

Policy on the removal of programme and centre approval

2023

Who and what is this policy for:

This policy is for Pearson approved centres and learners who are affected by a centre closing. There are many reasons why a centre may lose its Pearson centre or programme approval. This policy sets out those reasons and what would need to occur for us to withdraw approval. It also explains how we will support learners when a centre closes or goes into administration.

If you have questions on this process, please contact ukapproval@pearson.com.

Pearson Education Ltd – Our Mission and Values

At Pearson, our purpose is simple: to add life to a lifetime of learning. We believe that every learning opportunity is a chance for a personal breakthrough. That's why our c.20,000 Pearson employees are committed to creating vibrant and enriching learning experiences designed for real-life impact. We are the world's leading learning company, serving customers in nearly 200 countries with digital content, assessments, qualifications, and data. For us, learning isn't just what we do. It's who we are. Visit us at www.pearsonplc.com

We are regulated by the UK qualifications regulators Ofqual (England), SQA Accreditation (Scotland), CCEA Regulation (Northern Ireland) and Qualifications Wales (Wales). Our regulatory policies are integral to our approach and articulate how we meet regulatory requirements. These policies are designed to support centres and students and set out clearly our approach to the design, delivery, and award of Pearson qualifications and services.

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1. Scope of policy

- 1.1 This policy is about the removal of centre and/or programme approval and how Pearson will support learners in cases where centre approval has been removed or where a centre has gone into administration. It applies to all UK and International centres offering Pearson qualifications.

2. Reasons for removal of approval

- 2.1 The decision to remove centre or programme approval will generally be taken by Pearson's Head of Centre Management or the Director of Business Improvement and Regulation. This might happen because:
- The Pearson Malpractice Committee determines this is an appropriate sanction to impose, following a malpractice or maladministration investigation (see Section 3).
 - A centre has breached the terms and conditions of Pearson centre or programme approval (see Section 4).
 - There are significant and/or repeated quality issues identified through the Quality Assurance programme (see Section 5).
 - There are long-standing financial issues which a centre has not resolved (see Section 6).
 - A centre has approval for programmes but is no longer active.
 - Pearson no longer has confidence in the centre's senior management team (see Section 7).

3. Malpractice and maladministration investigations

- 3.1 In the event of potential malpractice/maladministration, we will investigate in accordance with the process set out in the JCQ Suspected Malpractice Policies and Procedures. Once complete, a Malpractice Committee will review the case to determine if malpractice has occurred and, if so, the appropriate sanction(s) to be imposed on those who have committed it.
- 3.2 In serious cases of malpractice or maladministration, the Malpractice Committee can remove centre or programme approval. The JCQ Suspected Malpractice Policies and Procedures provide indicative scenarios of when removal of qualification/centre approval is likely to be appropriate. These include:

- Repeated breach of the regulations relating to a qualification.
- Loss of confidence in the head of centre or senior management of the centre.
- Breakdown in management and quality assurance arrangements for some or all accredited qualifications offered by the centre.
- Failure to co-operate with awarding body requests to thoroughly investigate suspected malpractice.
- Failure to implement a specified action plan.

3.3 As with all malpractice sanctions, those subject to sanction can appeal. Please refer to the JCQ Appeals booklet for information on the 2-stage appeals process that is available in such cases.

4. Breaches of terms and conditions

4.1 In some cases, centre or programme approval is suspended or removed on the grounds that the centre approval terms and conditions have been broken. This decision is taken by Pearson's Centre Management team, in consultation with the Legal team and the Responsible Officer where appropriate. A centre cannot appeal against these decisions.

4.2 This route is normally used only where there is a clear breach of terms and conditions, and Pearson must take immediate action. For example, when:

- There has been a lack of cooperation, the centre has not responded to communications from Pearson, or has refused access to premises, learner work or assessment records.
- There has been a failure to inform Pearson of a collaborative arrangement.
- A centre is marketing a qualification which has not been approved or is actively enrolling learners on such a programme.
- A centre has sold fraudulent certificates to learners, claiming to be genuine Pearson certificates.
- A centre has misrepresented our relationship in a way which could mislead or cause serious disadvantage to learners.
- A centre has submitted false documentation to Pearson, for example fraudulent qualification approval applications.
- A centre has submitted false information about Pearson qualifications to other agencies, such as funding agencies or UK Border Agency (UKBA.)
- There has been a threat of or actual verbal or physical abuse towards Pearson staff.
- A centre is inspected by another external agency such as Ofsted, Office for Students, or the Department for Education, for example, and their findings identify failings that could be prejudicial to learners and their outcomes.

4.3 Pearson may also suspend or remove centre or programme approval where there is a pattern of repeated breaches of terms and conditions of a less serious nature.

- 4.4** In all cases, we will write to the centre about the nature of the breach(es) and centres will have an opportunity to respond before approval is suspended or removed. However, in serious cases such as those described in 4.2, approval may be suspended before receipt of the centre's response to protect the learners and/or the integrity of Pearson qualifications.

5. Quality assurance

Removal of programme approval for vocational qualifications

- 5.1** If a centre has already been subject to a non-release for a first or second standards verification sample but have not made adequate progress towards resolving quality issues, programme approval may be removed. In this situation, a centre may also be subject to additional monitoring during the following two years.
- 5.2** The following handbooks provide details of how we check appropriate quality assurance and maintain national standards:
- [BTEC Higher Nationals Centre Guide to Quality Assurance and Assessment](#)
 - [BTEC Higher Nationals Centre Guide to External Examination \(UK\)](#)
 - [BTEC Centre Guide to Standards Verification Entry to Level 3](#)
 - [BTEC Professional Centre Guide to External Examination \(UK\)](#)
 - [Pearson Work-based Learning Delivery Guidance & Quality Assurance Requirements](#)
 - [BTEC International Quality Assurance Handbook](#)

Removal of centre approval (for any Pearson qualification)

- 5.3** Pearson may suspend or remove centre approval in the following situations:
- Where quality issues continue during the monitoring period described in section 5.1 above.
 - Where quality issues occur across multiple programmes.
 - Where quality issues are sufficiently serious (for example, submitting false information about learner grades, or submitting grades for non-completed units).
- 5.4** Issues which may lead to Pearson considering removing or suspending a centre include:
- Significant failings in centre management.
 - Consistently failing to register learners in line with Pearson conditions.
 - Failure to recruit staff to deliver, assess or quality assure programmes.
 - Failure to recruit learners with integrity.
 - Continuous poor outcomes from quality processes for more than one academic year.
 - Poor quality outcomes across more than one programme.
 - Failing to ensure authenticity of learner work.

- 5.5 These decisions are taken by Pearson Centre Management team, in consultation with the Head of Centre Management. Centres can raise an appeal through the Pearson support portal. The appeal will be conducted by a member of Pearson appeals team or a Head of Department who was not involved in the original decision. The appeal will include a review of the evidence upon which the original decision was made and the reasonableness of that decision. The appeal will either be upheld in whole or in part, or not upheld. The outcome of the appeal will be communicated in writing to the Head of Centre within 42 calendar days of receipt of the complete appeal application. Following communication of the outcome of the appeal, there is no further right to appeal.

6. Suspension of service

- 6.1 Pearson will carry out financial checks as part of our commitment to ensuring centres have sufficient financial resources and facilities to be able to deliver and assess our qualifications and for learners to have the opportunity to complete them.
- 6.2 Pearson may take appropriate action, because of these checks, if there is a risk to learners. **A suspension of service will prevent new registrations** from being made, however, we **will not prevent certification** for existing learners.

7. Loss of confidence in senior centre management teams

- 7.1 In some instances, centre approval will be removed because Pearson has lost confidence in the senior management of the centre. This may apply where there is evidence which brings into doubt the personal or professional integrity of a member of the senior management team, for example, where they have been found guilty of a criminal offence, or where we see evidence of a culture reflected in patterns of behaviour in the centre, which is damaging to the reputation of the centre or is against the wider interests of learners.
- 7.2 Pearson expect all centres to reflect a culture of integrity in their delivery of our qualifications. This includes:
- Working with learners, partners, and staff in an open and transparent manner.
 - Seeking continual improvement in the quality of your processes.
 - Dealing with any issues promptly and thoroughly.
- 7.3 Where these attributes are not evident, this will also be taken into account when we are considering removal of centre or programme approval.

- 7.4** These decisions are taken by Pearson's Centre Management team, in consultation with the Legal team. Centres cannot appeal against these decisions.
- 7.5** Where appropriate, these cases will involve discussion with the head of the centre or other governing body about other possible options, including replacement of members of the senior management team.

8. Supporting learners

- 8.1** In all cases where centre or programme approval is suspended or removed, Pearson will do everything possible to help affected learners. This is likely to include:
- Retrieval of portfolios and assessment records.
 - Retrieval of certificates.
 - Standards verification of existing portfolios.
 - Certification at a unit or qualification level wherever appropriate.
 - Support in locating a suitable alternative provider.
 - Reviewing existing quality assurance information to determine which certificates may be invalid.
 - Undertaking further verification of learner work.
 - Taking additional steps to verify the authenticity of learner work.
 - Obtaining contact details for affected learners from the centre.
 - Contacting affected learners.

If a centre closes permanently due to going into administration

- 8.2** In cases where a centre goes into administration or in other circumstances where a centre closes at short notice, Pearson will take all reasonable steps to support affected learners. This may include:
- Certification (free of charge) for learners who have completed their qualification and has been validated by Pearson but never received a certificate.
 - Arranging the external verification of learners who have completed but certificates had not been released by Pearson.
 - Supporting learners who have not yet completed the programme to transfer to another Pearson centre or awarding organisation to complete the programme (this will involve transferring credit (where applicable)).
 - Supporting learners who need to achieve further components of an apprenticeship to transfer to another Pearson centre or another awarding organisation.
 - Certification (free of charge) for learners who need evidence for completed components of an apprenticeship to claim funding.
 - Replacement certificates (free of charge) for learners who had not received a certificate while the centre was still open and had made reasonable attempts to get a

certificate before the centre closed (we may ask to see evidence that attempts were made to obtain a certificate).

- 8.3** If you are a centre receiving learners from a centre that has gone into administration, please contact us via the Pearson Support Portal.

9. Regulatory references

- 9.1** UK regulators require all awarding organisations to establish and maintain their compliance with regulatory conditions and criteria. As part of this process, policies that relate to Pearson's status as an awarding organisation will reference any conditions and criteria that they address.

- 9.2** This policy addresses the following regulatory criteria and conditions:

| Qualification regulator or relevant governing body | Regulatory rule or guidance document | Regulatory condition, criteria, or principle |
|---|---|---|
| Ofqual | <u>General Conditions of Recognition</u> | C1 |
| Ofqual | <u>General Conditions of Recognition</u> | C2 |
| Ofqual | <u>General Conditions of Recognition</u> | C2.3 |
| CCEA Regulation | <u>General Conditions of Recognition</u> | C1 |
| CCEA Regulation | <u>General Conditions of Recognition</u> | C2 |
| CCEA Regulation | <u>General Conditions of Recognition</u> | C2.3 |
| Qualifications Wales | <u>Standard Conditions of Recognition</u> | C1 |
| Qualifications Wales | <u>Standard Conditions of Recognition</u> | C2 |
| Qualifications Wales | <u>Standard Conditions of Recognition</u> | C2.3 |
| SQA Accreditation | <u>Regulatory Principles (2021)</u> | 5 |

10. Review date

- 10.1** This policy will be reviewed in May 2024.