VQA Endorsed Learning



Endorsed Course Provision

Full Guidance
Version 5

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Version history

The following table provides a summary of the changes that have been made to the document since the publication of the previous version.

Version number	Summary of changes
Version 1	New document
Version 2	Changes made to wording in PDLC assessment criteria. Course application examples moved into individual course guidance
Version 3	Removal of reference to Recreational Learning Course
Version 4	Changes made to fees and pricing
Version 5	Adding Recreational Learning Course

Introduction

VQA is proud to unveil its new approach to endorsed courses. Designed to provide rigour, quality and flexibility, our revamped offering is made up of three distinct course types that help centres deliver specialist learning, workplace development, and the opportunity for learners to explore new hobbies.

This guidance will walk you through the details of our new provision, detailing the difference between course types, what you need to do to apply for approval and rules for titling and advertising your courses.

Course options

VQA's endorsed offering includes three distinct course types that cater for different learning requirements. The types are:

Certified Learning Course (CLC):

- This course type provides formal recognition of specialised training programmes.
- It includes structured units with learning outcomes and assessment criteria.
- Learners' knowledge and skills are formally measured through robust assessment activities.

Professional Development Learning Course (PDLC):

- This type is focused on continuous professional development and employee growth.
- It supports the workforce to remain up to date with current knowledge and practices.
- It does not include unitised assessment.

Recreational Learning Course (RLC):

- This type is focused on non-professional interests for personal enrichment.
- It is designed to support learners to explore a new pastime, hobby, or craft.
- Learners' knowledge and skills are formally measured through informal formative assessment.

Certified Learning Course (CLC)

CLCs ensure your course aligns with high quality standards focusing on the integrity, relevance, and effectiveness of the content. They are carefully reviewed to ensure they deliver valuable, industry-relevant learning experiences and are structured as follows:

Learning outcomes	At least 3 learning outcomes per unit. At least 3 assessment criteria per learning outcome.
Units	At least 2 units.
Assessment	A mix of formative/summative assessment as well as holistic assessment.

Hours/duration of course	Minimum of 21 hours, and no more than 2 years to complete.
Target audience	National, international.
Method of delivery	Online/in-class/blended.

Assessment, levels, and command verbs

When creating the content for a CLC, there are key assessment considerations related to the course's level and the associated command verbs. This table provides examples. **Please note that we can only endorse courses up to Level 5.**

Level	Description	Equivalent to	Suggested command verbs
1	Basic knowledge and skills.	GCSE grades 1 – 3.	Define, outline, show, locate, give examples.
2	More advanced knowledge and skills than level 1.	GCSE grades 4 – 9.	Define, explain, identify, plan, list, discuss.
3	Advanced level of knowledge and skills.	A levels, T levels, BTECs.	Explain, compare, differentiate, discuss, evaluate, judge, plan, summarise .
4	Specialised learning and a broader range of skills.	Higher National Certificate Certificate of Higher Education, the first year of an undergraduate degree.	Critically analyse, critically evaluate, discuss, demonstrate, evaluate, implement, justify.
5	Deeper knowledge and skills.	Higher National Diploma Diploma of Higher Education, the second year of an undergraduate degree.	Adapt, analyse, collaborate, compare and contrast, distinguish, establish, monitor, research.

As part of the review and approval process, centres must confirm the assessment methods they will use as part of their courses. Below are the types we would expect for high-quality delivery and effective assessment of learners.

- Presentations.
- Discussions.
- Essays/written work.
- Portfolio of evidence.
- Group and pair work.
- Observations.

Sample assessment materials

Centres will need to provide sample assessments for one unit upon submission and must ensure the assessments contain:

- aims and objectives of the particular unit

- assessment methods which will be used to meet the outcomes
- teacher/tutor's role in delivering the assessment
- grading scale (where relevant)
- qualifications and experience of staff who are delivering the course.

Titling conventions

Each of our endorsed courses must follow strict titling guidelines. These have been developed to ensure absolute transparency for learners and that centres and training providers advertise their courses appropriately. Titling should not insinuate that endorsed courses are VQA qualifications, regulated or included on the Ofqual Register of Regulated Qualifications. Please refer to the examples given below of the recommended format for titling conventions.

- Level 3 Certified Learning Course for Emotional Management for Children and Carers in Foster Care
- Level 2 Certified Learning Course in the Principles of Luxury Spa Hospitality and Accommodation Management
- Level 1 Certified Learning Course in Introducing Structured Exercise to Care Home Residents (20 hours)

The order in which the course title is structured should follow this convention:

[Level 1-5] Certified Learning Course in [clear and concise title] **[optional: duration of the course in hours]**

For further information on how to create an excellent CLC, and examples of what a good CLC might look like, please email endorsed.courses@vqa.org for individual course/product guidance.

Professional Development Learning Course (PDLC)

Our CPD-style course is the ideal product for learning in the workplace. Example subjects may include, but are not limited to:

- company-specific training gaps which are not covered in regulated provision
- team building
- principles of management and team leading – on the condition that it does not overlap with regulated provision
- company-specific technology platforms, apps, and computer systems
- policy and process building
- customer and client relationship building
- product and service knowledge
- recruitment specific to industry.

The following criteria must be followed when submitting a PDLC application:

Learning outcomes	At least 3 learning outcomes per unit.
Units	Minimum of one unit.
Assessment	Summative assessment (to demonstrate knowledge and skills)
Hours/duration of course	No maximum hours, but should be completed within 1 year.
Target audience	Workplace learning/training.
Method of delivery	Workplace/blended.

Assessment, levels, and command verbs

For a PDLC, the assessment approach and levels work differently. Please refer to the table below for the recommended command verbs and corresponding levels:

Level	Description	Preferred Command Verbs
Foundation	Introduction to the knowledge and skills needed to understand basic concepts of sales, marketing, advertising, teamwork, company practices, use of software and technology in its most fundamental form. The underpinning ethics, principles, and practices of the industry. Undertaken with supervision.	Define, explain, identify, plan, list, discuss, demonstrate, show, reflect.
Proficient	For those wishing to progress within the company and add to their skillset. A deeper understanding of **company-specific** technology, relationships, and client building, as well as management of people, services, and products.	Explain, collate, compare, consider, diagnose, differentiate, discuss, evaluate, interpret, judge, plan.
Advanced	Fluency in **company-specific** practices, technology, and software. A full and comprehensive	Critically analyse, critically evaluate, consider, discuss,

	understanding of client and customer relationship building, as well as scope to develop products and build on portfolio. Management and team-leading skills are mastered at this level.	demonstrate, evaluate, implement, justify.

As part of the review and approval process, centres must confirm the assessment methods they will use as part of the course. Below are the types we would expect for effective assessment of learners in a work environment.

- Presentations.
- Discussions.
- Essays/written work.
- Portfolio of evidence.
- Group and pair work.
- Observations.

Sample assessment materials

Centres will need to provide sample assessments for one unit upon submission and must ensure the assessments contain:

- all the aims and objectives of the particular unit
- the assessment methods which will be used to meet the outcomes
- the teacher/tutor's role in delivering the assessment
- the qualifications and experience of staff who are delivering the course.

Titling convention

All PDLCs must adhere to our titling convention guidance outlined below. This is to ensure the levelling is correct and appropriate for a CPD course to be used in a work or community context.

- Foundation Professional Development Learning Course in Supporting Retail Floor Staff.
- Proficient Professional Development Learning Course in Delivering IT Systems Induction to Clients and Colleagues (15 hours).
- Advanced Professional Development Learning Course in Leading Account Presentations for New Clients.

[Level-*Foundation/Proficient/Advanced*] Professional Development Learning Course [in/for specific work or community-based skills and knowledge gap] **[optional: hours spent on course]**

Additionally, you may remove "foundation/proficient/advanced" should it not be relevant. However, no other levels can be used in its place:

- Professional Development Learning Course in IT Skills for Front of House Staff (10 hours)

For further information on how to create an excellent PDLC, and examples of what a good PDLC might look like, please email endorsed.courses@VQA.org for individual course/product guidance.

Recreational Learning Course (RLC)

An RLC provides learners and centres with a great opportunity to improve their level of creativity, enhance hobby skills and support their wellbeing while having fun during the process.

Subjects may include:

- arts and crafts
- sports and fitness
- gardening and interior design
- media and filmmaking
- music
- DIY
- Cookery
- conversational foreign language.

See below the expectations for the submission of an RLC application.

Learning outcomes	At least 3 learning outcomes per unit. At least 3 assessment criteria per learning outcome.
Units	1-5 units.
Assessment	Creation of something – informal formative assessment.
Hours/duration of course	Maximum of 150 hours. No more than 1 year to complete.
Target audience	Those wishing to pursue and improve a hobby or skill.
Method of delivery	Online/in-class/blended.

Assessment, levels, and command verbs

The RLC should have a clearly tiered approach to levels. This will help learners who wish to improve their skills to progress over time. We recommend the three stages of levelling listed in the table and their associated command verbs.

Level	Description	Preferred Command Verbs
Beginner	Basic knowledge and skills introduction, with an overview of the subject and simple tasks carried out under direct supervision.	Comment, define, explain, identify, plan, list, discuss, differentiate, demonstrate.
Intermediate	Deeper understanding of key concepts and the ability to apply them in greater depth.	Explain, collate, compare, consider, diagnose, differentiate, discuss, evaluate, interpret, judge, plan.
Advanced	Building on existing high-level knowledge, deepening understanding, and enhancing the practical application of ideas.	Critically analyse, consider, discuss, demonstrate, evaluate, implement, justify, review and revise.

We expect centres to confirm the assessment methods they will use as part of the course. Below are the types we would expect for effective assessment of learners in a recreational environment.

- Presentations.
- Discussions.
- Essays/written work.
- Portfolio of evidence.
- Group and pair work.
- Observations.

Sample assessment materials

Centres will need to provide sample assessments for one unit upon submission and must ensure the assessments contain:

- all the aims and objectives of the particular unit
- the assessment methods which will be used to meet the outcomes
- the qualifications and experience of staff who are delivering the course.

Titling convention

RLCs follow a simple beginner, intermediate, and advanced levelling system. We recommend the following titling conventions:

- Beginners' Recreational Learning Course in Crochet, Knitting, and Reading Patterns.
- Intermediate Recreational Learning Course for Improving Landscape Painting Skills with Oil, Pastel and Gouache.
- Advanced Recreational Learning Course in Journaling Your Life Story for Publication.

[Level - Beginners/Intermediate/Advanced] Recreational Learning Course [in/for hobbies and recreational knowledge and/or skills development] [optional: hours spent on course]

For further information on how to create an excellent RLC, and examples of what a good RLC might look like, please email endorsed.courses@vqa.org for individual course/product guidance.

Application process

Using the online forms

There are three distinct forms to complete, depending on which type of endorsed course is best suited to your needs. Sometimes it can be difficult to determine the best fit for your endorsed course. In this instance, we encourage you to contact our Qualifications Team and they can advise you.

You must be a VQA-recognised centre before you apply. Your centre name and number will be required as part of the endorsed course submission process.

You will also need to provide attachments for:

- the course teaching content

Subject Sector Areas (SSAs)

A Subject Sector Area is the classification system used to categorise qualifications and courses into broad subject areas. They help support the scope and context of regulated qualifications to ensure they meet industry standards and educational requirements.

Although it is important to reiterate that VQA's endorsed provision is not regulated, we categorise endorsed courses in accordance with the SSA categories to ensure clarity and to support the quality assurance processes of the courses we endorse.

Please follow the link below, as it will be an important part of your submission.

Non-statutory guidance on assigning qualifications to Sector Subject Areas (SSAs) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Exempt areas

VQA reserves the right to withhold the approval of an endorsed course in certain circumstances. These circumstances include, but are not limited to:

- courses in regulated professions (as defined in the Professional Qualifications Act and where a full list of regulated professions are referenced)
- instances where course purpose or content overlaps or competes with regulated qualifications
- courses in areas that require **formal accreditation, regulation, or licensing** by industry-specific bodies, such as healthcare, education, legal, and social care. These qualifications typically need to meet stricter standards, often involving professional practice, clinical training, and legal or regulatory compliance

- courses that involve the teaching and development of techniques that result in semi-permanent or permanent changes to an individual's appearance. This includes, but is not limited to:
  - tattooing and microblading
  - cosmetic and aesthetic procedures
  - any form of body modification (such as piercing or implants).

This list is not exhaustive, and we reserve the right to decline approval of course subject areas that are deemed to present an unacceptable risk.

Review process

Approval criteria

When the Qualifications Team receives your application form, we will follow a strict process to ensure all the necessary information has been included. As part of this process, we will ensure that:

- all requested documents are present and completed in full
- the correct SSA has been selected
- the course objectives are clear and stated in full
- the course does not overlap or conflict with a regulated qualification
- the centre fully understands the assessment expectations of their chosen course type
- the titling meets VQA guidelines
- the centre has provided details of what will be taught
- the individual delivering the course is appropriately qualified.

Why might a submission fail?

We are keen to support centres to ensure that their endorsed course application is successful and meets our expectations. However, as outlined in this document, there are circumstances where a course may not be eligible for approval and these reasons may include the below.

- Subject matter is deemed to be inappropriate.
- Inappropriate or insufficient knowledge of effective course delivery.
- Assessment methods do not meet the assessment criteria.
- Lack of detail provided in the application form.
- Incorrect titling.
- Course level is considered to be either too high or too low.
- Centre refusal to make any mandatory changes to their course submission as requested by the Qualifications Team.

If you need further assistance in creating the content for your new endorsed provision, please contact our Qualifications Team.

Language

All endorsed courses must be written and assessed in English. VQA uses plain English and strives to make the language in our qualifications as accessible as possible. When developing your endorsed course content, keep your wording concise and include relevant industry terminology.

Diversity and inclusion

The content of endorsed courses must be accessible, inclusive, and non-discriminatory. During development, centres must consider the nine protected

characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation) and ensure that no barriers to achievement are included in any learning outcomes or assessment criteria.

Minimising risk in assessment

Any risk that might impact the assessment of the course and associated decision-making processes must be minimised. Risks that are not prevented can impact both the quality of assessment decisions and learner work, resulting in the course becoming invalid.

Examples of the situations that may pose a risk to assessment include the below.

- The level of a course being too low or high for the learners.
- Unqualified or inexperienced staff responsible for assessment decisions.
- A lack of robust testing for plagiarism.
- Staff not taking learners' additional needs into account during teaching or assessment.
- An unsuitable environment provided for assessment.
- Incorrect assessment methods or types utilised.
- Unclear learning outcomes or assessment criteria that can be misinterpreted.
- Inappropriate or lack of relevant teaching resources.
- Ineffective internal quality assurance processes.
- Poor quality or inadequate feedback.

Course naming rules

When considering titles for your new course, please consider the below do's and don'ts.

Do	Don't
Make it clear what the course is about.	Use "VQA" in the title.
Format it in line with the examples given.	Use branded names unless explicit permission has been given.
Be creative, you can suggest multiple titles if you can't decide.	Use "RQF", as it relates to regulated qualifications.
Ask for support from our expert Qualifications Team if needed.	Copy titles from regulated qualifications.

Fees

We have a highly competitive fee structure for endorsed centres. This includes a thorough review and feedback process, ongoing support, quality reviews and bespoke certification:

- Introducing an annual endorsed fee of £1,500 (includes two endorsed course applications within the first 12 months from centre approval date
- Learner registration and certification fee £10

Changes to fees for endorsed applications to £500-£700.

Timescales

See below the expected timelines for review for each type of endorsed course application from the initial date of submission:

CLC Journey

1. Submission (acknowledgement email sent within three working days)
2. First review (within five working days)
3. Second review (within 14 working days)

3a. Amendments needing to be actioned by centre (5-7 working days)

4. Approved
5. Approved (reviewed once a year)

5a. Amendments needing to be actioned by centre (five working days)

6. Not Approved
7. Not Approved (under appeal)
8. Not Approved (appeal rejected)

PDLC Journey

1. Submission (acknowledgement email sent within three working days)
2. First review (within five working days)
3. Second review (within 10 working days)

3a. Amendments needing to be actioned by centre (5-7 working days)

4. Approved
5. Approved (reviewed every two years)

5a. Amendments needing to be actioned by centre (five working days)

6. Not Approved
7. Not Approved (under appeal)
8. Not Approved (appeal rejected)

RLC Journey

1. Submitted (acknowledgement email sent within three working days)
2. Review (within seven working days)
3. Approved
4. Amendments needing to be actioned by centre (5 working days)
5. Approved (reviewed every two years)
6. Amendments needing to be actioned by centre (5 working days)
7. Not Approved
8. Not Approved (under appeal)
9. Not Approved (appeal rejected)

The timelines for appeals will be on a case-by-case basis. Please discuss the matter with your appointed qualification developer.

Approval

Documentation

When your endorsed course application has been approved, you will be sent an official letter via email stating your course name, reference number, and the approval date as confirmation of our endorsement of your new course.

In the event of a course not being approved, we will send you an email providing reasoning.

We want to encourage centres to design new courses to support learner needs and we will guide you through the endorsed course application process to gain approval. However, as an Awarding Organisation, we must adhere to strict criteria to ensure we only endorse those courses that are of the highest quality and fit for purpose.

We can also advise centres of our existing regulated provision to ensure that you opt for the qualification or course that best suits your needs.

Certification form

In addition to the approval letter, we will send you a spreadsheet that will contain the course name, course number, and your centre name and number. When applying for learner certification, you will need to complete and submit this document to our Operations Teams. The team will not be able to accept any other template or spreadsheet.

Advertising rules

As an Awarding Organisation regulated by Ofqual, VQA and its registered centres are subject to the Conditions of Recognition defined by Ofqual. Two of these conditions (B5.1 and B5.2) mandate that VQA and its centres must take steps to ensure that non-regulated qualifications, such as endorsed courses, are not advertised or promoted to learners as regulated qualifications. To guarantee these conditions are met, we have provided the following requirements that all centres must follow when marketing their endorsed courses:

- No advertisement of the course as VQA endorsed provision must take place until the approval process has been completed and confirmed. This includes any reference to VQA or use of our logos.
- Full titles, agreed as part of the endorsed course application process, must be used.
    - "VQA" **must not** feature in the advertised title of the qualification.
    - All references to VQA must be specified concerning our endorsement of the course.
- Fees **must** be transparent and available to learners ahead of registration.

- No marketing should mislead a learner into believing they will be gaining a regulated qualification
    - All marketing **must** clearly feature the phrase “endorsed course” and outline which type of endorsed course it is
    - All marketing **must not** refer to the course as “regulated” or as being “nationally recognised”
    - All marketing **must not** compare an endorsed course to any regulated qualification or imply in any way that they are equivalent
    - All marketing **must not** state or imply that an endorsed course meets industry standards for employment.
- Upon removal of endorsed course approval, all advertisements of the course referencing VQA must halt with immediate effect.

For more information about VQA’s advertising guidelines, please read our Endorsed Course Advertising FAQ.

Approved text for websites and advertising

To help you with abiding by our requirements, we have prepared the following statements that centres may use to advertise the qualification. The wording of these statements is not mandatory, but any statements a centre writes themselves must still follow the advertising rules as stated above.

Topic	Suggested wording
What endorsement is	An endorsed course is a skills and/or knowledge-based programme developed by [your centre’s name] and given formal recognition by Training Qualifications UK, a national awarding body. Endorsed courses are not regulated qualifications and are not recognised by Ofqual.
The endorsement process	Our endorsed course has been developed to meet the needs of learners. The content has been reviewed by VQA to ensure quality and accuracy. All intellectual property rights are retained by [your centre’s name]. VQA disclaims any legal responsibility or liability for any errors, omissions, or outcomes related to this course.

Maintenance and monitoring

What's included in the fees

The fees for our endorsed courses can be seen below.

- Full endorsement after approval – continuing for as long as the annual fee is paid.
- A full annual review for CLCs, which includes scrutiny of:
    - examples of learner work
    - websites and social media for advertising monitoring
    - samples of assessment which the learners are expected to undertake
    - curriculum plans or lesson plans
    - qualifications/experience of relevant staff
- A two-year review of the PDLC which includes scrutiny of:
    - examples of learner work
    - any websites and social media for advertising monitoring
    - qualifications/experience of relevant staff
- Ongoing support from our Qualifications Team
- The chance to submit up to two courses for approval within the first 12 months from centre approval date on condition of fees being paid.
    - In the event of a submission not being approved but needing amendments, a charge will not be made
    - In the event of a submission failing, centre's will be charged the appropriate fee if outside of their allocated two initial course submissions.

Centres will have 10 working days to submit all documentation requested or may risk having endorsement removed.

Storing your course information

When you submit an application, we collect and process personal data necessary for that purpose. This data will be used exclusively for the purpose of processing your application and providing you with relevant services.

We retain copies of approval letters and certification spreadsheet templates in line with our data retention policies, which comply with GDPR guidelines. Personal data will not be kept longer than necessary and will be securely deleted once it's no longer needed.

Certification

All certificates for our endorsed provision are handled by our Operations Team. You will need to liaise with the Operations Team when claiming certificates and you must use the appropriate documentation as outlined in a previous section.

Ending endorsement

Establishing long-lasting relationships with our centres is a key part of what makes VQA the highly-regarded awarding organisation it is.

However, should you wish to end your endorsed provision with us, please send us an email confirming your decision and ensure that you include your VQA Account Manager in your email.

Should you no longer retain your VQA recognised centre status, all endorsement will terminate in-line with the removal of your centre status.

Appendix 1 – additional writing guidance

Units

Ofqual defines a unit as a "coherent set of learning outcomes and assessment criteria with a title, credit value, and level". Each unit specifies what learners need to know and understand or be able to do, and the standards of performance that will be assessed.

Learning outcomes and assessment criteria

Learning outcomes are broad statements describing what a learner is expected to know, understand, or be able to do as a result of the learning process. These should clearly articulate the expected achievements and not the process or activities involved in learning.

Each unit must include at least one learning outcome and one corresponding assessment criterion; there is no limit to the number of learning outcomes you can include in each unit.

The learning outcome should always begin with 'the learner will' and then be followed by one of the following:

- Know – for a knowledge-based outcome
- Understand – for a knowledge-based outcome with a more complex level of learning
- Be able to – for a practical based outcome.

Please use VQA's current regulated portfolio as guidance.

An assessment criterion is a specific standard associated with a learning outcome that specifies how a learner's achievement will be judged. These criteria are essential for determining the learner's performance and must be observable and measurable. They provide clear indicators of the standard expected when the learner is assessed to ensure consistency and fairness.

TQT - total qualification time

Total qualification time is the estimated number of hours a learner is expected to spend completing all learning outcomes in the course.

When creating your content, it is important to consider the number of hours you would expect a learner to spend on each learning outcome. You should think about whether learners have any prior knowledge of the topic, or if they are being introduced to new and complex topics.

GLH – guided learning hours

The number of hours where a Learner is being taught, instructed by, or participating in education or training under the Immediate Guidance or Supervision of – a lecturer, supervisor, tutor etc. This includes the activity of being assessed if the assessment takes place under the Immediate Guidance or Supervision of a lecturer, supervisor, tutor etc.

'Additional guidance' in units

There may be some instances, where a centre may need additional guidance outside of learning outcomes and assessment criteria. This could include, but is not limited to:

- relevant website links to support assessment and learners in meeting the criteria
- books and further reading on the subject
- further places of support
- definitions of acronyms or a glossary to define certain terminology
- specific details of an outcome, for example:
    - expanding on a list of different policy types
    - outlining the specifics of an observation or discussion
        - e.g. must be observed with no less than three other learners
    - detailing written assessment guidelines.

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