



Approval Procedure for VQ Approved Centre Status

RV 3.0

Summary of Stages of Approval

- The application process to become a VQ Approved Centre (AC), together with its accompanying documents is described below:

Stage	Process	Documents
1	Expression of Interest	Expression of Interest Form
2	Initial discussion with Awarding Organisation	n/a
3	Finance & Legal Check	Finance & Legal Questionnaire
4	Application to Awarding Organisation	VQ001a ECITB Approved Centre Application and Recognition Form

Enquiry

- Enquiries should be submitted for the attention of ECITB VQ Administrator by email to qualifications@ecitb.org.uk or post using the contact details at the end of this document.
- Enquiries will be responded to within **5 working days** of receipt and applicants will be provided with an' Approved Centre Express of Interest form to complete and return. A record of all enquiries is retained within Awarding Organisation records and systems.
- Enquiries are not considered a formal application.

Stage 1 - Expression of Interest

- Return of the completed *Approved Centre Expression of Interest Form* will acknowledge within **5 working days** of receipt.
- A record of your interest will be recorded on ECITB CRM system and assigned to a member of the ECITB Awarding Organisation team.

Stage 2 Initial Discussions with the Awarding Organisation

- The Awarding Organisation will then arrange for an advisory call to take place with the applicant. We will aim to complete this within **15 working days** of receipt of Expression of Interest form.
- The purpose of the advisory call is to outline the Awarding Organisation approval process, discuss ECITB requirements and enable applicants to ask questions and seek guidance on the approval process and finally confirming they wish to proceed.
- The Awarding Organisation reserve the right to close the application at this stage, should it be considered that the applicant would not be able to meet ECITB requirements.

Stage 3 Finance and Legal Check

- Upon agreement that the application can proceed the applicant will be sent, via email, a copy of the *Approved Provider and Contractor Finance and Legal Information Questionnaire*.
- Below is a summary (not an exhaustive list) of the information you will be required to provide at this stage:
 - Company registration and director details
 - Equal Opportunities & Health & Safety Policies
 - Annual account for last three financial years
 - Company banking details
 - Three customer references
 - Copies of the following Insurance Policies:
 - Professional Indemnity Insurance, minimum indemnity limit of £2 million
 - Employer's Liability Insurance, minimum indemnity limit of £5 million.
 - Public Liability Insurance, minimum indemnity limit of £5 million

Further information on Finance and Legal checks can be found in Appendix A.

- Applicants should submit the completed questionnaire and associated documentation to qualifications@ecitb.org.uk
 - Receipt of the *Approved Provider and Contractor Finance and Legal Information Questionnaire* will be acknowledged within **5 working days**.
 - There will be an administration check to ensure the questionnaire has been completed, signed and that all the required documents have been submitted. If the application is adjudged to be incomplete (either because documents are missing and/or because forms have not been completed), the missing information will be requested. Until such time as the missing information has been provided the application will not be processed further.
 - If the application is adjudged to be complete the application will be considered by both ECITB Finance and Legal Departments within **20 working days** from receipt.
 - The Finance and Legal Departments will advise the ECITB Awarding Organisation that the application:
 - Should proceed, along with any conditions that must be met by the applicant prior to approval for Approved Centre status and the applicant will be sent a copy of the *VQ001a Approved Centre Application and Recognition Form* by email within **15 working days** of receipt of the questionnaire being returned by the Finance & Legal Department.
- OR**
- Should **not** proceed. The matter will be considered by the Head of Awarding Organisation and should the Awarding Organisation not wish to proceed with the application, the applicant will be advised in writing within **15 working days** of receipt of the questionnaire being returned by the Finance & Legal Department.

Stage 4 Application to the Awarding Organisation

- The completed *VQ001a Approved Centre Application and Recognition Form* should be completed, signed, initialled on each page and sent with required documentation via email to: qualifications@ecitb.org.uk
- Below is a summary (not an exhaustive list) of the information you will be required to provide:
 - A business case, including forecasts and evidence of support from potential customers.
 - Details of other awarding organisation accreditations
 - Details of facilities and systems for delivery and assessment, including use of E-portfolio if applicable
 - Details of candidate and programme management processes and systems
 - Internal Quality Assurance and risk management policies, procedures and documentation
 - Policies: Malpractice, Complaints, Appeals, Conflict of Interest, Reasonable Adjustment & Special Consideration, Health & Safety, Equal Opportunities, Data Protection and Retention of Records.
 - Details of proposed assessment team, including copies of CVs, qualification certificates and other relevant certifications and details of induction and training requirements.
- On receipt *VO001a Approved Centre Application and Recognition Form* there will be an administration check to ensure that all the required documents have been submitted and all sections have been completed.
- If the application is adjudged to be complete this will be forwarded to either a member of the Awarding Organisation team for review.
- If the application is adjudged to be incomplete (either because documents are missing and/or because forms have not been completed), the missing information will be requested. Until such time as the missing information has been provided the application will not be processed further
- The applicant will receive confirmation of the above within **5 working days** of receipt.

Stage 5 Review and Approval of Approved Centre Application

- The application and information provided will be assessed in accordance with the ECITB's and regulatory requirements within **30 working days** of receipt of the completed application.
- If the application does not meet ECITB and regulatory requirements then actions will be set on *the VQ001a Approved Centre Application and Recognition Form in Part 7* and this will be returned by email to the application inviting them to resubmit within **one calendar month**. Any review of a resubmitted VQ001a Approved Centre Application and Recognition form will be completed within **30 working days** of receipt.
- As part of the assessment an approval meeting may be required by a member of the Awarding Organisation team to either validate the application and/or view facilities, resources and/or systems. All best efforts will be made to secure a meeting date within **30 working days** following the review of the application. This may be able to be completed remotely.
- Once the application meets ECITB requirements then *Part 8 of the VQ001a Approved Centre Application and Recognition Form* will be completed with a recommendation for approval and submitted to the Head of Awarding Organisation. Conditions of approval may be applied at this stage.

Stage 6 Approval by Head of Awarding Organisation

- The Head of Awarding Organisation will assess the information and consider the recommendation made and will either approve or not approve the application within **15 working days** of receipt.
- The applicant will be advised of the decision within a further **15 working days** and if approved the application will proceed as per Stage 7 of this procedure.

Stage 7 Confirmation of Approval and Centre Activation

- The following documentation will be sent to the named Approved Centre Co-ordinator within **15 working days** of approval by the Head of Awarding Organisation:
 - An approval letter, with a unique ECITB Approved Centre Number and details of the Approved Centre's ECITB External Quality Assurer.
 - An ECITB Approved Centre Plaque
 - An email containing the link, username and password for ECITB Membership Services Portal (MSP)
 - Qualification specific assessment documentation
 - Centre Handbook

Note:

- All ECITB Policies and procedures can be downloaded from the ECITB website <https://www.ecitb.org.uk/the-ecitb-awarding-organisation/>
 - All User Guides and forms required to support delivery and assessment can be downloaded from our Membership Services Portal.
- All newly Approved Centres will be subject to a **Level 1 Probationary Restriction** ensuring all claims for achievement are subject to External Moderation prior to certification.
 - All newly Approved Centres are required to attend an induction meeting with their allocated ECITB External Quality Assurer (EQA) prior to 'activation'. This meeting must be attended by all Approved Centre staff members involved in the management, delivery and/or assessment of ECITB qualifications.
 - Upon confirmation from the EQA that Approved Centre Induction meeting has been completed, the VQ Administrator will:
 - Activate your centre on the MSP to enable you to register candidates for VQ qualifications.
 - Add your centre details to our 'Provider Finder' tool on our website.
 - Following approval the Approved Centre will be subject to post approval monitoring as outlined in the document; *ECITB Centre Assessment Scrutiny and External Quality Assurance Strategy*.

Appendix A

Note: *The following has been extracted from the ECITB's Procurement System. If there is any ambiguity or contradiction between the provisions of the Approval of VQ Approved Centres and Additional Schemes procedures and the contents of this Appendix, the former shall prevail.*

Notes and Guideleines on the use of the Finance & Legal Questionnaire, the Legal and Financial checks procedure and related issues.

The Procedure

1. It is unnecessary to send an Approved Provider and Contractor Finance and Legal Information Questionnaire if the Approved Training Provider or Contractor already appears on the Approved Training Provider and Contractor database.
2. Application forms should be sent out electronically by the department wishing to contract with the party or as part of the Approved Training Provider Application process. The Finance and Legal Department should be advised that a Questionnaire has been sent out. A list of outstanding Questionnaires will be maintained by Finance and Legal to record incoming and monitor outstanding Questionnaires. Once a Questionnaire has been processed (i.e. the party has been "approved" or "rejected") it will be removed from the list.
3. If a company is 'in scope' then there will be no requirement to fill in sections 3 or 4 of the Questionnaire.
4. Upon receipt of the completed Questionnaire, and all supporting financial information, all such documents should be submitted to the Finance and Legal Department for assessment.
5. If further information is needed to enable a decision to be made the Finance and Legal department will request this from either the relevant manager or the party concerned. However, whilst the Finance and Legal Department awaits further information, it may issue a provisional approval to allow the relevant department to begin its own approval/selection processes or investigations into suitability.
6. If Finance and Legal are satisfied that the ECITB should proceed with the party from a financial and legal perspective it will sign off on the application and retain the original. A copy of the approved form will be sent to the relevant manager or administrator.
7. If the Finance and Legal Department does not consider the party to be satisfactory the reasons will be stated on the form. A copy of the form will be sent to the relevant manager or administrator, who should then notify the applicant.

8. Approved organisations will be entered onto the Approved Training Provider and Contractor database.
9. A record of all failed applications with notes explaining why they have failed will be maintained by Finance and Legal.
10. All the information relating to the application will be stored on the CRM including application form, accounts etc. Under the Administration tab for each company there is a section relating to Contractors, where details of the application will be recorded.
11. The Approved Provider and Contractor Finance and Legal Information should be reviewed every 3 years. The Finance and Legal Department will notify the departments that have dealt with the party and enquire whether the party should be retained as an approved organisation or deleted. If the former, Finance and Legal will take steps to obtain the current information required. However for Training Providers the information can be collected as part of the annual audit. The latest published accounts can be requested and sent to Finance and Legal for assessment and updating of records.

Guidelines

It should be noted that the purpose of the Approved Provider and Contractor Finance and Legal Information Questionnaire is to gather information about a prospective training provider and/or contractor. The questions contained in the questionnaire do not represent an exhaustive checklist, and relate to financial and legal issues only.

Therefore, there will be additional informational requirements (for example of an operational nature) that will be required and these should be raised independently by the departments concerned (e.g. in the Approved Training Provider application process or in the Pre-Qualification Questionnaire).

The following guidelines should be taken into account when considering information submitted by prospective training providers and/or contractors, and when setting requirements.

1. The policies that a prospective contractor or provider should have as a condition of being approved as a contractor or provider will be determined by the prevailing policy of the relevant ECITB Department or Directorate.

However, the ECITB will always require a contractor or provider to have the following policies:

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Environmental Policy
- Health and Safety Policy

2. The insurances the ECITB will always require a contractor or provider to have are:

- Professional Indemnity Insurance cover with a minimum indemnity limit of £1 million in the aggregate for development contracts. Depending on the “product” or intellectual property being developed this requirement could increase to £5 million.
- Professional Indemnity Insurance cover with a minimum indemnity limit of £2 million for Training Providers.
- Employer’s Liability Insurance cover with a minimum indemnity limit of £5 million (this is the legal requirement with which all employers are required to comply).
- Public Liability Insurance cover with a minimum indemnity limit of £5 million. However in some cases ECITB will be prepared to accept £2 million if the risk is low. If the contractor or provider proposes to offer Public Liability Insurance cover with a minimum indemnity limit of less than £5 million, please contact the Finance & Legal Department for guidance.