



# Centre Operations Manual

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<b>Contents</b>	
INTRODUCTION .....	4
ABBE values, vision and mission .....	4
Background to ABBE .....	4
Last registration and certification dates .....	4
Role of the regulatory authorities and the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) .....	5
Vocational and Technical qualifications .....	5
CENTRE APPROVAL .....	6
Advisory visits .....	6
Becoming an ABBE approved centre .....	6
Potential conflicts of interest .....	6
Satellite centres .....	6
Evaluation process for ABBE centre approval .....	7
Adding additional ABBE units and qualifications .....	7
Change in centre details .....	8
Use of the ABBE logo .....	8
Promotion of ABBE qualifications .....	8
Centre closure .....	8
Data Protection and Security .....	8
ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES WITHIN APPROVED CENTRES .....	9
ASSESSMENT .....	10
Initial assessment .....	10
Assessment planning .....	10
Assessment of evidence .....	14
Remote assessment of learners .....	15
Feedback to learners .....	15
Record assessment activity and decisions .....	15
Maintain occupational competence .....	16
INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE .....	17
The process of Internal Quality Assurance .....	17
Advise and support the assessment process .....	17
Monitor and quality assure the assessment process .....	18
Manage external quality assurance requirements .....	18
Record internal quality assurance decisions .....	19
Maintain occupational competence .....	19
EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE .....	20
The Process of External Quality Assurance .....	20
Undertaking Face To Face External Quality Assurance Visits .....	22
What is the Process for Remote External Quality Assurance? .....	24
SAMPLE RECORDING DOCUMENTATION .....	26
INITIAL ASSESSMENT TOOL .....	27
ASSESSMENT PLAN .....	29
ASSESSMENT RECORD .....	30
INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURER OBSERVATION OF AN ASSESSOR REPORT .....	32
INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURER PLAN FOR SAMPLING ASSESSORS .....	34
PORTFOLIO SAMPLING BY IQA – FEEDBACK FROM IQA TO ASSESSOR .....	35
MASTER INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURER LEARNER TRACKING FORM .....	37
Sanctions applied for non-compliance with ABBE Compliance Criteria .....	38
Direct Claims Status (DCS) .....	38
LEARNER REGISTRATION .....	40
Learner registration process .....	40
Transferring or withdrawing learners .....	40
LEARNER CERTIFICATION FOR ABBE QUALIFICATIONS .....	42
Certification of units and qualifications .....	42
Distribution of ABBE certificates .....	42
Replacement of damaged certificates .....	43
Replacement of lost certificates .....	43
Request for replacement certificate where there are errors on the original .....	43
EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES .....	44
REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS AND SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS .....	45
Reasonable adjustments .....	45
RESULTS ENQUIRIES AND APPEALS .....	48

Results enquiries.....	48
Appeals.....	48
MALPRACTICE AND MALADMINISTRATION .....	50
Reporting cases of malpractice or maladministration.....	50
UNITS AND QUALIFICATIONS WHICH INCLUDE EXTERNAL EXAMINATIONS .....	52
ABBE external examinations .....	52
USE OF LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH .....	52
OVERSEAS ACTIVITY .....	53
CUSTOMER SERVICE.....	53
COMPLAINTS .....	53

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to provide details of the operational systems and procedures that support ABBE's qualifications.

All qualifications offered by ABBE follow the same operational systems and procedures, as outlined in this guide.

All of the qualifications offered by ABBE have their own qualification handbook. These are available to ABBE approved centres and can be downloaded from the centre's section of the ABBE website at [www.abbega.co.uk](http://www.abbega.co.uk). The qualification handbooks provide essential information for those involved in delivering ABBE qualifications.

## ABBE values, vision and mission

### **Our Values: - Quality through Standards**

Our aim is to provide a high quality experience by building a strong community of mutual support and trust. We can use our collective talents to build meaningful partnerships to help us all to achieve our goals. ABBE is a recognised Awarding Organisation with strong professional integrity.

**Our Vision** is that every learner is confident, successful and has the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

**Our Mission:** ABBE Educates, inspires and empowers learners

## Background to ABBE

ABBE began in 1997 offering qualifications in the building and construction industry. As an Awarding Organisation, ABBE's role is to develop qualifications which are responsive to customer needs.

We approve colleges and training providers to deliver courses and training, we set assessments and issue certificates to successful learners. Our expertise lies in developing qualifications that are vocational in nature and which complement work based learning and licence to practice 'type' qualifications.

The qualifications that ABBE offer are suitable for preparing to work in the sector, for starting and progressing careers and/or for professional development. We have developed considerable expertise in overseeing high quality assessment for qualifications ranging from level 1 to level 6 covering a variety of disciplines and a range of sectors. ABBE has the flexibility to design assessment methods to suit the needs of all different types of organisations and employers.

We have developed an insight into the needs of all sizes and types of customers, working in partnership to deliver a range of qualifications and apprenticeships to meet the needs of their clients. Along with this we offer a wide range of support for learners, assessors and quality assurers.

ABBE has a nationwide network of centres through which training and assessment(s) can be undertaken.

ABBE is regulated by Ofqual and Qualifications Wales for the delivery of a range of qualifications. Our qualifications are nationally recognised, helping learners to achieve their full potential and ambitions.

The Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) came into being on 1 September 2015.

## Last registration and certification dates

ABBE's qualifications are allocated a 'last registration' and 'last certification' date. The 'last registration' date is the date by which learners must be registered for the qualification; the

'last certification date' is the date by which the learner must have claimed their certificate. Last registration and certification dates are set when a qualification is first developed and must be adhered to by all centres.

In some cases, ABBE will choose to extend the last registration date and last certification date for a qualification. We will advise centres where this is the case. In some cases a qualification may be redeveloped to ensure the content is up to date and introduced as a replacement; occasionally qualifications will be withdrawn without a replacement being available.

Whichever of the above applies, ABBE will keep centres informed of the future of a qualification that is currently being offered.

When qualifications change, arrangements for transfer of learners who wish to move to the new version will be provided by ABBE. This will take the form of a letter which will detail the specific options available to learners in relation to transferring from the existing qualification to the new qualification. These may include details of any exemptions, the qualification currency and the actions that need to be undertaken by centres.

### **Role of the regulatory authorities and the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF)**

The regulatory authorities are responsible for the statutory regulation of nationally recognised qualifications to ensure that they are high quality, fit for purpose, command public confidence and are understood by both those who take them (learners) and those who use them (approved centres, employers, etc.).

### **Vocational and Technical qualifications**

Vocational and Technical qualifications are designed to recognise and develop an individual's skills and competence in a specific job or job role. They focus on the particular, job related skills and knowledge needed in employment and allow the learner to demonstrate that they have the ability to do a particular job to the standard required by employers.

## CENTRE APPROVAL

### Advisory visits

Prior to making an application for centre approval, an organisation may request an advisory visit to help them plan and prepare for the implementation of the qualifications. Advisory visits may be requested and are charged at the standard visit fee rate. For further information, please telephone ABBE on 0121 331 5174 or via email to [abbeenquiries@bcu.ac.uk](mailto:abbeenquiries@bcu.ac.uk)

### Becoming an ABBE approved centre

In order to become an ABBE approved centre, organisations must apply for approval from ABBE. Centres can be private training providers, professional institutions, colleges of further or higher education, private companies or any other organisation which has the infrastructure in place to support the delivery and quality assurance of qualifications.

Organisations wishing to apply for centre approval must complete an **Application for Centre Approval** form which is available on the ABBE website [www.abbeqa.co.uk](http://www.abbeqa.co.uk) or can be requested in hard copy by telephoning ABBE on 0121 331 5174. The application can include as many qualifications as the organisation wishes to apply for at the time.

The organisation must identify all of the personnel they have in place to deliver, assess and quality assure the qualification, including a 'single named point of accountability' within the organisation for the overall quality assurance, management and administration of the ABBE qualifications to be offered by the organisation. This could be the Head of Centre, Centre Manager, Managing Director or any other appropriate person within the organisation who has ultimate accountability.

It should be noted that ABBE will be unable to process centre approval requests for learners until an appropriately experienced/qualified assessment team is in place at the organisation, as specified in the qualification handbook and/or assessment principles.

The organisation must demonstrate that they are able to meet the ABBE Compliance Criteria. All approved centres must provide evidence to show that they can meet these criteria and this evidence must be recorded on the application form.

Completed application forms including copies of the requested supporting information and the relevant fee should be returned to ABBE, Birmingham City University, Franchise Street, Perry Barr, Birmingham, B42 2SU or via email to [abbeenquiries@bcu.ac.uk](mailto:abbeenquiries@bcu.ac.uk)

The relevant fee must be included with the application. Payment can be made by BACS or by cheque. Cheques should be made payable to ABBE Limited.

### Potential conflicts of interest

As part of the centre approval process, all organisations are required to have in place a conflict of interest policy which is subject to review as part of the quality assurance arrangements in place for monitoring of centres.

A centre must have systems and checks in place to ensure that an assessment or IQA activity is not undertaken by anyone who has a personal interest in the result of the assessment. Any potential or actual conflicts identified by the centre or by a member of ABBE external quality assurance team, must be reported to ABBE.

### Satellite centres

A satellite centre is a centre that is attached to an approved centre, but is located in a different geographical location and has its own permanently located assessment and internal quality assurance team.

Where a centre is intending to use satellite centres, these must be identified on the **Application for Centre Approval** form.

Where an existing ABBE approved centre wants to add a satellite site, the centre will need to complete an **Application for Centre Approval** form.

Note: where a centre wishes to use locations around the country for **training** purposes these would not be classed as satellite sites and their details do not have to be provided to ABBE.

### Evaluation process for ABBE centre approval

Once the application form for centre approval has been received by ABBE, it will be reviewed to ensure that all required supporting documentation has been submitted. ABBE will then allocate an evaluator to undertake an evaluation visit to the organisation. The evaluator will contact the organisation to arrange the timing for the evaluation visit. The evaluator will have been supplied with the supporting documentation supplied by the organisation.

At the evaluation visit, the evaluator will need to confirm the evidence that has been identified on the application form and talk to relevant staff about proposed plans for delivery, assessment and internal quality assurance of the qualification(s).

The evaluator will add their comments to the application form and will make a recommendation to ABBE as to whether the organisation should be approved, or not.

If the recommendation is for approval, an **ABBE Centre Agreement** will be sent. This document will need to be signed and returned to ABBE. On receipt, a letter will be sent confirming centre approval.

Where an organisation cannot be approved as an ABBE centre, ABBE will provide information to identify what must be done by the organisation before they can be reconsidered for approval.

### Adding additional ABBE units and qualifications

Where an ABBE approved centre wishes to add additional ABBE qualifications to its existing provision, it must complete an **Application for Additional Qualification Approval** form. This is available on the ABBE website [www.abbega.co.uk](http://www.abbega.co.uk) or in hard copy by telephoning ABBE on 0121 331 5174. The centre can apply for as many qualifications as they wish when completing this form.

To gain approval for additional qualifications the centre must identify the personnel they will use to deliver, assess and quality assure these and also confirm that quality assurance procedures to support this programme fit into the existing quality assurance procedures in place in the centre.

Completed application forms including the required supporting information and the relevant fee should be returned to ABBE, Birmingham City University, Franchise Street, Perry Barr, Birmingham, B42 2SU or via email to [abbeenquiries@bcu.ac.uk](mailto:abbeenquiries@bcu.ac.uk)

The relevant fee must be included with the application. Payment can be made by BACS or by cheque. Cheques should be made payable to ABBE Limited.

Where a centre is adding qualifications to their existing provision, it may not be necessary for ABBE to carry out an evaluation visit. On receipt of an **Application for Additional Qualification Approval** form, ABBE will advise the centre whether a desktop evaluation can be carried out rather than a visit to the centre.

## Change in centre details

Should an ABBE approved centre's details change, for example, change of address, change in assessment team, then the centre must inform ABBE in writing as soon as possible.

## Use of the ABBE logo

The ABBE logo is provided to ABBE approved centres and individuals who have achieved an ABBE qualification. Further details on the use of the logo can be found in the document ***Visual Identity Guide for ABBE Logo***, which is supplied to centres on request.

## Promotion of ABBE qualifications

ABBE approved centres must ensure that any materials or information that they develop does not advertise or promote ABBE qualifications in a way that may be misleading. This includes (but is not confined to) advertising qualifications as being available before this has been confirmed by ABBE.

## Centre closure

When an organisation applies to become an ABBE approved centre, part of the Centre Agreement requires them to confirm that they have a procedure in place to support learners in the event that they have to withdraw from their role of delivering qualifications.

Should a centre cease trading, or if it can no longer offer ABBE qualifications, it must advise ABBE in writing as soon as possible. This confirmation must include details of:

- the proposed date of closure
- the arrangements that will be made for outstanding learner assessment and certification
- the arrangements that will be made for the assessment and quality assurance records to be passed on or securely stored

Centres are reminded that in this situation they are responsible for protecting the interests of all learners who may still be progressing through their qualification.

## Data Protection and Security

ABBE is compliant with the Data Protection Act and handles all data in accordance with the required procedures of the Act.

Each centre approved by ABBE to deliver our qualifications are required to maintain all learner records and details of achievement in an accurate, timely and secure manner, in line with the requirements of the Awarding Organisation and with Data Protection Legislation, and make these records available for external quality assurance and auditing purposes, as required.

The data collected from learners will only be used for the purpose for which it has been collected and personal learner information will not be disclosed to any unauthorised person or body. Personal data will be processed in accordance with the centre's registration under the Data Protection Act and the ***ABBE Centre Agreement***.

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES WITHIN APPROVED CENTRES**

### **Learner**

The learner is required to demonstrate the ability to carry out the role outlined within the qualification specification. This includes demonstrating performance of tasks and activities to the required standard and showing the required level of knowledge and understanding.

### **Assessor**

The assessor is appointed by the approved centre. They review the evidence presented by the learner and make a judgement as to whether or not this shows the learner can meet the standards contained within the qualification specification.

The judgement is recorded by the assessor with a rationale showing how they made this judgement and including a summary of the feedback that was provided to the learner about this assessment activity.

In order to be approved as an assessor, the individual must provide evidence to show that they meet the requirements set out in the Assessment Principles.

Further details of the assessment process can be found in the **ASSESSMENT** section.

### **Internal quality assurer**

The internal quality assurer is appointed by the approved centre and oversees the work of an assessor team. They ensure that the assessors are making appropriate and consistent judgements when carrying out the assessment of learners; they do this by running standardisation activities with their assessors; observing the assessors carrying out assessment activities and sampling the assessment decisions made on learner evidence.

In order to be approved as an internal quality assurer, the individual must provide evidence to show that they meet the requirements set out in the Assessment Principles.

Further details of the internal quality assurance process can be found in the **INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE** section.

### **External quality assurer**

The external quality assurer is appointed by ABBE to oversee the internal quality assurance process being undertaken within the approved centre. The external quality assurer will undertake two external quality assurance activities each academic year (1 August – 31 July) to review the systems and procedures that are in place; interview assessors, internal quality assurers and learners; sample assessment and internal quality assurance decisions and records; and confirm the certification of full qualifications or individual units.

The centre must provide access to premises, staff, learners, data, records, meetings and documents as requested by the external quality assurer.

Further details of the external quality assurance process can be found in the **EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE** section.

### **Head of Centre/Centre Co-ordinator/Managing Director**

Depending upon the size of the organisation, this role could be undertaken by a Head of Centre, Centre Manager, Managing Director or any other appropriate person within the organisation who has ultimate accountability.

This individual is the 'single named point of accountability' within the centre for quality assurance of the ABBE qualification(s). They will be the principal point of communication with the Awarding Organisation for qualifications and will ensure that the assessment and internal quality assurance personnel are following the approved centre's policies and procedures at all times.

This individual must be identified at the point that an organisation applies for approval.

This is the individual who must sign the **ABBE Centre Agreement** and **Application for Additional Qualification Approval** forms.

## ASSESSMENT

Assessors work with learners to ensure that valid and reliable evidence is produced by each learner.

Assessors are required to:

- undertake initial assessment
- undertake assessment planning
- undertake assessment of evidence
- feedback to learners
- record assessment activity and decisions
- maintain occupational competence

### Initial assessment

When a learner approaches an approved centre to undertake an ABBE qualification, the centre should carry out an initial assessment. The purpose of this is to:

- ensure that the learner is choosing the most appropriate units, qualification and level for them
- identify the opportunities available to the learner to develop and demonstrate their competence
- ensure that learners can generate the evidence required for the qualification
- ensure that any particular assessment requirements that the learner may have, can be met

The learner should be encouraged to bring forward examples of learning and experiences gained in previous employment, education or unpaid work to consider whether these can be used as evidence towards this qualification. The currency of this evidence needs to be thoroughly considered by the centre and must not exceed three years.

An example of an initial assessment tool can be found in SAMPLE RECORDING DOCUMENTATION.

### Assessment planning

Once the appropriate qualification has been established for the learner, the assessor and learner should plan how and when the assessment of the qualification will be carried out.

Assessment planning should focus on:

- identifying opportunities for collecting evidence across the qualification from appropriate activities
- ensuring that the evidence collected by the learner is authentic, valid, reliable, current and sufficient
- identifying times and locations where the assessor can carry out observation of the learner carrying out relevant activities
- identifying aspects of the qualification that may not be naturally occurring and explore ways of collecting appropriate evidence
- identifying which aspects of competence must be supported by specific evidence or must be assessed by specified methods (as detailed in the Qualification Handbook).
- identifying any previous achievements that can be used as evidence towards this qualification. Previous achievements fall into the following categories:
  - Recognition of Prior Learning  
Recognition of prior learning (RPL) includes experience gained by learners through work or training activities for which they do not have formal certification.

Each request for RPL must be reviewed on an individual basis by the assessor in the centre. When determining if a claim for RPL is appropriate, assessors must consider the following:

- Currency – does the evidence reflect a learner’s current level of competence? The assessor has to determine that learners are competent now. To show this, evidence must be current. It should be as recent as possible, though this will depend on the nature of the evidence.

The recognition of previous achievements raises particular issues of currency. If, for instance, legislation has changed since achievement, evidence would have to be supported by proof of awareness of present legislation and how it would affect current practice at work.

RPL claims must be considered in line with the need for evidence to be current i.e. within a timeframe of approximately three years; or other criteria as specified with the qualification handbook.

- Validity – is the evidence of prior learning appropriate for the competence being assessed? The evidence learners present must be relevant to the unit they are undertaking and must satisfy the relevant learning outcome and assessment criterion.
- Authenticity – was this evidence produced by the learner? Evidence for RPL must be presented in a way that allows learners’ contributions to be identified, and must relate to their own competence.

The assessor must ensure that evidence is authenticated by means of an endorsement by learners’ line managers or colleagues, or by observing learners, or by questioning them. In some situations, a learner’s role and responsibility may need to be described precisely to confirm the authenticity of the evidence. When included within the learner’s portfolio, this description must be signed by the appropriate parties (e.g. line manager, supervisor, mentor etc.).

- Sufficiency – does the evidence presented cover all the learning outcomes and assessment criteria required by the unit?

Taken as a whole, the evidence must meet the learning outcomes and assessment criteria and enable assessors to judge that learners are consistently competent across all of the requirements of the unit.

- Exemptions

Exemptions cover units or qualifications held by learners that are not readily recognised as a qualification in the usual meaning, for example membership of a professional body, certified Continued Professional Development training or certain undergraduate or post graduate achievements.

Details of any exemptions that are permitted for units within specific qualifications are detailed in the qualification handbook; these may include requirements for currency.

Learners must provide their centre with proof of their achievements, e.g. certificates for training courses or membership of a professional body. Copies of these must be included in the learner’s portfolio.

Centre Assessors must justify and record the basis of the exemptions given.

- Equivalencies

The Qualification and Credit Framework (QCF) allowed for units to be used in more than one qualification. The rules of the QCF allowed that where the same unit was used more than once, learners needed to achieve that unit only once; they did not

have to do that unit again if they undertook another qualification where that unit also featured.

With the closure of the Qualification and Credit Framework (QCF), the sharing of units between qualifications is likely to be less prolific than during the use of the QCF. However, ABBE recognises that, for some time, there will be a need to recognise an equivalent unit that has been achieved either within a different qualification or from another Awarding Organisation. ABBE has made provision for this in the acceptance of qualification equivalencies.

Where a learner has already achieved a unit with the same unit reference number to one within an ABBE qualification the learner will not be required to repeat the achievement of the unit.

Details of any equivalencies that are permitted for units within specific qualifications are detailed in the qualification handbook; these may include requirements for currency.

Learners must provide their assessment centre with proof of their achievements, e.g. unit or qualification certificates. Copies of these must be included in the learner's portfolio.

Centre Assessors must record the basis of the equivalencies given.

It is the responsibility of assessment centres to declare learners as having successfully completed the requirements of a qualification or not. Centre personnel need to check and validate all claims made by learners.

Note: Learners who knowingly submit false information will have their ABBE certification withdrawn.

An example of an assessment planning form can be found in SAMPLE RECORDING DOCUMENTATION.

## **Evidence collection**

### Portfolio of evidence

The way in which most learners collect and organise their evidence, to prove their competence against the standards of a qualification, is usually referred to as a 'portfolio' of evidence. The portfolio usually contains documentation, such as observations, correspondence, testimonies, reports, related certificates and/or photographs and other illustrations of competence presented on video or tapes. The evidence may be presented as hard or electronic copy, or may be signposted to its original location within the learner's workplace. Portfolios should only include evidence of competent performance, it is not appropriate to include copies of training materials or activities.

The portfolio demonstrates the learner's competence to the requirements of the qualification and it, therefore, belongs to the learner who presents it for assessment and quality assurance in a centre.

A learner's employer has the right to rule that the evidence presented by the learner is company-confidential, especially where this relates to customer information. In this case, the learner must still be able to present the evidence for assessment and quality assurance purposes when required, but the company may require its return following completion of the qualification.

The company may also require the learner to anonymise the evidence to their satisfaction during the period of assessment and quality assurance.

Before learners begin the process of assessment, the learner, their employer, and the learner's assessor should clarify ownership of the evidence and ensure that confidentiality is not breached.

Portfolios are the property of the individual learner, therefore assessor and internal quality assurer records should be kept separately by the centre. In addition, any work retained by the centre should be copies of learner evidence, rather than originals.

#### Lost or missing portfolios

In a situation where a learner's evidence is lost or goes missing, and is not, therefore, available for external quality assurance, in the first instance centres must report this situation to ABBE.

Centres must then provide copies of all relevant assessment and internal quality assurance records, copies of any evidence that may have been retained by the learner (e.g. held on their own personal computer) and details of the circumstances of the loss for consideration by the external quality assurer at their next activity

The ABBE external quality assurer will review the records and any evidence gathered to determine whether, in light of a full verification of the assessment and internal quality assurance processes in the centre, an award could be made.

Evidence of competence can take the form of:

#### Performance Evidence (what the learner is able to do)

- Work produced by the learner (e.g. the actual product or a record or photograph of the product)
- A description or summary of the process the learner went through (e.g. an assessor's observation of a learner; a witness testimony; or video)

#### Knowledge Evidence (what the learner knows and understands)

- Evidence of the learner's knowledge may come from performance of a task/activity, questions/tests, oral tests and/or informal questioning.
- Knowledge evidence is used to support performance evidence and can provide additional confirmation to the assessor of the learner's competence.
- On occasion, knowledge evidence may also be used to cover contingencies and aspects of the specification, if applicable, that occur infrequently. For example, the learner could describe how they would handle specified contingencies (e.g. dealing with an emergency) for which performance evidence is not readily available.
- Knowledge evidence could be demonstrated through the completion of written or oral tests, assignments, projects or an external examination. The Qualification Handbook will identify those areas of knowledge and understanding where it is necessary for particular types of knowledge evidence to be provided, or where any areas of knowledge are deemed to be so critical that they must be separately assessed.

#### Sources of Evidence

Evidence can come from a range of sources, appropriate to each individual learner. The following provides examples of some of these sources:

- Observation: Recorded observations of learner performance by the assessor whilst the learner is undertaking work activities.
- Outcomes of work products: Correspondence with customers; minutes of meetings; questionnaires returned from customers; photographs of products; client files.
- Questioning: Written tests; pre-set oral tests that are recorded by the assessor; informal questions that are recorded by the assessor; external examination.
- Expert witness statements: Written or oral account of a learner's performance at work by, for example, colleagues, managers, customers and suppliers.

- **Personal statements:** A written or verbal account of specific incidents or situations which have directly involved the learner, supported by product evidence and/or witness testimonies.
- **Simulation:** A reproduction of the essential features of an activity and its working environment for assessment purposes. The assessment guidance within each qualification handbook will provide guidance on the amount and form of simulation that is acceptable for each individual qualification.
- **Recognition of prior learning (RPL):** Recognition of prior learning (RPL) includes experience gained by learners through work or training activities for which they do not have formal certification. Evidence of previous work activities or qualifications which can be assessed against the requirements of this qualification.
- **Structured Professional Interview/Professional Discussion:**  
The structured professional interview (SPI) is one assessment method that centres can use to assess learner competence.

The SPI is designed to be used primarily with experienced practitioners in situations where the learner needs to fill small gaps in their evidence in a quick, efficient and robust manner. It is an ideal assessment method for a qualification when the minimum evidence has already been submitted but where some small areas of evidence require further explanation or discussion; it is usual to use this assessment method when querying knowledge and understanding but not requiring the learner to submit further product evidence. The SPI is an assessment tool that allows the centre to undertake a detailed and structured interview with the learner, to review the specified additional evidence in a structured fashion.

## Assessment of evidence

Evidence presented for assessment must be judged by the assessor as:

Valid	Is it relevant to the unit/s being assessed? Does it contribute to the requirements of the qualification?
Authentic	Is it the learner's own work or contribution? This is particularly important when considering product evidence that has been produced away from the assessment centre
Current	Does it demonstrate that the learner can meet the requirements of the qualification at the time of assessment? This is particularly important when looking at evidence from prior achievement
Reliable	Would another assessor make the same decision when judging this evidence?
Sufficient	Does it meet all the assessment criteria of the qualification?

The requirements for each qualification are detailed in the relevant Qualification Handbook.

When carrying out their role and making assessment judgments the assessor must judge the learner's evidence over a period of time using a range of assessment methods. They must also ensure fair assessment and equality of opportunity for the learner within the assessment process.

In order to ensure that the assessor is making judgements that are consistent with the rest of the assessment team, they must meet regularly with other assessors, internal quality assurer(s) and the ABBE external quality assurer as requested to discuss assessment decisions.

## Remote assessment of learners

Where centres choose to offer their programmes and assessment via distance learning or other remote means, measures must be put in place to ensure there are clear communication links between the learner, assessor and internal quality assurer.

The proposed communication methods (e.g. telephone, email, Skype, video conference) must be discussed and agreed with the learner at the start of the programme, to ensure that they are clear about how they can contact their assessor to gain advice, support and feedback on their activities. The learner will also require details of how to contact their internal quality assurer in case their assessor is unavailable, or they wish to appeal against a decision made by their assessor.

Centres must ensure that authenticity of any work produced and submitted by remote means is safeguarded e.g. via a secure port. Assessors should regularly question the learner about their reasons for carrying out an activity or producing a work product in a particular way. This gives the learner the opportunity to demonstrate their performance, knowledge and/or understanding across a wider range of the qualification and also will give the assessor the confidence that this is the learner's own work. It is recommended that the assessor has face to face meetings with the learner on a regular basis throughout the programme.

## Feedback to learners

Assessment feedback from the assessor to learners should be:

- ongoing throughout the assessment process
- positive to inform the learner of what has been achieved
- specific to actions or targets so that the learner knows where they are performing well and where further development needs to take place
- clear and constructive, identifying any barriers to progress and suggesting ways to improve performance
- recorded as a written summary with a copy provided to the learner.

Assessor feedback and discussion needs to be an interactive process that motivates and encourages the learner to take responsibility for their own development and evaluate their own progress.

When providing feedback to the learner on evidence that does not yet meet the qualification requirements, care should be taken to ensure that the assessor gives helpful advice as to where the learner needs to improve, but does not cross the line into doing the work for them.

Learners should be allowed to go away and redraft a piece of evidence based on this feedback, however, if the revised version still does not meet the requirements, the learner may need to be provided with additional support/training and asked to produce a new piece of evidence.

## Record assessment activity and decisions

A reliable system must be in place for recording assessment judgements and decisions to ensure that all claims for certification can be verified. All learner assessment records must be fully auditable.

Assessment Records are required to show:

- who assessed who, what, how and when
- what assessment decision was made
- the assessment method(s) used
- the location of the supporting evidence
- feedback given and further action/assessment plans negotiated
- regular monitoring of the learner's progress
- the achievements of the learner.

Assessment records are required for internal and external quality assurance and must be securely retained by the centre for **a minimum of three years** from the date learner achievement was claimed.

An example of an assessment record can be found in SAMPLE RECORDING DOCUMENTATION.

### **Maintain occupational competence**

In order to assess a qualification, all assessors must have the necessary occupational experience and qualifications. Occupational competence requirements are provided for all ABBE qualifications and can be found in the relevant qualification handbook and Assessment Principles.

# INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

## The process of Internal Quality Assurance

Internal quality assurance of the assessment process ensures that assessment within the centre is valid and consistent. In order to demonstrate quality assurance of the assessment process, internal quality assurers are required to:

- advise and support the assessment process
- monitor and quality assure the assessment process
- manage external quality assurance requirements
- record internal quality assurance decisions
- maintain occupational competence

## Advise and support the assessment process

The internal quality assurer should be in regular contact with assessors to provide advice and information including:

- helping with interpretation of guidelines and policy
- answering specific questions about assessment
- advising on the appropriate use of different types of evidence
- assisting with any special arrangements that might be required for individual learners

Internal quality assurers should ensure that assessors are provided with all relevant documentation, records and guidance provided by ABBE and the centre. The internal quality assurer will allocate duties and responsibilities according to the expertise of the assessors and the needs of learners. The internal quality assurer will also ensure that both assessors and learners are aware of these responsibilities.

The internal quality assurer may not necessarily carry out the training of assessors; however, they are required to ensure that induction has occurred and that any identified training needs are met.

The induction programme should ensure the assessors' understanding of the:

- philosophy of skills-based assessment
- qualification requirements
- organisation's quality assurance policy and procedures
- assessment records and documentation to be used

Internal quality assurers are required to hold regular team meetings with assessors to include consideration of the following:

- access and fair assessment
- health and safety
- monitoring, review and evaluation (if appropriate)
- new policies, impact and implementation in the centre (where applicable)
- updates from ABBE
- discussion of any action points identified by ABBE external quality assurers
- agreement of action to be taken by assessment team members
- staff roles and responsibilities

Team meetings are essential to ensure that the centre's assessment practice is standardised and meets the requirements of ABBE. Records of these meetings must be maintained for external quality assurance.

## Monitor and quality assure the assessment process

Internal quality assurance should be **ongoing throughout the assessment process** and should include the following activities:

- observation of assessment activities and constructive feedback to assessors
- reviewing the learner's evidence which has been judged by the assessor as valid and sufficient
- observing formative and summative assessment interviews by an assessor with a learner
- carrying out standardisation exercises with a group of assessors focusing on such aspects as specific/problem units; types/sources of evidence; assessment methods; considering alternative forms of evidence

### Internal Quality Assurance Sampling Strategy

The internal quality assurer should sample assessment decisions to ensure that assessment within the centre consistently complies with ABBE requirements. Sampling must include direct observation of assessment practice and learner interviews. The internal quality assurer must identify a **representative sample** of activity across the centre. Over a period of time, this sample should cover:

- all assessors
- all units
- all learner types (e.g. part time; experienced; remote)
- all types of evidence
- all stages of evidence (new to programme, ongoing, complete)
- all assessment sites

Once centre practice is established, the internal quality assurer may wish to focus the sample on particular areas, e.g. sample an increased number of assessment decisions by new or newly qualified assessors.

Records to show how a cross-section of these variables has been quality assured specific to each qualification must be made available to the external quality assurer.

### Review and Feedback

The internal quality assurer must provide constructive feedback to assessors, identifying areas of good assessment practice and any training and development needs. Records of this feedback must be made available to the external quality assurer.

## Manage external quality assurance requirements

The internal quality assurer is the link between the assessment team and the centre co-ordinator and is required to manage and maintain the qualification systems within the centre.

Internal quality assurers must:

- ensure accurate records of assessment and internal quality assurance are kept using appropriate documents
- liaise with the ABBE external quality assurer to co-ordinate and manage centre visits, clarifying requirements, disseminating ABBE updates and guidance, agreeing action plans
- deal with disputes or appeals in line with centre procedures and as agreed with ABBE
- advise ABBE of any significant changes to centre operations which may affect the quality of assessment and internal quality assurance (e.g. changes in staff)

**Note: Centres cannot submit claims for certification to ABBE if they do not have an appropriately qualified internal quality assurer in place.**

## Record internal quality assurance decisions

Centres must have a reliable system in place for recording internal quality assurance activities. All internal quality assurance records must be fully auditable - the ABBE external quality assurer must be able to see all of the internal quality assurance activities that have been undertaken by the centre.

Internal quality assurance records must show:

- induction and training activities undertaken by assessors
- assessor and quality assurer competence
- minutes of team and standardisation meetings
- list of assessors' allocated responsibilities e.g. learners, qualifications, units
- an internal quality assurance sampling strategy
- who quality assured who, what and when
- feedback given to assessors and action plans
- certificates claimed (including unit certificates), who claimed the certificate for whom and when
- statistical information on achievement and certification rates analysed by factors such as ethnic origin, disability and gender
- reasonable adjustments and special considerations provided for specific learners

Internal quality assurance records are required for external quality assurance. They must be securely retained by the centre for **a minimum of three years** following learner achievement of the qualification.

Examples of internal quality assurance records can be found in SAMPLE RECORDING DOCUMENTATION.

## Maintain occupational competence

In order to internally quality assure an ABBE qualification, all internal quality assurers must have the necessary occupational experience and qualifications. Occupational competence requirements are provided for all ABBE qualifications and can be found in the relevant qualification handbook and Assessment Principles.

## EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

### The Process of External Quality Assurance

When a centre has signed their ABBE Centre Agreement, sent their Centre Approval letter and signed their Parnassus Agreement, they will be able to register learners. As soon as learners are registered, ABBE will allocate an External Quality Assurer to the approved centre.

External Quality Assurers (EQAs) are appointed by ABBE and allocated to ABBE approved centres to:

- monitor the assessment and internal quality assurance practices for the qualifications that the centre is approved to offer
- sample assessment and internal quality assurance decisions made by the centre staff to ensure consistency and rigour against the qualification requirements
- sample the assessment and internal quality assurance decisions made by the centre staff to ensure consistency across the centre's assessment team
- confirm the occupational competence of the assessor and internal quality assurance team
- confirm resource availability and learner access to appropriate resources
- confirm that the needs of the learner are being met
- sign certification claims where all requirements have been met
- feedback to ABBE on the effectiveness of the quality assurance arrangements within the centre
- provide advice and guidance and act as the interface between ABBE and its approved centres

During external quality assurance, the EQA will verify the quality of the assessment decisions made by the assessors and internal quality assurer (IQA) in the centre. They will review a sample of learner's work across each assessor and IQA to ensure that they are applying standards consistently.

An EQA will visit their allocated centres at least once each academic year<sup>1</sup>. This face to face visit must take place before 31 January in each academic year. They will also carry out a remote sample of the work of learners within their allocated centres at least once a year. This remote external quality assurance must take place between 1 February and 31 July in each academic year. NB: This may not apply to newly approved centres.

At the time of allocation, an EQA should contact the centre to discuss timings for the External Quality Assurance to be undertaken for that year (face to face visits must take place before 31 January in each year and remote external quality assurance must take place between 1 February and 31 July)

ABBE reserves the right to visit centres, or to undertake remote external quality assurance more often than once a year, if required.

Where centres offer more than one qualification suite and depending on the expertise of the EQA, it may be necessary for more than one EQA to visit the centre and to undertake remote external quality assurance.

Centres can request more than one visit or remote external quality assurance from their allocated EQA(s). This extra activity will carry a cost to the centre.

### Preparation

A pre external quality assurance planning form will be sent to the centre three weeks before the external quality assurance date. The centre is to complete Part A of this form and should return it to their EQA at least two weeks before the external quality assurance activity.

When the EQA receives the pre external quality assurance planning form back, they review the information provided and complete Part B of the form.

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<sup>1</sup> External quality assurance must take place during the academic year 1 August to 31 July.  
Centre Operations Manual Version 1: October 2016

The EQA should email a copy of the fully completed form, to the centre, one week before the date of the external quality assurance activity.

Where a face to face visit is scheduled, an agenda for the visit must also be completed and sent to the centre. The agenda should clearly identify timings, people to be interviewed (staff and learners), any observations arranged and the time the meeting will end. Before the visit takes place, the EQA should review the External Quality Assurance Report form from the last external quality assurance activity for the centre to familiarise themselves of the centre's previous performance and to be aware of any actions, sanctions and recommendations

At the visit, the EQA will review the centre's policies and procedures, allocated resources in terms of staff, equipment and accommodation, consider assessment plans and meet with the centre team including Assessors, IQAs, Centre Co-ordinator and other members of the team as required. They will also conduct interviews with learners.

Remember, EQAs can only quality assure work of learners that are **registered** with ABBE.

### **How will the Process Work?**

By the end of July each year ABBE will notify centres of their allocated External Quality Assurer (EQA) for the forthcoming academic year.

A centre does not have to accept remote external quality assurance. If they prefer to have two face to face visits, they can.

Each academic year, in **all** circumstances, a **face to face** quality assurance visit must take place **before remote** external quality assurance can be undertaken. There will be **no exceptions** to this.

## Undertaking Face To Face External Quality Assurance Visits

An EQA will undertake the following activities:

- Review the centre's policies and procedures
- Review the centre's allocated resources in terms of staff, equipment and accommodation
- Consider the centre's assessment plans
- Meet with the centre's team, including Assessors, IQAs, Centre Coordinator/Manager (if different people fill these two roles) to discuss the progress of the qualification
- Conduct interviews with the centre's learners to gain feedback on their experiences
- Sample learner evidence to determine if assessment decisions made within the centre are fair and consistent, this includes any certifications claimed via DCS.

The document **ABBE Compliance Criteria** provides detail of the compliance criteria to be met, possible sources of evidence and the sanction applied where non-compliance is found.

These requirements are the same as currently exist, so centres will not experience any differences.

### Arrival at the centre

Face to face External Quality Assurance visits can only be undertaken at the centre or at their approved satellite site; they **cannot** take place at any other location.

Observation of assessors undertaking assessment of learners in their workplace is the only instance during which an EQA visit can take place at a location other than the centre or approved satellite centre.

Each face to face External Quality Assurance visit is a re-confirmation of a centre's ABBE approved centre status and follows the format of the initial centre evaluation.

### Meet with Centre Co-ordinator

EQAs should meet with the Centre Co-ordinator to:

- confirm the agenda, timings and availability of a quiet room or area in which they can conduct the external quality assurance face to face visit
- check that the centre personnel and learners that they requested are available for interview
- check that the portfolios and related paperwork, such as assessment and internal quality assurance records, requested are available to review
- confirm details of any observations such as location and timings, as applicable
- confirm that centre contact details, such as email address, Centre Co-ordinator, Centre Manager, etc. are correct.
- confirm that the centre has access to all relevant documentation, such as:
  - ABBE qualification handbooks/Assessment Principles
  - ABBE Centre Operations Manual
  - ABBE Compliance Criteria
  - ABBE DCS Datasheet
  - ABBE Parnassus Agreement
- confirm that all action points from the previous report have been met and that appropriate evidence is available. Details of how the actions have been met will be recorded in the External Quality Assurance Report.

### Confirm centre's management systems, policies and procedures

EQAs must check that the centre's management systems, policies and procedures comply with the ABBE Compliance Criteria.

EQAs must confirm:

- the existence of policies and procedures and ensure they are up-to-date and are relevant to the qualifications
- that the centre assessment team (Assessors, IQAs, Centre Co-ordinator and all other relevant staff) understands the centre's policies and procedures
- that the centre's policies and procedures are complied with

### Confirm resources in the centre

EQAs must check that there are adequate resources in the centre to deliver the qualification(s).

EQAs must:

- check that equipment and accommodation is sufficient for the delivery and assessment of the qualification(s)
- check that the equipment and accommodation comply with the requirements of relevant health and safety acts
- confirm that the details of all assessors, internal quality assurers and all assessment sites are correct
- confirm that there are sufficient competent and qualified assessors and internal quality assurers for the number of learners and qualifications
- confirm occupational competencies of staff through evidence of CVs and CPD records and development plans
- check that the centre assessment staff have sufficient time, resources and authority to carry out their roles and responsibilities
- confirm that staff development is provided for assessors and internal quality assurers in line with identified needs
- if applicable, confirm qualifications of assessors and IQAs

### **Confirm that learners are appropriately supported**

Centres must support learners to achieve their qualification(s).

EQAs must confirm that:

- learners have received information, advice and guidance about the qualification and how and when assessment of the qualification will be undertaken
- learners are provided with information about the centre's appeals procedure
- learner needs have been matched to the requirements of the qualification
- assessment planning is regularly reviewed with the learner to ensure that the learner is aware of the assessment requirements
- learners have been registered onto the relevant qualification and are aware of their registration status
- learners have access to a range of valid assessment methods and have been informed of these
- any particular assessment requirements of learners have been identified and met where possible
- learners receive constructive feedback following assessment of their evidence
- unit certification is available to learners

### **Confirm the effectiveness of the centre's quality assurance**

Centres must have in place effective quality assurance systems. EQAs must review the centre's internal quality assurance records to ensure that the centre's internal quality assurance processes meet ABBE requirements.

EQAs must confirm that:

- internal quality assurance takes place on an ongoing basis and includes learner work in progress and summative assessment decisions
- assessor performance is monitored and feedback is provided
- corrective actions are agreed and followed up

## Review centre records

EQAs must confirm that:

- centre records relating to learners are up-to-date
- all learners on programme are registered with ABBE. **EQAs must not review portfolios of learners not yet registered with ABBE.**
- records of internal quality assurance sampling are complete and accurate and confirms assessors' decisions
- where assessment decisions are not consistent or do not meet the required standard, that these instances have been noted and acted upon
- learner assessment records are complete, up-to-date, accurate and signed by the assessor and learner
- the assessment team are occupationally expert

## Meet with learners, assessors and IQAs

EQAs must interview learners, assessors and IQAs at each visit.

## Reporting

EQAs will compile a report, which they will discuss with the your centre representative at the end of the visit. The visit report contains various sections, one of which is the Action Plan. Any areas of improvement (identified as Action Points) will be entered into the Action Plan and depending on the severity of these; the relevant sanction will be set.

Once the report is finalised, **both** the EQA and the appropriate centre representative must **sign the report**. A date will be agreed on which the remote external quality assurance will take place and entered onto the report.

Please note, electronic signatures will **not** be accepted, however scanned signatures can be applied.

Once the report has been **signed by both parties** a copy should be given to the centre, or the EQA can scan the signed report and email it to the centre.

If the EQA is able to confirm that the assessment decisions made in the centre are consistent and meet the requirements of the qualification, then they can sign off any CRFs that the centre has presented to them ensuring that IQAs have signed them first. These must then be sent to ABBE for processing normally **within two working days of the visit as a maximum**.

## What is the Process for Remote External Quality Assurance?

To enable remote external quality assurance, centres must either:

- enable the EQA to access portfolios via a centre authorised log in
- OR**
- post the portfolios that have been pre-selected by the EQA via recorded delivery to the EQA

Remote external quality assurance cannot take place for any qualifications that have not previously been considered at a physical visit.

A pre external quality assurance planning form will be sent to the centre three weeks before the external quality assurance date. The centre is to complete Part A of this form and should return it to their EQA at least two weeks before the external quality assurance activity.

At the same time, the centre must also send any CRFs for certifications that they want to claim. These should be fully completed and signed by the centre's IQA and should be scanned and emailed to the EQA.

When the EQA receives the pre external quality assurance planning form back, they review the information provided and complete Part B of the form.

The EQA should email a copy of the fully completed form, to the centre, one week before the date of the external quality assurance activity.

If the EQA is able to confirm that the assessment decisions made in the centre are consistent and meet the requirements of the qualification, then they will sign off the CRFs that the centre sent to them and the EQA will send these to ABBE for processing.

### **An EQA can only review portfolios of learners that are registered with ABBE.**

#### **Reporting**

Following the remote external quality assurance activity, the EQA must produce a report on the outcomes of the activity. Any areas of improvement (identified as Action Points) in relation to assessment and internal quality assurance will be entered into the Action Plan and depending on the severity of these; the relevant sanction will be set.

Once the report has been finalised, the EQA will email a copy to the centre and to ABBE.

DCS **cannot** be awarded following remote external quality assurance, however if the centre previously had DCS and this was suspended at the face to face visit, DCS can be reconfirmed following remote external quality assurance.

#### **Unannounced visits**

ABBE operates a system of unannounced visits in order to ensure that centres are complying with the rules set out within this specification around the delivery of assessments. These visits ensure ongoing confidence in the qualification as well as maintaining and improving quality. Such checks will create the opportunity to comment on good practice and also identify areas for improvement.

An EQA or an ABBE Quality representative will carry out these unannounced visits.

Centres must provide ABBE, upon request, with access to premises, people and records relating to learner assessments, achievement and internal quality assurance. If a centre fails to provide access, ABBE will suspend the centre's approval status subject to further checks.

Centres will receive feedback from the unannounced visit within a maximum of 10 working days. This feedback will include any actions to make improvements and/or any good practice observed.

On completion of an unannounced visit, ABBE reserves the right to apply conditions and/or sanctions on centres, to safeguard the award of achievement and protect their interests. Any sanction proposed will be discussed with the ABBE Director of Operations and Quality Assurance Manager before being applied.

The level of sanction imposed will depend on the nature of the centre's non-compliance. In cases of serious breach of non-compliance, for example, in relation to the security of its assessments, ABBE may withdraw a centre's recognition. This withdrawal of recognition may impact upon the centre's eligibility to deliver all qualifications with ABBE or other Awarding Organisations. ABBE will provide centres with guidance on protecting the interests of learners appropriate to the circumstances of the withdrawal.

## **SAMPLE RECORDING DOCUMENTATION**

This section contains sample forms that can be used by ABBE approved centres as a basis to develop their own recording documentation.

**Initial assessment tool**

**Assessment plan**

**Assessment record**

**Internal quality assurer observation of an assessor report**

**Internal quality assurer plan for sampling assessors**

**Portfolio sampling by IQA – feedback from IQA to assessor**

**Master internal quality assurer tracking form**

Please note that word versions of these forms can be downloaded from the ABBE website [www.abbega.co.uk](http://www.abbega.co.uk) under the Centre Login section.

## INITIAL ASSESSMENT TOOL

The purpose of this form is to give the learner an opportunity to consider the areas covered by the qualification and identify their own level of previous experience. This will be helpful in identifying an assessment plan for the learner and also in determining their correct level of qualification.

### ABBE LEVEL 3 CERTIFICATE IN AIR CONDITIONING ENERGY ASSESSMENT

Unit Number & Learning Outcome	Unit Title	Learner carries this out:			Examples of work activities undertaken
		Often	Sometimes	Never	
<b>Unit 1</b>	<b>Conduct energy assessments in a safe, effective and professional manner</b>				
LO 1	Comply with organisational and legal requirements at all times				
LO 2	Maintain health, safety and security at work				
LO 3	Develop and maintain effective working relationships with colleagues, professionals, clients and others				
LO 4	Conduct energy assessments in a professional manner				
<b>Unit 2</b>	<b>Prepare for energy assessments of air conditioning systems</b>				
LO 1	Know the information and techniques required to prepare an energy assessment				
LO 2	Clarify the requirements for an energy assessment				
LO 3	Develop and agree a method for the inspection with the client				
LO 4	Prepare and agree a clear and comprehensive scope of works with the client				
<b>Unit 3</b>	<b>Demonstrate understanding of simple/package air conditioning system inspections</b>				
LO 1	Know the operations and features of simple/package air conditioning systems				
LO 2	Know the relevant information relating to the energy performance of simple/package air conditioning systems				
LO 3	Know the methods, techniques and equipment required for the inspection of simple/package air conditioning systems				

<b>Unit 4</b>	<b>Inspect simple/package air conditioning systems</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>Examples of work activities undertaken</b>
LO 1	Conduct the inspection following current best practice				
LO 2	Obtain information relating to the energy performance of simple/package air conditioning systems				
LO 3	Locate and inspect outdoor units				
LO 4	Locate and inspect indoor units within treated areas				
LO 5	Locate and examine cooling unit and heating system controls and temperature sensors				
<b>Unit 5</b>	<b>Provide a report on the energy performance of simple/package air conditioning systems</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>Examples of work activities undertaken</b>
LO 1	Prepare the structure and content of the report				
LO 2	Develop recommendations for the report				
LO 3	Develop the report				
LO 4	Issue the report and clarify any areas as required by the client				

Are you bringing forward evidence which you would like to be considered for recognised prior learning?	Yes	No
If yes, provide a description of evidence below:		

Learner signature:

Date:

## ASSESSMENT PLAN

The purpose of this form is to identify proposed assessment activities. As far as possible, all assessment activities should be planned in advance in order to give learners an opportunity to do any necessary preparation and to make them aware of the formal assessment process.

<b>Centre name:</b>		<b>Qualification:</b>	
<b>Learner name:</b>		<b>Assessor name:</b>	
<b>Workplace (if applicable):f</b>			

<b>Activity and evidence to be produced</b>	<b>Assessment method</b> (e.g. portfolio review, observation, questioning)	<b>Date for assessment</b>	<b>Enter the unit(s), learning outcome(s) and assessment criteria to which the evidence relates</b>

Assessor signature:

Date:

Learner signature:

Date:

## ASSESSMENT RECORD

The purpose of this document is to record the assessment activity and judgement that has been made on the learner's evidence. It should be used when carrying out a formal assessment activity on the learner (as specified in the assessment plan).

It is critical that the assessor judgement is also included here, along with a rationale as to how this has been made. This will ensure that the internal quality assurer is able to see how the assessor made their judgement and can compare this to the methods used by the other assessors in the team. An example of the level of detail that should be included in the 'Description of evidence and assessor judgement' column could be:

*Energy performance certificate, site notes, photographs and personal statement describing how the report was compiled showed the learner had a clear understanding of the process. I asked some additional questions to clarify a number of points. These are included as (evidence reference) with a summary of the answers the learner provided to me. On this basis I can confirm that this EPC and associated evidence demonstrates competent performance.*

<b>Centre name:</b>		<b>Qualification:</b>	
<b>Learner name:</b>		<b>Assessor name:</b>	
<b>Workplace (if applicable):</b>			

<b>Location of assessment</b>	<b>Date</b>

<b>Unit(s)/Learning outcome(s)/ Assessment criteria</b>	<b>Assessment method</b>	<b>Description of evidence and assessor judgement</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Assessor initials</b>

**Feedback to learner**

I confirm that the evidence provided by the learner is authentic, sufficient, valid and current. It covers the learning outcomes and assessment criteria specified and has been assessed in accordance with the qualification specification.

Assessor signature:

Date:

Learner signature:

Date:

Internal quality assurer signature:  
*(if sampled)*

Date:

## INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURER OBSERVATION OF AN ASSESSOR REPORT

The purpose of this document is to record the findings of an observation carried out on an assessor actively undertaking assessment of a learner. This could be when the assessor is observing or questioning the learner, or could be when the assessor is assessing written evidence produced by the learner.

Internal quality assurers should schedule observations of assessor activity on an ongoing basis.

<b>Centre name:</b>		<b>Qualification:</b>	
<b>Assessor name:</b>		<b>Location at which observation is undertaken:</b>	
<b>Date:</b>		<b>Unit(s):</b>	
<b>Internal quality assurer name:</b>			

<b>Did the assessor:</b>	<b>IQA comments</b>
give clear information on the assessment process to the learner?	
encourage the learner to identify and present evidence?	
refer to the qualification specification?	
use any specified assessment documentation?	
remain as unobtrusive as possible?	
use questions which were clear and did not lead the learner?	
question the learner enough to confirm that their underpinning knowledge/understanding could infer competence?	
consider all sources of evidence?	
make the correct assessment decisions against the requirements of the qualification?	
ensure that the evidence is the authentic work of the learner?	

confirm the outcome of the assessment and feedback to the learner in a timely manner?	
encourage the learner to ask questions about their assessment and feedback?	
record evidence and assessment decisions in line with centre procedures and ABBE requirements?	

<b>Feedback to assessor</b>

<b>Comments from assessor</b>

Assessor signature:

Date:

Internal quality assurer signature:

Date:



## PORTFOLIO SAMPLING BY IQA – FEEDBACK FROM IQA TO ASSESSOR

The purpose of this document is to record the findings of portfolio sampling undertaken by the internal quality assurer. Internal quality assurers should schedule portfolio sampling sessions on an ongoing basis.

<b>Centre name:</b>		<b>Qualification:</b>	
<b>Assessor name:</b>		<b>Unit(s):</b>	
<b>Learner name:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	

<b>Assessment methods used:</b>	
---------------------------------	--

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Internal quality assurer's comment</b>
Has appropriate and sufficient assessment planning taken place?			
Have appropriate assessment methods been used?			
Have all the learning objectives and assessment criteria for the unit(s) been assessed?			
Has the evidence presented been clearly referenced and gathered over a sufficient period of time?			
Has the assessor justified their assessment decision?			
Do you agree with the assessment decision?			

<b>Feedback to assessor</b>

**Action to be taken/assessed evidence to be resubmitted (if applicable)**

--

**Comments from assessor**

--

**Date for resubmission:  
(if applicable)**

--

Internal quality assurer signature:

Date:

**ACTION COMPLETED**

Internal quality assurer signature:

Date:

## MASTER INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURER LEARNER TRACKING FORM

The purpose of this form is to keep a record of overall learner progress throughout their programme.

<b>Centre name:</b>		<b>Qualification:</b>	
<b>Internal quality assurer name:</b>			

Learner name	ABBE learner number	Start Date	The Assessor, IQA, EQA to confirm achievement by initialling	Unit 1 achieved	Unit 2 achieved	Unit 3 achieved	Unit 4 achieved	Unit 5 achieved	Date cert claimed	Date cert received
			Assessor							
			IQA							
			EQA							
			Assessor							
			IQA							
			EQA							
			Assessor							
			IQA							
			EQA							
			Assessor							
			IQA							
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			Assessor							
			IQA							
			EQA							
			Assessor							
			IQA							
			EQA							
			Assessor							
			IQA							
			EQA							

This form can be amended to insert/delete columns to match the number of units in the qualification achieved

## **Sanctions applied for non-compliance with ABBE Compliance Criteria**

ABBE provides a tariff of sanctions for non-compliance with the ABBE Compliance Criteria which EQAs must use as a framework to identify appropriate actions where non-compliance is identified in centre practice. The level of sanction to be applied to each instance of non-compliance is found within the document **ABBE Compliance Criteria**.

Where a centre is unable to provide appropriate evidence that they meet the specific criteria, a sanction will be recommended by the EQA to ABBE. The level of sanction is dependent upon the risk that is incurred to quality assurance within the centre and take the following forms:

- Level 1: Entry in to the Action Plan (an action point to be met by a specified date)
- Level 2: Removal of direct claims status
- Level 3: Suspension of registration and certification
- Level 4: Withdrawal of centre approval for specific qualifications
- Level 5: Withdrawal of centre approval for all qualifications

Where a centre fails to address the non-compliance identified at an external quality assurance activity, the issue moves to the next level of sanction at the next external quality assurance activity.

## **Direct Claims Status (DCS)**

Direct Claims Status (DCS) is the term used to denote that an ABBE approved centre is able to claim learner certification between external quality assurance activities **for an identified qualification**.

DCS can only be recommended following face to face External Quality Assurance.

### **Criteria for eligibility for DCS**

- The specified qualification has been delivered for approximately 12 months and quality assured at least twice without sanctions being imposed, including the visit at which the recommendation for DCS is made.
- All relevant units and full certificate claims for each qualification have been sampled and quality assured as compliant with the qualification criteria and the ABBE Compliance Criteria.
- The centre's quality management, assessment and internal quality assurance strategy has been sampled within the centre and all satellite sites externally quality assured.
- The centre's financial transactions with ABBE are in good order.
- The centre advises ABBE immediately of any changes that will affect the centre approval e.g. changes to resources and particularly the assessment and quality assurance team.
- The centre must identify an internal quality assurer as the officer accountable to ABBE for all DCS claims made for those qualifications recommended for approval for DCS. A copy of the internal quality assurer's signature must be supplied to ABBE.

### **Criteria for the withdrawal of DCS**

DCS will be removed if:

- the centre no longer meets the criteria for eligibility.
- a Level 2 sanction or above is imposed on the qualification.
- the centre is subject to a compliance investigation.
- the centre does not make direct certification claims for the qualification for 12 months.
- External quality assurance has not taken place for 12 months.
- ABBE are notified of the centre's cessation of business.
- the centre does not allow for external quality assurance to take place.
- a qualification is being withdrawn.

Centres should note that certificates issued by DCS may be rescinded if the DCS criteria are not met.

**Criteria for the re-instatement of DCS**

If DCS has been withdrawn the EQA may recommend that ABBE:

- re-instate DCS following the external quality assurance activity if all action points relating to the withdrawal of DCS have been completed

or

- require the centre to go through the full DCS process again.

ABBE will make the final decision on whether DCS will be re-instated or not and reserve the right to remove or refuse to reinstate DCS

## LEARNER REGISTRATION

### Learner registration process

Once a centre has signed the **ABBE Centre Agreement**, the **ABBE Parnassus Online Learner Registration System Agreement** and has received confirmation of its approved centre status, ABBE can accept learner registrations.

Parnassus is a portal-style Awarding Organisation management system which ABBE uses for qualification management, register of centres, learner registration and learner achievement data.

Centres can access Parnassus either through a web browser <https://parnassus.bcu.ac.uk/> or via their ABBE Centre Login on the ABBE website [www.abbeqa.co.uk](http://www.abbeqa.co.uk)

On receipt of the Parnassus Agreement, ABBE will issue a user name and password along with a Parnassus user guide to the centre. Centres will be able to register their learners directly to Parnassus. Please be aware that it is the responsibility of the centre to ensure that all learner details are correct at the time of registration.

NB These details should be confirmed with the learner prior to registration as these details will appear on certificates.

Learner registration fees are detailed on the ABBE Fees List. Learner registration fees are payable as soon as the learner's details have been submitted to ABBE via Parnassus. An invoice will be provided to the centre and should be settled in line with ABBE's standard terms. A failure to comply with ABBE payment terms could result in a suspension of learner registration.

Please note that learners must be registered, and in possession of a learner registration number, before they can sit an ABBE examination or claim a certificate for a unit or qualification. ABBE external quality assurers can only review the work of learners that are registered with ABBE.

Once made, a learner registration remains with the learner for the life of the qualification; the fee cannot be refunded.

### Transferring or withdrawing learners

#### **ABBE registration fees are non-refundable.**

In addition:

- Once a registration has been made, this remains with the learner and it cannot be transferred to another learner if the original learner leaves the programme early.
- No refunds of learner registration fees can be made in the event that a learner leaves the programme early.

Where a learner wishes to transfer to another approved centre, the receiving centre must complete a **Transfer of learner registration between ABBE approved centres** form and this must be signed by an authorised representative of the learner's original centre. This should then be submitted to ABBE for the transfer to be considered.

In exceptional cases, where a learner is registered for an ABBE qualification and wishes to transfer to a different level of the same ABBE qualification this may be possible as long as the learner has not claimed certificates for any units or sat an examination for the original qualification.

Where a transfer is required, the centre must write to ABBE to request this and must include the following information:

- Learner's name and ABBE registration number
- Full title of the qualification they are currently registered for
- Full title of the qualification they wish to be transferred to
- Reason for the transfer request

Where a learner registration fee for the qualification the learner has been transferred to is higher than the original fee paid, the difference will be invoiced to the centre. No refund will be made where the new qualification fee is lower than the original qualification fee.

Centres may wish to withdraw learners who have left the programme. In order to do this, the centre must write to ABBE to request this and must include the following information:

- Learner's name and ABBE registration number
- Full title of the qualification they are currently registered for
- Reason for the withdrawal request

No refund will be made.

## LEARNER CERTIFICATION FOR ABBE QUALIFICATIONS

ABBE will only issue unit or qualification certificates once all of the required components have been achieved and the necessary documentation has been received from the centre.

The value of a certificate (particularly when it has a direct link to legislation or licence to practice) should not be underestimated and centres must ensure that all certificates are handled securely and all measures taken to ensure that they are successfully issued to, and received by, the correct learner.

### Certification of units and qualifications

ABBE centres should complete an individual **ABBE Certificate Request Form** (CRFs) for all learners who have completed unit(s)/qualification(s) and who require certification from these. The CRFs must be signed by the authorised internal quality assurer before being presented to the external quality assurer, at their next external quality assurance activity, along with the learner's portfolio of evidence. The internal quality assurer signature must be authentic and not an electronically generated text signature. Scanned and printed signatures are acceptable.

Where the external quality assurer is able to confirm certification for a learner, they will sign the CRF and return it to ABBE. The external quality assurer signature must be authentic and not an electronically generated text signature. Scanned and printed signatures are acceptable.

Where a centre has requested certification of some of the units within a qualification, they will receive a partial certificate for the learner that lists those individual units.

Where a centre has requested certification of a full qualification, they will receive one certificate that identifies the full qualification title and one certificate listing all of the units claimed for the learner at that time.

### Distribution of ABBE certificates

All unit and qualification certificates will be issued to the approved centre for distribution to individual learners. This will be by first class recorded delivery. Centres are required to sign for receipt of the certificates.

Centres must:

- issue certificates to learners promptly
- keep records of the receipt and issue of certificates
- keep the certificates in a secure place until they are distributed

Before the certificate is handed to the learner the centre should confirm the learner's identity. Certificates may be sent to learners by recorded delivery at the centre's discretion.

Unclaimed certificates must be retained, and kept securely, by the centre for a maximum of twelve months from the date of issue by ABBE. After this time any unclaimed certificates must be returned to ABBE. Under no circumstances should an unclaimed certificate be destroyed by the centre.

### All certificates remain the property of ABBE and are issued with the following conditions:

- certificates are passed on to learners with minimum delay
- certificates are not withheld from a learner under any circumstances
- any alteration or defacement of a certificate renders it invalid
- ABBE has the right to request the return of a certificate at any time if found that it has been incorrectly issued

ABBE will **not** email certificates to learners or to centres. In exceptional circumstances, confirmation of achievement can be sent out.

### **Replacement of damaged certificates**

Centres or learners can apply for replacement of damaged certificates. The request must be made using the ***Application form for a replacement ABBE certificate*** and the original certificate(s) must be returned.

A fee is payable for this service.

### **Replacement of lost certificates**

Where a certificate has been lost, centres or learners can apply for a replacement certificate. The request must be made using the ***Application form for a replacement ABBE certificate***.

It will only be possible to replace a lost certificate if it can be clearly seen from the evidence provided that all possible action has been taken by the centre and/or the learner to retrieve it.

A fee is payable for this service.

### **Request for replacement certificate where there are errors on the original**

If a learner's name was incorrectly spelt on centre registration, for example, 'Smith' instead of 'Smyth', an application can be made to amend the spelling. The request must be made using the ***Application form for a replacement ABBE certificate*** and the original certificate(s) must be returned.

A fee is payable for this service.

## EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

ABBE approved centres must ensure that all learners registered for ABBE qualifications:

- receive equal treatment regardless of gender, sexual orientation, colour, race or national origin, age, marital or civil partnership status, family circumstances, socio-economic background, disability or religious or political beliefs
- have equal access to fair assessment of the skills, knowledge and understanding required to achieve an ABBE qualification.

All ABBE approved centres must have an explicit, monitored equal opportunities and access to fair assessment policy in place to ensure fair access and fair assessment procedures for all learners.

ABBE approved centres must:

- have written policies and procedures in respect of equal opportunities and equal access to fair assessment
- identify and provide for any special assessment needs of learners and have mechanisms in place to ensure fair assessment (e.g. the internal quality assurance plan identifies observation of assessment across a range of learner types)
- offer assessment methods which are appropriate to meet the needs of individual learners
- collect and analyse information on the performance of learners in relation to equal opportunities and equal access to fair assessment to ensure that individual needs are being met
- keep accurate and up-to-date records of all activity undertaken in this area.

ABBE will collect feedback on any issues that arise in relation to access to ABBE qualifications and feed this into the qualification development process to ensure that our qualification specifications and examinations do not contain unnecessary or artificial barriers to access in relation to the language used, or the evidence requirements and assessment methods specified.

Any learner who believes that they are being discriminated against should raise the matter through their ABBE approved centre. Where this route has been fully exhausted, the learner should be made aware of the ability to escalate the complaint to ABBE (see **COMPLAINTS**).

## REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS AND SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

ABBE approved centres must ensure equality of access to qualifications as required by relevant legislation, including the Equality Act 2010.

These qualifications are designed to accredit a learner's competence in a particular role, therefore, ABBE approved centres must ensure that learners are demonstrating competence to the requirements of the qualification on their own, with no assistance from others.

As part of the initial assessment process, centres must identify any areas of the qualification where the learner may have difficulty in meeting the requirements and explore with them ways in which these could be addressed. The requirements of the qualification cannot be amended, re-worded or omitted in any way.

Learners can use any commercially available, appropriate equipment to assist them in demonstrating competence (e.g. a Minicom system, text enlarging software), however they cannot seek the assistance of another person to carry out an activity on their behalf (e.g. it would be unacceptable for a learner to ask a colleague to go into a loft, give them instructions on what to look at and then write down what is reported back to them by the colleague).

Centres can decide on the use of appropriate equipment or materials to support the learner without reference to ABBE; however, their use must be reported to the external quality assurer at their next external quality assurance activity to the centre.

For any external examination component of a qualification or unit there are two ways through which access to fair assessment can be maintained:

Reasonable adjustments can be made **before the examination** is undertaken to help reduce the effect of a disability or difficulty that could place the learner at a substantial disadvantage in an assessment situation.

Special considerations can be made **just before or at the time of an examination** where a learner has been temporarily disadvantaged by illness or injury and is unable to complete all of the usual assessment requirements.

### Reasonable adjustments

Reasonable adjustments must not affect the integrity of what needs to be assessed.

What is reasonable will depend on the individual circumstances, cost implications and the practicality and effectiveness of the adjustment. Other factors, such as the need to maintain standards of competence and health and safety, will also be taken into consideration.

### Centre responsibilities

ABBE approved centres must:

- have an explicit, monitored access to fair assessment policy that is communicated to all staff and learners.
- have effective internal procedures in place to identify, as early as possible and preferably during initial assessment, any difficulties the learner may have in accessing assessment.
- explain to the learner the assessment requirements of the qualification and discuss any reasonable adjustments that may need to be made:
  - when identifying reasonable adjustments to assessment, centre staff must take into consideration the learner's normal way of working and the assessment requirements of the qualification. Certain simple adjustments may be all that is required, e.g. a

- dyslexic learner may need extra time to complete a written test, but may not need extra time for a practical activity.
- in order to ensure that any adjustments to assessment will only provide the learner with the necessary assistance without giving them an unfair advantage over others, centres must be clear about the extent to which the learner is affected by the disability or difficulty. The implications of some disabilities are not obvious and it may be necessary for centres to obtain specialist advice to determine what level and kind of assistance the learner will need.
  - any adjustment to assessment must neither give the learner an unfair advantage nor should it disadvantage the learner. The qualification achieved must have the same credibility as that of any other learner. Achievement of a qualification must give a realistic indication to a potential employer of what the holder of the certificate can do.
- identify appropriate, authorised reasonable adjustments and apply for these to ABBE at the time of learner registration.
  - keep accurate and up-to-date centre records where alternative assessment arrangements have been requested for learners
    - centres must keep records of its decisions to allow reasonable adjustments along with any supporting evidence (e.g. diagnostic report, medical certificate). The records and supporting evidence must be kept for **three years** from the date of the assessment and made available to ABBE on request.

### **Barriers to access**

It is the case that some full qualifications may be inaccessible to some learners because the learner is unable to demonstrate competence in specific elements. If it is found that the barriers are created by something like inappropriate or inaccessible wording, ABBE will consider feedback from centres and practitioners.

### **Application of reasonable adjustments to ABBE qualifications**

The reasonable adjustments allowed for each ABBE qualification will be specified in the qualification handbook.

Reasonable adjustments normally take the following forms:

- Additional time - where there is evidence of need, the centre may request additional time for those learners whose ability to demonstrate attainment is affected by their disability or difficulty.

Additional time must be requested at the time the learner is registered for the qualification with ABBE.

- Amanuenses - an amanuensis is a person who, in an examination, records (usually in writing or on computer) a learner's dictated answers to questions. Learners are eligible for amanuenses if they suffer from long term or temporary disabilities that prevent them from providing their answers by other means.

An amanuensis must be requested at the time the learner is registered for the qualification with ABBE.

- Reader - a reader is a person, who in an examination reads questions to a learner. Learners are eligible to use a reader if they suffer from a long term or temporary disability which prevents them from reading the questions themselves.

A reader must be requested at the time the learner is registered for the qualification with ABBE.

## **Special considerations**

Special considerations only apply to examined components of a qualification and are provided where specific circumstances have arisen near the time of the examination that could not be provided for by prior arrangement of reasonable adjustments.

Centres must ensure that special considerations do not affect the integrity of what is being assessed and must not give the learner an unfair advantage. The result must reflect the learner's achievement in the assessment and not their potential ability.

Special consideration may result in a small post-assessment adjustment to the marks of learners. The size of the adjustment will depend on the circumstances during the assessment and will reflect the difficulty faced by the learner in attempting the assessment.

A learner who is fully prepared for an examination may be eligible for special consideration if:

- performance in the examination is affected by circumstances beyond the control of the learner e.g. recent illness, accident, serious disturbance during the exam  
*or*
- reasonable adjustments agreed in advance of the examination proved inappropriate or inadequate.

## **Format of evidence**

Unless evidence is required in a specific format by the qualification specification (e.g. a written report), the learner may present their evidence in any format that is appropriate to their needs (e.g. an oral record of questioning, signed on to video, CD, DVD, Braille). Centres should explore appropriate assessment methods with the learner and review these on an ongoing basis to ensure their effectiveness throughout the programme.

Whatever form the evidence takes, the centre must ensure that it is accessible to both the internal and external quality assurers (e.g. by providing a comprehensive reference to show where particular evidence can be found on a tape, or an appropriately skilled person to translate Braille or signed evidence).

Where a learner is unable to meet the requirements of a particular unit or units within a qualification, the centre can claim unit certification for those units that can be achieved. However, the centre must advise the learner that they will be unable to achieve the full qualification.

## RESULTS ENQUIRIES AND APPEALS

### Results enquiries

ABBE has a standard quality assurance procedure to process all examination results. This includes a review of the performance of all questions in the examination, focusing particularly on those where a low number, or a high number, of learners selected the correct answer; and any feedback provided from invigilators and learners.

Where a centre or learner disagrees with, or wishes to question, the results provided for an ABBE examination, a results enquiry can be made to ABBE. It should be noted that, as all questions in ABBE multiple choice examinations come from a live question bank, it is not possible for ABBE to provide details of specific questions or answers as part of this process.

All results enquiries must be applied for using the **ABBE Request for Results Enquiry** form, available at [www.abbeqa.co.uk](http://www.abbeqa.co.uk) and must be accompanied by the relevant fee.

All applications must be made within two weeks of the results being issued.

ABBE will review the results of the learner concerned along with the issues/concerns specified on the application form and provide a written response in line with the timescales published in our **customer service statement**.

### Appeals

ABBE will accept an appeal from a centre or learner in the following circumstances:

- a learner appealing against an assessment/quality assurance decision made by an approved centre where the centre's own appeals procedure has been followed but the learner is not satisfied with the outcome.

**The centre's own appeals procedure must be followed to its conclusion before referring the matter to ABBE.**

- an approved centre appealing against a quality assurance decision made by an ABBE external quality assurer in the areas of:
  - non-compliance with the ABBE Compliance Criteria
  - validity/reliability of the centre's assessment/quality assurance decisions
  - withdrawal of direct claims status
  - withdrawal of centre approval either for one specific qualification or all ABBE qualifications.
- an organisation appealing against an evaluation decision for centre approval.
- An approved centre appealing against a sanction imposed as a result of an investigation of malpractice or maladministration.
- A learner or approved centre appealing against the result of an ABBE external examination.

In the event of failure of an ABBE examination, the learner or centre must apply for a results enquiry and await the results of this **before** making an appeal to ABBE.

- A learner appealing against a centre's decision regarding Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations

## **Making an appeal**

All parties must make every effort to resolve a problem or dispute informally before instigating a formal appeal.

All appeals must be made to ABBE in writing using the **ABBE Request for Appeal** form and within fifteen working days of the decision that is being appealed against. This communication must set out the full grounds of the appeal and must be accompanied by the relevant fee.

ABBE will acknowledge, within two working days, the receipt of the appeal and give an indication of the timescale within which a response will be provided to the appellant.

The appeal will be investigated by the ABBE Appeals Panel who will consult with the approved centre and all other relevant parties to establish the facts.

Where the application of an appeal is against an assessment decision made by ABBE, the nominated representative will consider whether the awarding body:

- used procedures that were consistent with the regulatory criteria
- applied the procedures properly and fairly in arriving at judgements.

Where the application of an appeals process in the case of a learner leads ABBE to discover a failure in its assessment process, it must take all reasonable steps to:

- identify any other learner who has been affected by the failure
- correct, or where it cannot be corrected, mitigate as far as possible the effect of the failure, and
- ensure that the failure does not recur in the future.

Following the investigation, the outcome will be communicated to the appellant.

Where an appeal is upheld the fee will be refunded to the appellant.

## MALPRACTICE AND MALADMINISTRATION

Malpractice or maladministration is used to define any act, neglect, default or other practice which is in breach of regulations and which threatens the integrity of the certification of qualifications.

ABBE approved centres must ensure that all relevant staff involved in the management, assessment, moderation or quality assurance of ABBE qualifications are made aware of their responsibilities in relation to malpractice or maladministration.

ABBE approved centres must have robust quality assurance mechanisms in place in order to protect the integrity of the qualification and the validity of learner certificates.

Malpractice or maladministration can arise for a number of reasons, including:

- actions undertaken intentionally to give an unfair advantage to a learner or centre
- actions which come about due to ignorance of the regulations or carelessness in applying the regulations.

### Centre malpractice

Examples:

- giving assistance to learners, e.g. providing learners with an excessive amount of support in the production of evidence; providing learners with evidence to present as their own work.
- other areas, e.g. causing or allowing work to be assessed which is not the learner's own individual work; failing to ensure sufficient levels of internal quality assurance; claiming certification with incomplete evidence; placing unacceptable amounts of pressure on assessors for the completion of portfolios and achievement of certificates by learners; denying ABBE external quality assurers access to the centre premises or records.

Centres must note that failure to comply with the guidance regarding reasonable adjustments and special considerations has the potential to constitute malpractice and may lead ABBE to withhold the learner's result and investigate practices within the centre.

Failure to comply could take the form of:

- failing to maintain records of reasonable adjustments and special considerations for audit purposes

### Learner malpractice

Examples:

- misuse of examination material
- failing to abide by an invigilator's instructions during an examination
- introduction of unauthorised materials into an examination
- copying from another learner
- plagiarism - submission of another person's work as if it were the learner's own
- disruptive behaviour in an examination
- pretending to be someone else or arranging for another to take their place in an examination
- offensive or insulting behaviour towards centre or awarding body staff

## Reporting cases of malpractice or maladministration

Where malpractice or maladministration is suspected this must be reported to ABBE by completing a **Malpractice/Maladministration Investigation** form. The form must include the centre name and number; full nature of the malpractice or maladministration; date(s) the malpractice or maladministration occurred; title of the qualification involved; complainant's name, signature and date of submission of the form.

In cases of misconduct or irregularity during an examination, the invigilator is empowered to expel a learner from the examination room. The expelled learner's question paper/script should be secured and, in the case of a paper copy, be submitted to ABBE with the form.

If any of the rules of examination conduct are broken by a learner, invigilator or other person required for the conduct of the examination, ABBE may declare the examination or assessment void.

ABBE will acknowledge receipt of all forms.

### **Investigation of reported incidents**

In the first instance, ABBE will require the approved centre to fully investigate any suspected or actual irregularities or cases of malpractice or maladministration. ABBE will agree with the centre their proposed actions and the timescales for this.

ABBE will notify the Regulatory Authorities of the commencement of an investigation and provide an estimated timescale for its completion.

Either at notification of a suspected or actual case, or at any time during the investigation, ABBE will reserve the right to suspend any claims for certification submitted by the centre. We will endeavour to ensure that any ABBE personnel involved in supporting the centre with an investigation will be independent of the management of the normal ABBE working relationship with the centre.

If the investigation confirms that malpractice or maladministration has taken place, the centre may have one or more of the following sanctions applied; please note this list is not exhaustive:

- increased level of external quality assurance activity or centre visits by appointed ABBE staff
- removal of Direct Claims Status
- removal of ability to register and certificate learners
- removal of approved centre status

The centre is responsible for informing staff and learners affected by the removal of any ABBE services.

ABBE reserves the right to withhold a learner's results for all ABBE qualifications for which they are registered at the time of the notification or investigation of suspected or actual malpractice or maladministration.

Once an investigation is complete, ABBE will produce a report and provide a copy of this to the Regulatory Authorities and the centre.

In cases where certificates are deemed to be invalid, we will inform the Regulatory Authorities, centre(s) and/or learner(s) of the reasons for this and any action to be taken for reassessment and/or certification.

## UNITS AND QUALIFICATIONS WHICH INCLUDE EXTERNAL EXAMINATIONS

Some ABBE qualifications include an externally set and marked examination. Further information on the arrangements for these can be found in the ABBE Online Examination System Guide for Centres available on the ABBE website at [www.abbeqa.co.uk](http://www.abbeqa.co.uk)

### ABBE external examinations

In order to sit an ABBE examination, a learner must first be registered for the qualification (see **LEARNER REGISTRATION**). Once this has been confirmed the centre will then be issued with a voucher number for the learner to use, in conjunction with their ABBE registration number, to book an examination. The examination booking system is available via the ABBE website.

ABBE examinations are available through Pearson Vue examination centres located around the UK and are available online and on demand which means the learner is able to choose a date, time and location to suit themselves in agreement with their assessment centre.

Once the examination has been completed, a printed copy of the results and feedback on examination performance is provided to the learner by the examination centre. A summary of all examination results is provided by ABBE to the assessment centre on a weekly basis.

Full details of the operation of the ABBE online examination system can be found in the document ABBE Online Examination System – Guidance for Centres which is available on the ABBE website at [www.abbeqa.co.uk](http://www.abbeqa.co.uk).

## USE OF LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH

For all of the qualifications offered by ABBE, assessment must normally be carried out in English. At present all qualification specifications and examination papers are provided in English only.

A learner taking a qualification may be assessed in British Sign Language where it is permitted by an Awarding Organisation for the purpose of Reasonable Adjustment.

Assessment carried out in a language other than English does have implications for provision of an appropriately skilled assessment and quality assurance team. Centres must take this into account and discuss these implications through with ABBE before confirming the approach with their learner. Centres will need to be able to ensure access to evidence by the external quality assurer; this may require the use of a translator which would be provided at the centre's expense.

## OVERSEAS ACTIVITY

It must be noted that the remit of the Regulatory Authorities (Ofqual, Qualifications Wales and CCEA Regulation) extends to England, Wales and Northern Ireland only. This has implications for certain qualifications offered by ABBE:

- Approved centres based in England, Wales or Northern Ireland cannot extend their operations beyond these borders (i.e. they cannot have satellite centres in Scotland, Republic of Ireland or any other overseas location).
- Organisations which operate as approved centres outside of England, Wales or Northern Ireland must be approved as centres in their own right.
- The Regulatory Authority logo on the certificate is for the qualifications that are accredited ONLY in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. This should be confirmed to any learner who achieves an ABBE certificate and is based outside England, Wales or Northern Ireland.

## CUSTOMER SERVICE

We aim to provide a high level of customer service as expected by our customers. All services provided by ABBE will be in line with our published Customer Service Statement available at [www.abbeqa.co.uk](http://www.abbeqa.co.uk)

ABBE reserves the right to:

- request payment up front for all ABBE services
- determine a credit limit for an organisation if considered appropriate
- apply sanctions to centres where issues with quality assurance or business activities arise, in line with the ABBE Compliance Criteria
- suspend or withdraw centre approval if the centre's actions could, in the opinion of ABBE, cause damage to ABBE's reputation
- withdraw centre approval should the centre fail to work to ABBE's regulator's requirements
- cease trading with the centre in the event that the centre fails to meet ABBE payment terms

## COMPLAINTS

We aim to ensure that the service received from ABBE is satisfactory, however, if a centre or learner wishes to complain about any aspect of ABBE's service, this should be sent in writing to:

Quality Assurance Manager  
ABBE  
Birmingham City University  
Franchise Street  
Perry Barr  
Birmingham  
B42 2SU

All complaints will be acknowledged within two working days of receipt, providing a timescale for when a formal response will be provided.