



Pearson

Recruiting with integrity

A guide for centres on the fair recruitment
of learners onto qualifications

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The key role of Pearson Education Ltd (Pearson) is to secure standards for those qualifications we certificate. As part of our commitment to quality assuring standards and therefore protecting learners, Pearson provides guidance and support to help centres and their learners achieve their learning and development goals. Pearson also ensures that any regulatory requirements our regulators impose on us are met, and that we support centres to meet those requirements.

This document replaces the previous policy *Age of learners: a guide for centres on the fair recruitment of learners onto qualifications (2014)*.

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What does this guidance cover?

This guidance is about the fair, equal and appropriate recruitment of learners onto all Pearson qualifications administered by Pearson Education, including the Pearson self-regulated framework, the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) and other national frameworks in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland. Centres are responsible for ensuring that learners are fully informed about any prerequisites required for a qualification and that they are recruited onto qualifications which are at an appropriate level for their ability, with a reasonable expectation they will be able to complete it to the standard required, having completed the relevant programme of learning.

Qualifications that are not in scope are those which are restricted for legal reasons e.g. serving alcohol, using firearms. There may be other restrictions such as funding.

Pearson will not consider applications for special arrangements or considerations for learners made on grounds related to the learners' age.

This guidance is intended to support the recruitment of learners onto qualifications. However centres must comply with the UK Equality Act 2010.

The aims of this guidance are:

- To clarify for centres the age at which learners may commence study for Pearson qualifications and when to make registrations to gain certification.
- To support centres in making appropriate choices for their learners, based on a number of considerations, including opportunities for progression into further study or employment and the learners' own intentions and ambitions.
- To ensure that there is a fair and consistent approach to recruiting with integrity across Pearson qualifications.

Our qualifications

General qualifications

Age of learners

General qualifications are the main qualifications taken by 14 to 16 year olds in schools and colleges in England, Wales and Northern Ireland but can be taken to gain a qualification in a subject learners are interested in at any age. In working towards qualifications such as GCSEs, there is no restriction within centres on when learners commence studies based on the specifications, as these build directly on learning in earlier years. Centres may also choose to accelerate assessment for more able learners.

GCSEs are usually studied full time, taking two years to complete. Short courses are also available, and adult learners can take evening classes or teach themselves. There are no formal entry requirements and no age limits.

GCSE courses mainly involve studying the theory of a subject combined with some investigative work. Each qualification is at Level 1 or 2 on the Regulated Qualifications Framework, depending on the grade achieved.

A levels - sometimes called General Certificates of Education (GCE) or Advanced level - are normally studied after GCSEs or International GCSEs, but can be taken at any age. They mainly involve studying the theory of a subject combined with some investigative work, and are usually studied full-time over two years at school or college.

To study a subject at A level, learners will normally need to have studied it already at level 2 in a BTEC or GCSE.

Vocational qualifications

Age of Learners

There is a general recommendation from Pearson that vocational qualifications are designed for learners no younger than age 14 years, and in most cases 16 years and over.

This recommendation is in place because younger learners:

- have an entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum maintaining a full range of qualification opportunities
- may find it difficult to respond appropriately to work-based or vocational contexts
- may not have access to appropriate practical experience, for example work experience because of health and safety or other concerns.
- may find that routes to work and further study are barred on completion of the qualification

Where there are specific restrictions relating to the age of learners for any qualification, these will be indicated in the Specification.

Higher National Qualifications

Pearson has designed these qualifications to be appropriate for learners aged 18 or over, however in some cases younger learners may be entered onto a Pearson BTEC Higher National programme. Centres are required to recruit students to Higher National programmes with integrity. They will need to make sure that applicants have relevant information and advice about the qualification, to make sure it meets their needs. Centres should review the applicant's prior qualifications and/or experience to consider whether this profile shows that they have the potential to achieve the qualification. For students with disabilities and specific needs, this review will need to take account of the support available to the student during the teaching and assessment of the qualification.

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are packages of training and, usually, qualifications, which have been designed by industry bodies to ensure employees have the appropriate skills and knowledge for a particular sector or job role. They are supported by the government and cannot be undertaken by people aged under 16. Centres are required to recruit learners to apprenticeships with integrity. They will need to make sure that applicants have relevant information and advice about the apprenticeship, to make sure it meets their aspirations and that of the employer. Centres should ensure support is given for employers as well as apprentices in making decisions about suitable frameworks and their associated qualifications. When recruiting learners on to apprenticeships centres should ensure learning can be integrated into the work environment and its activities or that suitable arrangements can be made where this is not the case.

Other factors in recruiting with integrity for Vocational Qualifications

Centres considering making any learning programmes available must ensure that learners will have the capability and full opportunity to achieve the qualification. It is recommended that centres undertake a diagnostic assessment of each learner to ensure that they are recruited on to an appropriate programme level. Each qualification specification sets out possible progression routes and centres should ensure these are matched to the aspiration of the learner. In addition, learners must be able to:

- plan and study independently to complete their assignments
- undertake required practical activities
- gain access to relevant work-based contexts such as work experience and access to real work environments
- gain access to appropriate and adequate resources and skilled staff.

Centres should consider whether learners would be best suited on a preparatory programme before selecting a vocational programme. This could include the opportunity to observe or participate in activities drawn from different vocational areas in order to make an informed selection of vocational programme. A preparatory programme could also include familiarisation with assessment methods and practice in planning assignment completion, e.g. how to plan time, to research, to make notes.

Our specifications

All Pearson's specifications state any entry requirements for that qualification, including any prerequisite qualifications and age restrictions. Any age restricted units are clearly identified with the reason for that restriction e.g. legal restrictions such as licence to practise.

Our qualifications are available online at <http://qualifications.pearson.com/>

Our centre handbooks

Statements made across all Pearson centre handbooks should make clear any entry requirements and age restrictions for all our qualifications and units made available.

Our handbooks are available online at <http://qualifications.pearson.com/>

Centre responsibilities

Centres agree to recruit learners onto qualifications with integrity as part of their approval process. Failure to adhere to the requirements of centre approval may result in withdrawal of approval for a qualification, group of qualifications or the centre as a whole (see our [Removal of centre or programme approval policy](#)). Centres are therefore responsible for recruiting with integrity and ensuring that any age restrictions are adhered to.

Centres must ensure that:

- learners have the correct information and advice on their selected qualification(s)
- the qualification(s) will meet the learners needs and aspirations
- that the qualification(s) is at an appropriate level for the learner - neither too high so as to restrict the learner's ability to achieve, nor too low so as to prevent the learner from attainment which is in line with their potential (although there may be some instances where a qualification outcome at a lower level than the learner's ability may be a requirement for employment or further study)
- learners are recruited onto the programme before the qualification end date which is published in the specification
- where the language of the assessment is not the learner's first language, the centre should ensure the learner has language skills that meet the required level for the assessment.
- they make justifiable and professional judgements about each learner's potential to successfully complete the assessment and achieve the qualification, which includes , checking the learning outcomes and assessment criteria of mandatory units as well as selecting the most appropriate route of optional units, where applicable. This initial assessment should ensure that the learner is placed on an appropriate qualification and level to achieve their desired outcome and according to their ability.
- they comply with their responsibilities under the UK Equality Act 2010. This includes ensuring that, where learner's have particular needs, adequate access arrangements can be made to enable them to meet the requirements of the qualification. Pearson may monitor whether centres are fulfilling this.
- learners are aware of a range of options available, including any reasonable adjustments that may be necessary, to enable demonstration of attainment across all required assessment
- learners understand the circumstances in which support may be made available to them to facilitate access to assessment and, through the process of recruitment, communicate clearly where they may not be able to demonstrate attainment and gain achievement in all parts of assessment for the qualification(s). Any restrictions on progression routes to the learner as a result of not achieving certain outcomes must be made clear to the learner.



Equality and diversity

Pearson is also responsible for complying with the Equality Act 2010, which we monitor by the completion of an annual review and declaration of compliance to the qualifications regulators. For further detail on how Pearson complies with this requirement see the Pearson Equality and Diversity Policy on our website (www.qualifications.pearson.com).

Other resources

There are other policies, documents and laws which support recruitment with integrity:

[General Conditions of Recognition \(Ofqual, September 2015\)](#)

[JCQ Access Arrangements, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration General and Vocational qualifications, 2015 -2016.](#)

[Pearson Equality and Diversity Policy](#)
[Policy for the removal of centre and programme approval](#)

[Supplementary guide for reasonable adjustment and Special considerations in vocational internally assessed units](#)

[SQA Accreditation's Regulatory Principles \(2014\)](#)

[UK Equality Act 2010](#)

Review date

We will review this guidance in April 2017.

Useful contacts

For more information on Pearson qualifications please visit our website: www.qualifications.pearson.com.