

General Quality Assurance Policy

1. Introduction

This document outlines Gatehouse Awards' (GA) approach to quality assurance and the procedures adopted to ensure that the design, development, delivery and award of qualifications is valid, reliable, and consistent across time. GA strives to achieve these outcomes in a manner that is practical and cost-effective, at the same time ensuring that quality is not compromised at any of the operational stages.

2. GA Quality Assurance Principles

GA have adopted the following principles underpinning the quality assurance system:

- Accessibility – all GA qualifications should be accessible to as wide a range of candidates as possible who have the potential to achieve them.
- Validity – all GA qualifications have a clearly specified purpose and the assessments are designed to measure exactly the outcomes that the qualification purports to achieve and nothing else.
- Reliability – all GA qualifications are reliable – the stakeholders, including centres, learners, employers, third party organisations can place trust in the qualifications awarded to candidates to reliably reflect their level of achievement.
- Comparability – all GA qualifications are comparable to those offered by other established Awarding Organisations and are designed, delivered and assessed to national standards.
- Manageability – all GA qualifications can be delivered effectively without placing undue burden, financial or otherwise, on approved centres.
- Fairness – all GA qualifications are free from bias which could either advantage or disadvantage particular groups of candidates.
- Continuous Improvement – GA strives to make continued improvements to all aspects of its services, including ensuring that the qualifications offered meet the current market requirements and Candidates' and other stakeholders' needs.
- Responsibility – GA expects its members of staff, as well as all approved centres, to share the responsibility for elements of the quality assurance programme.

3. Quality Assurance Components

In adherence to the above principles, GA has designed and implemented quality assurance arrangements which consists of the following components:

Centre Approval – GA operates a Centre Approval Procedure to ensure that only centres who meet the requirements in four main areas of operation: management and administrative systems,

physical and staff resources, delivery and assessment and quality assurance gain approved centre status. GA also operates an annual centre re-approval procedure in order to ensure that approved centres continue to meet the high quality standards and have effective quality management systems and processes in order to underpin delivery of GA qualifications.

Qualification Approval – GA operates a Qualification Approval Procedure to ensure that the centres have the necessary physical and staff resources in order to deliver a particular qualification.

Qualification Development – GA operates a Design of Qualifications and Assessments Procedure in order ensure that GA designs, develops and keeps under review all of its qualifications and units to ensure that they meet the Conditions of Recognition, in particular those of being valid, reliable and fit for purpose.

Moderation and Standardisation of Externally Assessed Qualifications – GA operates a Moderation Policy and Procedure in order to ensure that any and all examination results for GA externally assessed qualifications are valid and reliable and to determine that the assessment remains fit for purpose, as well as to ensure that the criteria upon which any and all examination results are predicated are applied consistently for all Candidates, in line with equalities legislation, in order to provide such Candidates and the public with the assurance that the service is provided within a moderated and quality assured framework.

Centre Assessment Standards Scrutiny (CASS) – GA operates a clear strategy with arrangements to check assessment judgements made by a centre (within centre-assessed qualifications). Standards scrutiny in the form of external moderation is undertaken before results are issued wherever possible. Processes are in place to provide a wider system of control, such as the way we decide which centres can mark assessments on our behalf, how we monitor these, how we decide whether to scale our controls up or down, and what action we may take if we discover an issue with centre assessments.

Internal Quality Assurance – GA recognises the importance of establishing and maintaining standardisation of assessment requirements across subjects and levels within a centre. Internal Quality Assurance processes in approved centres must cover assessment decisions made by all assessors, ensure that those decisions meet the criteria as stated in the specification, are consistent across the assessors and different groups of candidates and that effective feedback is provided to all assessors. Internal moderation of assessment decisions is a key requirement in all centre-assessed qualification delivery.

External Quality Assurance – GA operates the External Quality Assurance process to assess approved centres' compliance with issued guidelines and regulations. GA appoints External Quality Assurers and External Moderators, who are occupationally and professionally competent to carry out standards scrutiny and ensure accurate and consistent standards of assessments are maintained across all approved centres and over time. External quality assurance activities are designed to ensure that approved centres:

- have appropriate levels of staff and physical resources to support the delivery of the qualification
- use appropriate assessment methods and make appropriate assessment decisions
- effectively operate appropriate internal quality assurance and internal moderation arrangements
- use appropriate and effective management and administration processes to support the delivery and the assessment of qualifications.

External quality assurance activities provide approved centres with feedback including examples of good practice, areas for development, and, if applicable, action points.

Monitoring and Support for Approved Centres – GA undertakes regular monitoring activities of its approved centres according to a schedule based upon centre risk rating. Centres will be subject to regular visits and observations of assessment, and scrutiny of the centre’s wider operations to ensure they remain fit for purpose. Monitoring and support visits offer support in further developments and improvements to such systems. GA will also conduct announced and unannounced Examination Observations at centres who conduct controlled examinations. As part of the support, GA offers its approved centres a range of webinar support and additional advisory visits, which are available upon request.

Monitoring of Malpractice and Maladministration – GA adopts robust procedures for preventing, investigating and dealing with malpractice and maladministration relating to the development, delivery and award of its qualifications, in compliance with Ofqual’s Conditions of Recognition. All GA staff, as well as approved centres, are required to report to GA any instances of suspected malpractice that may occur during the examination, assessment and awarding process.

Conflict of Interest – GA operates a Conflict of Interest Policy and Procedure which is followed by the staff, management, directors, contractors and other third parties engaged by GA in order to ensure that, wherever possible, Conflicts of Interests are avoided or, where they cannot be avoided, are identified and managed effectively. GA also supports approved centres in identification, monitoring and management of any risks associated with Conflicts of Interest in respect of the delivery and award of Regulated qualifications. This is covered at initial approval, annual re-approval, centre visits and routine communications with centres.

Training and Continuous Professional Development – GA ensures that all members of staff are qualified and competent to perform their roles effectively, and that they are committed to continuous professional development. Job descriptions and person specifications are available for each role, and members of staff are appointed in strict adherence to the latter. Each new member of staff undergoes initial training necessary to effectively perform their role, and their performance is regularly reviewed during appraisals. A Continuous Professional Development Log is maintained by each member of staff whose role requires occupational competence. GA expects similar commitment from its approved centres and will undertake checks of the above during EQA visits and External Moderation activities.

Monitoring and Improving the Quality Assurance Programme – An overview of the monitoring conducted as part of, and the effectiveness of the Quality Assurance arrangements is provided to the Governing Body during quarterly meetings, and with members of the Quality Panel, where applicable. GA seeks to improve and strengthen its Quality Assurance arrangements and the procedures implemented to allow effective and compliant operations. The processes and procedures inherent to the Quality Assurance arrangements are reviewed at least annually, and more frequently if need arises. It is GA's policy to acknowledge and, if appropriate, respond to comments and compliments from all stakeholders in a timely manner, as well as to resolve any complaints as quickly as possible. GA carefully considers all types of feedback received, and endeavours to learn from it so that service can be continually improved.

4. Policy Review

This Policy will be reviewed at least every 24 months. Additional updates will be made as and when required.

Document Specification:	
Purpose:	To outline the general quality assurance arrangements GA has in place to ensure that the assessment of GA qualifications is valid and reliable, and that the application of standards is consistent over time for all centres, candidates and qualifications.
Accountability:	GA Governing Body
Responsibility:	Director
Version:	3
Effective from:	March 2022
Indicative review date:	March 2024
Links to Ofqual GCR	A4, A7, A8, B3, B7, C2, D – all, H – all, I1
Other relevant documents:	Centre Handbook CASS and General Moderation Policy Qualification-Specific Moderation Policy and Procedure(s), e.g. IESOL Moderation Policy Risk Policy Documents referred to in Section 3 of this policy