits of offering Higher Nationals, and also follow the same customer journey as identified in [Appendix 1](#). However, the approval process is slightly different to UK universities.



International universities, although not regulated by the UK quality Code for Higher Education, still need to comply with the academic regulations as identified in [Appendix 2](#) under the IP Licence agreement. The approval for international universities also requires additional evidence and the team will work closely to support the Universities.

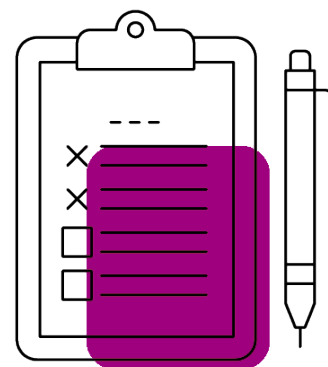
If you are interested in delivering Licensed Higher Nationals, please contact the Licensed HN team at LicenseHN@pearson.com.

¹ Please note certain restrictions apply for the approval of international universities

Review and Approval of Programmes Under the Licence Agreement

As an Awarding Organisation in its own right, you are responsible for the validation of the qualifications. However, as part of the HEI Licence Agreement, and to comply with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, you are required to provide us annually, the schedules 1 and 2, complete the relevant forms and provide the evidence of:

- All newly validated qualifications
- Revisions to existing qualifications
- Programme specifications for any new or revised qualifications (to include the highlighted changes from the previous specification)
- Re-validation of any qualifications
- Details of any new collaborative partners or any partners that need to be discontinued.



Pearson will review the new or revised programme specification(s) and if appropriate, issue a programme code for the qualification(s). Please note that unless informed otherwise, our systems will record the approval period as five years, by default. If you wish a qualification to be validated for a period longer than five years, you must follow the procedure below.

Requests to seek Pearson approval of new qualifications, or, to extend existing ones must be submitted by completing the change of detail form which can be found on the [Licensed HN webpage](#).

Please send the above information to our Licensed HN team at: LicenseHN@pearson.com.

Student Registrations and Completions

At the start of each academic year, you must register students with us before **15th November**² via Edexcel online (EOL). If your university operates recruitment throughout the academic year, then students must be registered with us within 4 weeks of enrolling. Registration information must include:

- Qualification details
- Student details including ULN
- Students must be registered under relevant subsite for collaborative partners and not just main site.

An EOL registration guide has been updated and can be accessed via [dedicated portal](#) for Licensed HN partners.

Student completion, partial achievement, (defined by credits achieved) and withdrawal data must also be entered into the relevant field in the learner record on Edexcel Online (EOL).

An EOL guide for Marking Learner Outcomes has been created and can be accessed via our [dedicated portal](#) for Licensed HN partners.

Edexcel Online is our self-service portal for centre staff. Providing administrators with support at every stage of the qualification cycle, from approval to registration and entry, reporting of achievement and outcomes and invoicing.

To use Edexcel Online, a user will need their own account, with the correct profile options/permissions suitable for their role. Once you have been given access to the Edexcel online account, you must nominate three roles at least, Head of the centre, Quality nominee and Exam's office/Centre administrator.

Fees

On confirmation of the student registration figures, we will invoice you for the **registration fees** within 30 days. There is also an **annual admin fee** for all HEIs, and this is applicable from the year after the approval has been given. This covers all changes, additional programme approvals and discontinuations.

² Late fees are applicable for any registrations after this date. Please see the fees document on our [webpage](#) for further information

Grading, Awarding and Certification

Grading

Individual Higher National units are graded at either Pass, Merit or Distinction. Where a Trademark Licensed HEI uses percentages or literal grading, they should map their unit grading system to Pass, Merit or Distinction. Typically, this would be 40% to 59% = Pass; 60% to 69% = Merit; and 70% or above = Distinction.

Higher National awards also have an overall grade i.e., HNC or HND with Pass; HNC or HND with Merit, HNC or HND with Distinction. The procedure used by Pearson licensed HE institutions in determining the overall qualification grade should be in line with that used for other awards made by the HE Institution.

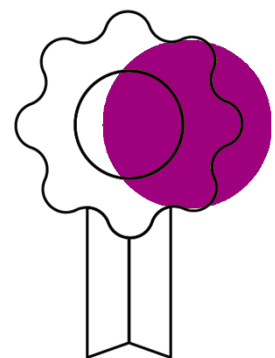
Awarding and Certification

You are responsible for the awarding recruiting External Examiners to quality assure the programmes before certification. You must produce and distribute certificates to successful students at the end of the programme.

Certificates should note that students have followed a Higher National qualification awarded by your institution under Licence.

The certificates should state the following:

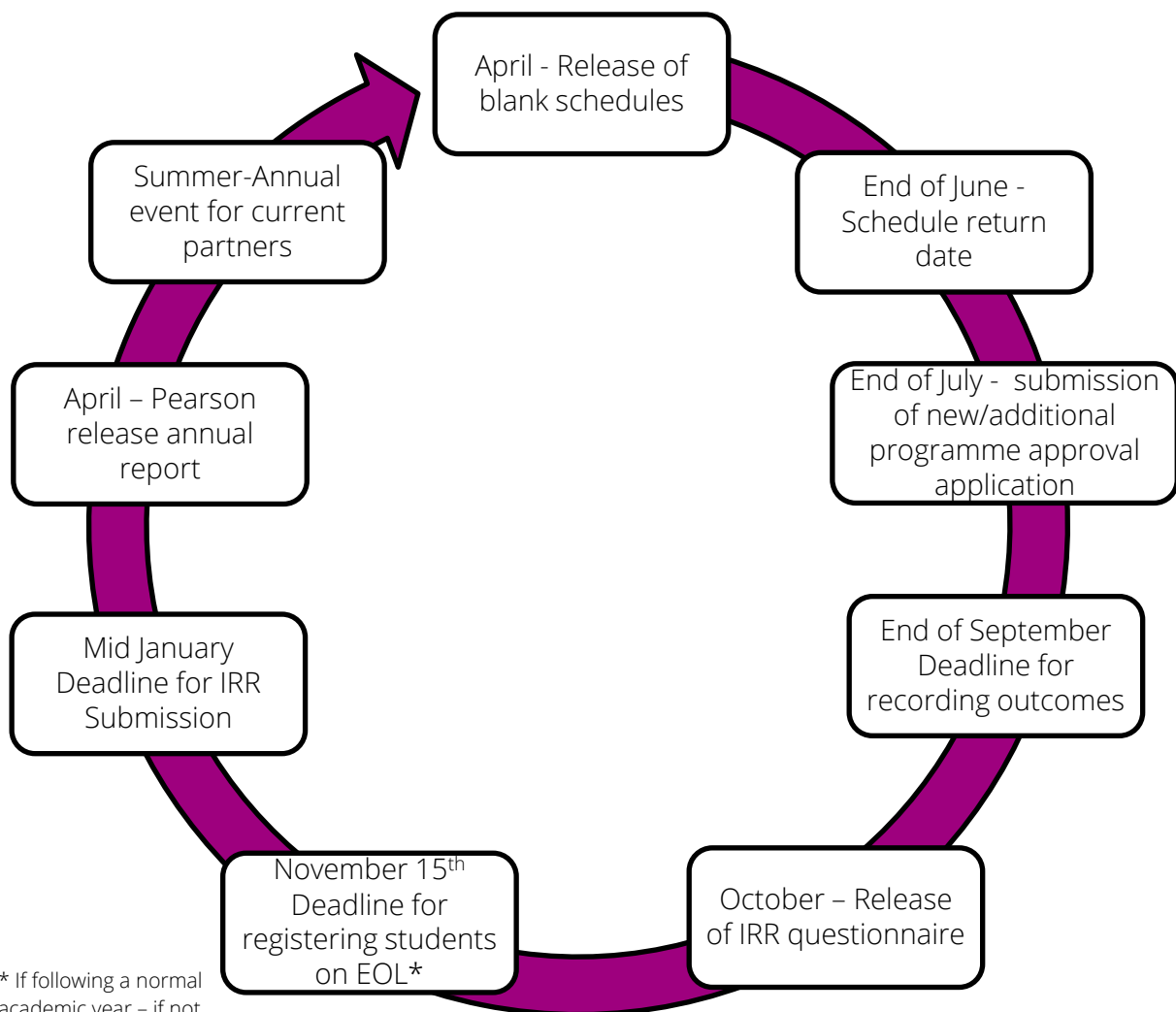
- Higher National (Certificate / Diploma) in (Subject) awarded by (University Name) under the Pearson Trademark/ IP Licence Agreement
- Higher National is a registered trademark of Pearson Education Ltd
- Pearson logos should not be used.



Quality Assurance

Whether an HEI has approval for TM, IP or both agreements, QA of all programmes under licence remains with the sole responsibility of the partner institution, including, but not limited to the recruiting, training, and remunerating External Examiners to undertake external quality assurance. However, throughout the academic year, Pearson do require actions of the HEI as part of our own QA process, as can be seen in the graphic below:

Image 1: Licensed Higher Nationals Annual Cycle³.



* If following a normal academic year – if not, within 4 weeks of enrolment to avoid late fees

³ Image 1- Exact dates will be shared via annual report, newsletter, and direct communication.

Annual Returns

As part of clause 3.2, 4.4/4.5 of the Licence Agreements, institutions must submit the annual schedules and IRR.

Schedules: The schedules must include indicative numbers of students to be registered in the next academic year, running from September to August. It is also useful way to review your programmes you are likely to offer and any that you may wish to discontinue and take the required actions. The schedules are released in **April** each year to be submitted by **end of June** each year.

Institutional Review Report (IRR): You must complete the Institutional Review Report (IRR) questionnaire annually and in a timely manner, summarising the previous academic year's quality assurance activity, findings, and subsequent actions, plus any relevant qualification or procedural updates. IRR questionnaires are received and monitored by the Licensed Higher Nationals team and the information is collated and published in the form of an Annual IRR Report, which is shared with all partners. IRR questionnaire is released in October each year and must be submitted to us by **mid-January** (following year). Please send your IRR to LicenseHN@pearson.com.

In addition to virtual catchups, in-person visits are available on request or may be arranged at the discretion of the Licensed HN Partnerships Manager.

Marketing and Promotion of Higher Nationals Under Licence

All programme information on your website and any other promotional materials must:

- only be included once approved by Pearson
- clearly state that it is 'subject to approval' if being promoted before the approval
- clearly state 'Higher Nationals' in the titles of the programme and any other additional information
- clearly say that the Higher National is awarded by your university, and not by Pearson
- **not** include 'Pearson or 'BTEC 'in the titles
- promote Higher Nationals programmes as ladder of learning and not as exit awards

Named Contact

You must ensure that the contact details for the person responsible for Academic Quality & Standards relating to your licensed qualifications is up to date. This person will be our named contact for all correspondence relating to your Licensed qualifications.

This same named contact should ideally also be the Quality nominee named on Edexcel online.

New contact details should be updated via the Change of Details form and sent to LicenseHN@pearson.com.

Support

If you require support or guidance at any time during the year, we have a team who will be ready to support you. For information about programme approval please contact LicenseHN@pearson.com and for registration of students please [contact our Customer Service Qualification team](#).

The Licensed HN Partnerships Manager is available to offer support and guidance to all licensed HEIs and to those seeking to become a centre. Please contact LicenseHN@pearson.com.

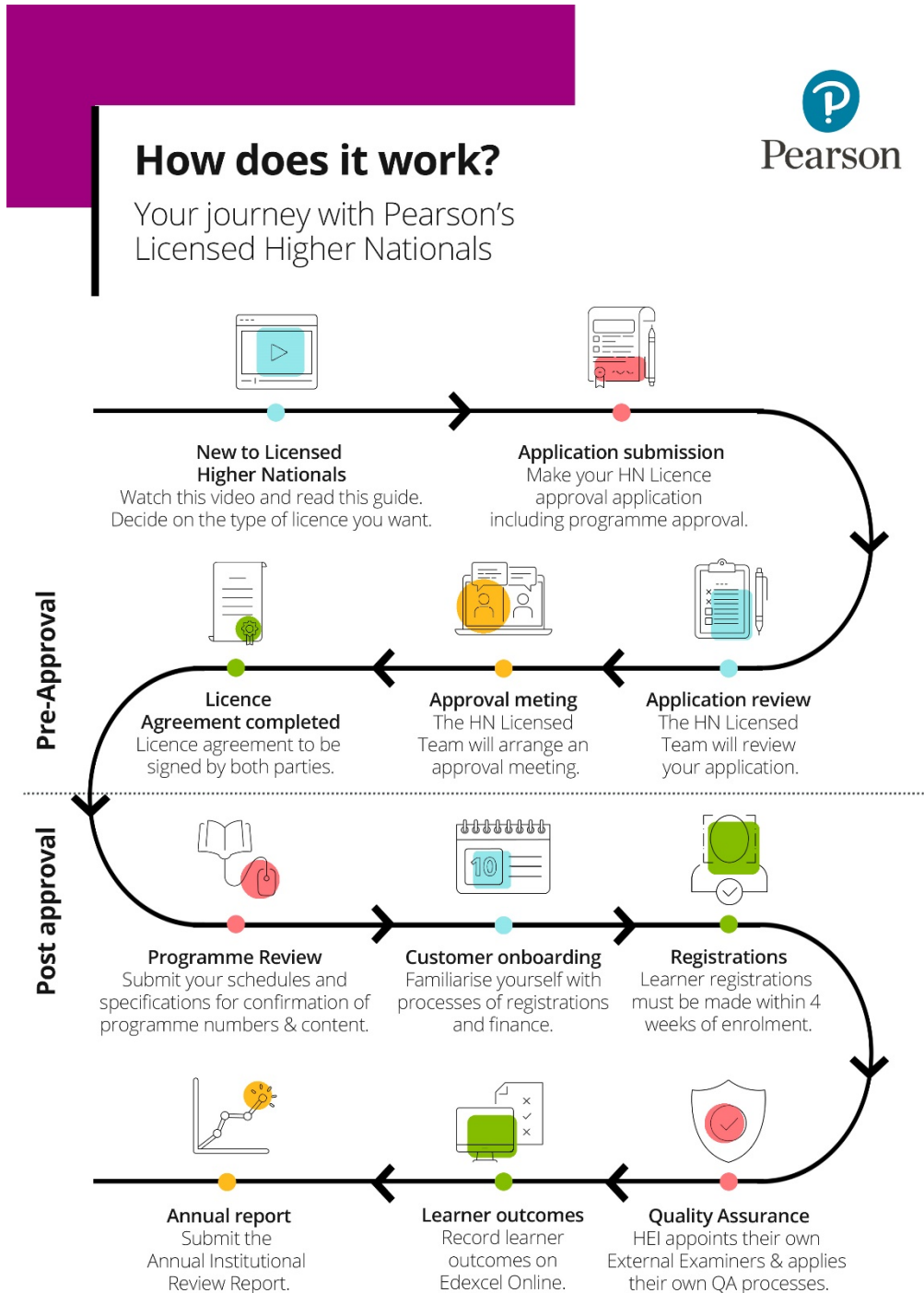
Service Operations

For any question about registering students, please contact our Customer Service team at: examsofficers@pearson.com or enquiries about approvals please contact the Licensed HN team at LicenseHN@pearson.com.

Your centre is also allocated a named account specialist for further information. Please contact: examsofficers@pearson.com.

Appendices

Appendix 1- Summary of the Licensed HEI Customer Journey



University/HEI	Pearson Qualification Services
Email request for an HEI to become a Pearson UK licensed centre.	Contact: LicenseHN@Pearson.com Request is acknowledged.
Complete and submit the approval application form to become a Licensed Centre.	Pearson receives the completed approval application Approval application reviewed Pre-approval meeting held If successful, the Licence Agreement is sent to the HEI for completion If unsuccessful, the HEI is provided with guidance and invited to resubmit the application within 6 weeks.
Send signed copies of the Licence Agreement to Pearson with all details of qualification programmes to be run (schedules 1 and 2 of the Licence Agreement) to Pearson.	Contact: LicenseHN@pearson.com who will return countersigned copy of the HEI Licence
<p>Ensures that:</p> <p>All Higher National programmes provided under an HEI Pearson Licence agreement with Pearson take account of relevant QAA (Quality Assurance Agency) subject and qualification benchmark statements.</p> <p>Newly validated Higher National qualifications contain the same core content as the equivalent BTEC Higher National.</p> <p>All Higher National programmes provided under Licence meet the Pearson BTEC Higher National academic regulations.</p>	Pearson Licensed HN Partnerships Manager provides support
<p>For licensed Higher Nationals, the Institution sends:</p> <p>Details of newly validated qualifications</p> <p>Revisions of existing qualifications</p> <p>Programme specifications for new or revised qualifications and extensions to the validations of any qualification</p>	Contact: LicenseHN@pearson.com Pearson scrutinises the programme specification (including core content mapping to equivalent BTEC Higher National programme) and if the specification is appropriate, issues a programme code for the qualification which will usually be valid for 5 years.

University/HEI	Pearson Qualification Services
<p>Register qualification and student details for the HEI Licensed centre and any partner centre(s) on Edexcel Online before 15th November each year</p>	<p>Pearson invoices the centres for registration fees.</p>
<p>Appoint your own External Examiners (EEs). The EEs report to your Institution, using your usual procedures, e.g., for training, monitoring, and remuneration and in accordance with QAA's expectations for External Examiners. You do not need to send names and details of the EEs to Pearson. EE reports should be made available to Pearson on request.</p>	
<p>The HEI certifies students.</p> <p>The HEI updates student registration details, completion, partial achievement, and withdrawal data on Edexcel Online by 30th September each year.</p>	<p>For guidance on the required certificate content, please contact LicenseHN@pearson.com.</p> <p>Contact examsofficers@pearson.com if further assistance is needed with EOL.</p> <p>Pearson will monitor your Higher National students' recruitment, completion, and achievement rates.</p>
<p>Send the completed Institutional Review Report (IRR) questionnaire on each of the validated qualifications for the previous academic year to Pearson, using the supplied pro-forma, by mid-January each year.</p>	<p>Send to LicenseHN@pearson.com</p> <p>All the IRRs will be analysed, and an annual overview report will be produced. The Licensed HN Partnerships Manager will continue to engage with all partners on the ongoing basis and visit Licensed HEI partners as required.</p>
<p>Send updated centre contact details for correspondence relating to licensed qualifications.</p>	<p>Send to LicenseHN@pearson.com</p>
<p>HEI programme leaders, and administrative staff will be invited to attend stakeholders' meetings run by Pearson</p>	

Appendix 2

Academic Regulations -Higher National Qualifications Under Licence

1. Level and Credit Requirements for the Awards

- 1.1. Higher National (HN) qualifications will be available at level 4 and level 5 are mapped to the QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland.
 - 1.1.1. Level 4 will be called a Higher National Certificate
 - 1.1.2. Level 4 and 5 will be called a Higher National Diploma
- 1.2. Higher National Diplomas (“HNDs”)
 - 1.2.1. HNDs will comprise two stages of 120 credits each:
 - 1.2.2. Stage 1 will comprise units at level 4.
 - 1.2.3. Stage 2 will comprise units at level 5.
- 1.3. Higher National Certificate (“HNCs”)
 - 1.3.1. HNCs will comprise one stage of 120 credits at level 4.

2. Key Guiding Characteristics

- 2.1. Higher National qualifications will have Total Qualification Time (TQT) and Guided Learning (GL) totals as follows:
 - 2.1.1. an HND will be worth 2400 hours of TQT and 960 hours of GL.
 - 2.1.2. an HNC will be worth 1200 hours of TQT and 480 hours of GL.
- 2.2. Core/compulsory modules credit values may vary by subject but will not be less than 30% of the whole qualification.
- 2.3. All Higher Nationals share the following guiding characteristics:
 - 2.3.1. Include significant employer/industry involvement in their development and design.
 - 2.3.2. Demonstrate access from level 3.
 - 2.3.3. Demonstrate that graduates at each level of the HN have the requisite skills and abilities to progress to the next level of study should they so choose. This includes ensuring that HND graduates can progress to level 6.
 - 2.3.4. Include mandatory work skills development through work experience and/or realistic work-related learning.
 - 2.3.5. Evidence of development and assessment of students' knowledge and skills in:
 - Communication (including written English, or relevant other language)
 - Numeracy
 - Enterprise and commercial awareness
 - Problem solving
 - Self-reflection and critical appraisal