

Crossfields Institute

Centre Handbook

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Version 3.3



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1) Introduction

This Handbook provides all Crossfields Institute approved centres delivering Crossfields Institute qualifications with the essential information required to successfully administer, deliver and quality assure their qualification(s).

Crossfields Institute is an awarding organisation, regulated by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) which regulates qualifications, examinations and assessments in England.

Crossfields Institute is also a charity that exists to develop education inspired by holistic and integrative approaches. We promote education that recognises and serves the potential of each individual. Our specialist qualifications are designed to integrate knowledge, intellectual challenge and practical skills and aim to facilitate the holistic development of learners. We also develop employer specific qualifications to support organisational methods and vision.

Crossfields Institute promotes holistic quality assurance that is a truly reflective, mindful process, focused on the needs of the learners and, ultimately, the society they contribute to. Our aim is to have a set of processes which are embedded in everyday practice and guarantee that quality will be experienced consistently throughout our partners, their learning provision and in all areas of our work.

We consider ourselves part of an action research culture and we aim to create an ongoing dialogue with peer organisations to share best practice.

Crossfields Institute is aware that many organisations regard Quality Assurance as a bureaucratic process. We encourage you to think of Quality Assurance as mindful, reflective practice. We are endeavouring to keep the bureaucratic aspects of QA to the minimum required to fulfil our needs, whilst also being able to demonstrate Quality Assurance and Improvement with transparency and clarity to everyone involved in the process.

2) Roles and Responsibilities of a Crossfields Institute Centre

In order to ensure that the provision of Crossfields Institute qualifications is to the highest standard, we expect that centres have rigorous policies and procedures in place at all times.

We believe that clarity, transparency and a fit for purpose organisational structure can help to ensure that teachers are free to teach and learners are free to learn.

Centres are assessed using the guidelines below and relevant benchmarks. Where a centre wishes to propose an alternative arrangement we ask for a written statement describing the underlying principle of the proposed alternative arrangement.

2.1 Vision, values, purpose and method

Centres should be mindful of the vision, values, method and purpose integral to the qualifications delivered by the centre. Refer to the qualification specification for specific guidance where appropriate.

2.2 Organisational Arrangements

Crossfields Institute recommends that centres have a legal structure that provides a healthy foundation for the qualification and its development and research. We are keen to support qualification teams in building skill, capacity and succession in an inclusive and collaborative manner. Centres are required to provide us with an overview of how their organisation or team is structured. This involves job specifications and CVs for key members of staff and information on the legal structures in place.

2.3 Qualification Teams and Staffing

In order to assure us that the delivery of the qualification is in good hands, centres are asked to provide information on all qualification team members including roles, responsibilities and a CV for each team member.

We will also need information on how the recruitment of staff is organised and by which criteria staff are selected to fulfil key roles in the qualification provision. Such information should be included in the Staff Handbook or relevant section of a website or virtual learning environment (see section 4 of this handbook for more information on Staff Handbook content). We will review and discuss the staffing needs of the qualification or provision and review recruitment procedures and information sharing.

All approved centre staff involved in the delivery, assessment and quality assurance of a Crossfields Institute qualification are expected to undertake mandatory holistic assessor and internal quality assurance training prior to the start of delivery.

Staff Development and Training

Centres are required to have processes in place for maintaining the quality of teaching, learning and assessment of the qualification through the effective operation of staff development policies at qualification level. This should include internal workshops, peer review of teaching, induction and mentoring of new staff, and staff involvement in subject networks or peer review groups.

Support to visiting and part-time staff

Centres are asked to provide information on processes that promote the integration of visiting and part-time staff and the extent to which they have access to the staff development opportunities described above.

See section 3 of this handbook for further information regarding staff resources.

2.4 Qualification and Quality Assurance Management

In order to ensure a high quality provision we ask that approved centres present a clear overview of staff roles and responsibilities in relation to programme delivery and quality assurance management.

For quality assurance purposes, each qualification must have allocated staff members to fulfil the following functions:

1. Qualification Team Coordinator
2. Academic Administrator
3. Quality Nominee
4. Internal Quality Assurer (IQA)
5. Bursar or Bookkeeper
6. Assessors

Centres are assessed against standard quality assurance criteria relevant to the level and volume of the qualification. The criteria we operate with are developed on the basis of recommendations from Ofqual¹ and the Quality Assurance Agency². If deemed necessary we will make recommendations on the regularity of qualification meetings, qualification reviews and general information sharing and flow of communication.

All processes must be tracked and recorded, signed and filed. Minutes of meetings, reports and reviews must be made available upon request. Staff induction procedures must reflect introduction and guidance on how the qualification is managed. Role descriptors are assessed on whether they reflect the qualification management procedures.

See section 11 of this handbook for further information regarding the centre quality assurance process.

2.5 Learner Recruitment and Entry Requirements

Centres are asked to provide information on how entry requirements and learner recruitment are conducted. We want to understand the rationale for the entry criteria to the qualification. The learner admissions process, enrolment policies and learner recruitment information are reviewed and assessed. Recommendations will be made to ensure that the learner recruitment process reflects equality, diversity, fairness and rigour.

2.6 Learner Records

Centres are required to provide information on how data is protected. A data protection policy must be in place to ensure that data is not processed without consent wherever possible. The policy must comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) that comes into effect in all parts of the UK on 25th May 2018. Please refer to the Crossfields Institute Data Protection Policy. All relevant records relating to learner registration or certification must be kept safely and securely for three years post certification, as specified in the Crossfields Institute Registration and Certification Policy. See section 8 of this handbook for further details on the centre's responsibilities surrounding registration and certification.

2.7 Assessment

Centres are required to provide us with their policies and procedures for ensuring valid, fair and reliable assessment. Assessment and internal quality assurance policies must be in place. The assessment policies and procedures will be cross-referenced to the Crossfields Institute criteria, which are designed to:

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofqual>

² www.qaa.ac.uk

- Ensure access and equality of opportunity whilst preserving the integrity of the qualification
- Ensure there are no obstacles to demonstrating achievement
- Provide ongoing support to learners, including those with particular requirements
- Take account of all current legislation with regards to equality of opportunity

It is a requirement that all centres keep learner assessment records for at least 3 years after completion of the qualification.

Please refer to the Crossfields institute Assessment Policy and section 5 of this handbook for more details on assessment guidance and arrangements.

2.8 Complaints, Appeals and Compliance

Centres may have to make decisions that affect learners personally, perhaps to do with an application for exceptional assessment arrangements, a request for a fee refund, or certification. If a person thinks that a case has not been properly considered or that a decision is unfair, they have the right to query, then complain and then to appeal against it. In order to ensure a fair process around complaints and appeals, centres are required to have in place policies that set out an appropriate step-by-step process. Complaints and appeals policies must explain the general procedure for querying and appealing against centre decisions. See Crossfields Institute Complaints and Appeals Policies and section 6 of this handbook for details on procedure and guidance for complaints and appeals.

2.9 Context and Resources

The centre must demonstrate sufficient technical and staffing resources to support the qualification that it intends to offer throughout the life of the qualification. The resources named must be available to learners, fit for purpose, and safe for use. This should include specialised and general resources. Resources must be available in sufficient quantity for the size of learning groups. Centres are asked to describe how general and specific resources are monitored to ensure they are fit for purpose and safe to use. Where external expertise is used, the centre ensures that the experts are familiar with the specification and any assessment requirements of the qualification. Quality assurance remains the responsibility of the centre.

See section 3 of this handbook for more details.

3) Centre Resources

3.1 Staff Resources

To offer Crossfields Institute qualifications centres are required to have staff that have relevant subject experience (practical and/or teaching) and/or relevant qualifications at the level above the qualification(s) the centre will deliver.

The centre is required to:

- retain staff of appropriate size, competence, experience and track record to undertake the delivery of the qualification - this includes taking reasonable steps to ensure their competence where this is required for the assessment of specific qualifications

- ensure that there is available sufficient managerial and other resources to enable the centre to effectively and efficiently undertake the delivery of the qualification as required by Crossfields Institute
- undertake to provide staff with appropriate inductions and professional development (including a development plan) to ensure staff can maintain their expertise and competence for the qualifications that it will deliver
- ensure that staff involved with a qualification fully understand the relevant qualification specification(s) provided by Crossfields Institute, and will comply with its provisions
- ensure that assessments are not undertaken by any person who has a personal interest in the result of the assessment (e.g. IQAs signing off their own assessments; someone assessing the work of a family member; or someone whose pay is unduly influenced by positive assessment results)

3.2 Physical Resources

Centres are required to have adequate physical resources in place in the following areas to support the delivery and assessment of the qualification:

- IT facilities
- Library resources
- Learning facilities
- Any specialist equipment that may be required

3.3 Systems Resources

Centres must ensure that they have adequate systems in place to administer and deliver the qualifications. As a minimum, centres must have in place:

- Reliable web access
- Robust operating systems that are appropriate to the delivery of qualifications that are compatible with Crossfields Institute's systems
- Comprehensive backup systems to ensure data security and operational continuity. Crossfields Institute recommend having an extensive Business Contingency Plan in place.

4) Centre Policies and Procedures

Learner Handbooks and Qualification Specifications

All learners must receive information on how to easily access both the qualification specification and the centre's policies and procedures. Policies and procedures can be either in the form of a Learner Handbook or made available on the centre's website or VLE. The qualification specification is available from Crossfields Institute.

Information that should be made available to the learner includes:

Key Information:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of Qualification and/or Organisation • Important Contact Information • Entry Requirements • Attendance Requirements • Teaching Schedule • Assignment Schedule/Assessment Plan and Submission Deadlines • Assessment and Progression • Learner Support and Guidance • Payment of Learner Fees • The Centre's Liabilities • Criminal Convictions and DBS checks
Mandatory Policies:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints Policy • Appeals Policy • Data Protection Policy • Equality and Diversity Policy and Procedure • Learner Recruitment Policy • Malpractice and Maladministration Policy • Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy • Recognition of Prior Learning Policy (RPL) • Registration and Certification Policy • Health and Safety Policy • Assessment Policy • Internal Quality Assurance Policy
Optional:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referencing • Graduation and Granting of the Award • Qualifications and Job Prospects • Learner Self-Assessment • Learner Agreement • Statement of Understanding • Migrant Learner and Sponsorship Policy (if recruiting international learners)

Staff/Faculty Handbooks

All centres approved to deliver Crossfields Institute qualifications are required to provide key information about the organisation, its values, mission, method and practical details relating to the qualification, as well as the key policies and procedures to all its staff.

Below are the information and policies a centre must have as a minimum. They can either be in the centre's Staff Handbook or on the centre's website or VLE.

Key Information:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision/Mission Statement • Staff Contact Details • Criminal Records and DBS Checks • Qualification Team Meetings • Resources • Staff Appraisal Scheme and Staff Development Plans

Mandatory Policies:

- Complaints Policy
- Appeals Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy and Procedure
- Malpractice Policy
- Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration Policy
- Recognition of Prior Learning Policy (RPL)
- Registration and Certification Policy
- Staff Recruitment Policy
- Staff Induction and CPD Policy and Procedure
- Health and Safety Policy
- Assessment Policy
- Internal Quality Assurance Policy

Optional:

- Qualification/Organisation History
- Organisational Structure and Management
- Learner Recruitment Policy
- Migrant Learner Sponsorship Policy (if recruiting international learners)
- Probation Policy
- Stress Management
- Attendance and Sickness Procedures
- Annual Leave
- Parental Leave and Pay Policy
- Confidentiality Policy and Procedures
- Flexible Working Policy
- Outside Communication Policy
- Pay and Grading Policy
- Alcohol, Drugs and Smoking Policy
- Disciplinary and Dismissal Procedure
- Safeguarding Policy and Procedure
- Whistleblowing Policy

5) Assessment Guidance and Arrangements

5.1 Centre Support and Guidance

Centres should use the following Crossfields Institute documents to ensure that assessment requirements are met and appropriate procedures followed:

- Assessor Toolkit
- IQA Handbook
- Qualification Specification

5.2 Centre Obligations

Refer to section 2.7 of this handbook for centre obligations surrounding assessment and quality assurance.

5.3 Record Keeping

Crossfields Institute expects that centres keep clear and auditable records for:

- Registration and learner details
- Assessment
- IQA and EQA feedback
- Assessment and Learner progress
- Evidence of standardisation
- Claims

6) Accessing Crossfields Institute Support

6.1 Key Contacts

Alison Richards, Responsible Officer and Head of Quality

Crossfields Institute, Stroud House, Russell Street, Stroud, Gloucestershire GL5 3AN

01453 760 291

alison@crossfieldsinstitute.com

Academic Administration Team

Crossfields Institute, Stroud House, Russell Street, Stroud, Gloucestershire GL5 3AN

01453 760 294

info@crossfieldsinstitute.com

Quality Team

Crossfields Institute, Stroud House, Russell Street, Stroud, Gloucestershire GL5 3AN

01453 760 295

qualityassurance@crossfieldsinstitute.com

6.2 Crossfields Institute IT System

Crossfields Institute's centre management and registration system is called Mercury and is accessible online at www.crossfieldsmercury.com. Centres approved to deliver regulated qualifications are provided with login details from centre approval application stage and access is increased when a centre is approved. A fully approved centre will receive individual access accounts for each staff user. The system can then be used by the centre to manage its own records.

User manuals will be provided to centres once centre approval is complete. For user support, please contact the Academic Administration Team at info@crossfieldsinstitute.com or call 01453 760294.

6.3 Crossfields Institute Policies

All Crossfields Institute policies can be viewed at www.crossfieldsinstitute.com/resources/ and are also available in the "Documents" section of Mercury. Centres are expected to be familiar with these policies and abide by them where applicable.

6.4 Future Qualification Approval Applications

Centres can apply to deliver additional qualifications by completing the Qualification Approval form, available from the Quality Team or on the Mercury system.

6.5 Complaints

Centres submitting a **complaint** to Crossfields Institute should follow the CI **Complaints** Policy and Procedure, available at www.crossfieldsinstitute.com/resources/ or through the "Documents" section of Mercury. Complaints should be submitted to the Quality Team at qualityassurance@crossfieldsinstitute.com.

6.6 Appeals

Centres submitting an **appeal** to Crossfields Institute should follow the CI **Appeals** Policy and Procedure, available at www.crossfieldsinstitute.com/resources/ or through the "Documents" section of Mercury. Appeals should be submitted to the Responsible Officer at alison@crossfieldsinstitute.com.

7) Malpractice and Maladministration

7.1 Malpractice and Maladministration Policy

The full Crossfields Institute Malpractice and Maladministration Policy, including definitions of malpractice and maladministration, and processes to be followed can be found at www.crossfieldsinstitute.com/resources/ and through the "Documents" section of the Mercury online system.

It is important that all staff involved in the management, assessment and quality assurance of Crossfields Institute qualifications, and all learners, are fully aware of the contents of the policy and that the centre has arrangements in place to prevent and investigate instances of malpractice and maladministration.

Centres should ensure that they have their own malpractice and maladministration policy in place that aligns with the policy and procedure set out by Crossfields Institute.

7.2 Centre Obligations

Failure to report suspected or actual malpractice/maladministration cases, or have in place effective arrangements to prevent such cases, may lead to sanctions being imposed on a centre

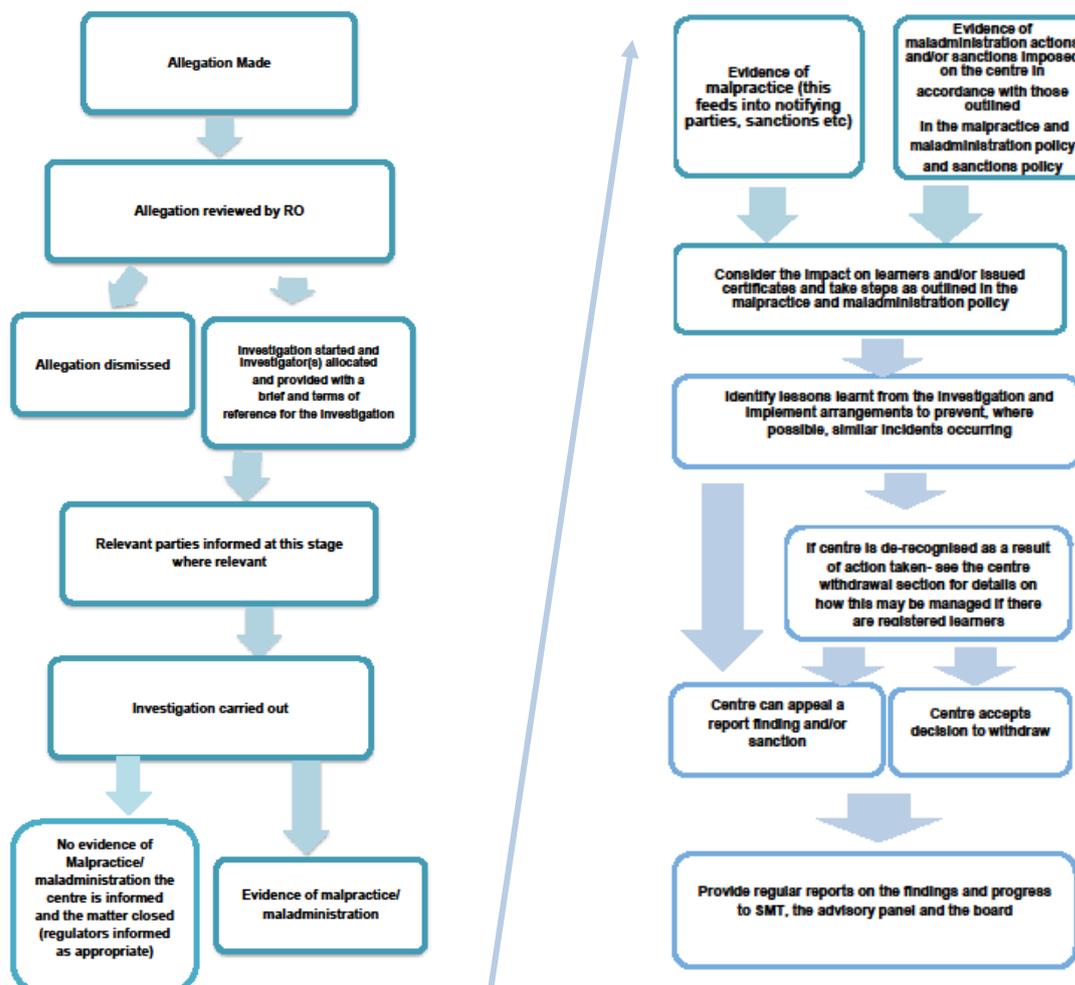
(see Crossfields Institute's Sanctions policy at www.crossfieldsinstitute.com/resources/ for details of the sanctions that may be imposed).

To receive guidance/advice from Crossfields Institute on how to prevent, investigate, and deal with malpractice and maladministration, please contact the Quality Team at Crossfields Institute who will provide the necessary information and training.

The centre's compliance with the Malpractice and Maladministration policy and how it takes reasonable steps to prevent and/or investigate instances of malpractice and maladministration will be reviewed by Crossfields Institute periodically through regular centre monitoring arrangements.

7.3 Crossfields Institute’s Malpractice Investigation Process

Below is a flow chart of the investigation process we will follow if we suspect that there is a Malpractice/Maladministration occurring, or if there has been an allegation.



Stage 1: Briefing and record-keeping

- All suspected cases of malpractice and maladministration will be passed to Responsible Officer (RO), who will record the issues in the Mercury system. The RO will ensure any investigation is carried out in a prompt and effective manner and in accordance with the procedures in Crossfields Institute’s Malpractice and Maladministration Policy. If the suspected case of malpractice or maladministration is about the Responsible Officer they will ask the Head of Executive and Academic Administration to review the case. The RO will allocate a relevant member of staff (e.g. an EQA) to lead the investigation, or may lead the investigation herself, and establish whether or not the malpractice or maladministration has occurred, and review any supporting evidence received or gathered. This person(s) will be the investigator for the case.
- If the RO identifies that an additional external resource is needed to investigate the malpractice case, they will be recruited in accordance with Crossfields Institute’s 3rd

party arrangements, including appropriate background checks and any potential or actual conflicts of interest will be logged and managed through Crossfields Institute's conflict of interest log in the Mercury system.

- If, due to the nature of the allegation being investigated, the investigation will be carried out jointly with another organisation (e.g. another AO, the regulators or funding bodies) the RO will clarify the leadership responsibilities with the other organisation(s) and agree the working and investigation principles and arrangements that must be followed. They will then ensure that all members of Crossfields Institute's investigation team are fully informed of the agreement and work accordingly.
- The investigator will ensure that an individual or centre has not been asked to assist or lead an investigation when there is a suspicion or allegation that the individual or centre was itself connected to the incident being investigated.
- The terms of reference for each investigation will be recorded by the RO, in the Malpractice/Maladministration log in the Mercury system (unless agreed otherwise as part of the principles/agreement associated with any joint investigation activities).
- Staff assigned to an investigation (referred to in the rest of this section as 'investigators') will have a clear brief from the RO and therefore have a clear understanding of their role in the investigation and the need to maintain an auditable record of every key action during an investigation.
- The RO will stipulate and/or provide secure storage arrangements for all material associated with an investigation in case of subsequent legal challenge.
- All allegations of malpractice and/or maladministration will be recorded in the Mercury online system by the RO. This will enable Crossfields Institute to identify possible trends/issues; to revisit at a later date if new evidence comes to light; and/or to show to the regulators upon request to prove compliance with their good practice guidance for dealing with malpractice and/or maladministration.

Stage 2: Establishing the facts

- Reviewer/investigators should review the relevant evidence and associated documentation, including relevant Crossfields Institute guidance on the delivery of the qualifications and related quality assurance arrangements, to determine:
 - What occurred (nature of malpractice/substance of the allegations)
 - Why the incident occurred
 - Who was involved in the incident
 - When it occurred
 - Where it occurred (e.g. there may be more than one location or centre affected)
 - What action, if any, the centre has taken
- If relevant according to the nature of the investigation, the investigator may check previous claims for exemptions, equivalences or RPL if there are doubts about the validity of such requests. They may also check claims for reasonable adjustments and special considerations. The investigator may also review previous centre monitoring reports, complaints or appeals as they appear relevant to the investigation.

Stage 3: Interviews

- Most investigations will include interviews with key parties and therefore interviews should be thoroughly prepared, conducted appropriately and underpinned by clear records of the interviews.

Stage 4: Other contacts

- In some cases, learners or employers may need to be contacted for facts and information. This may be done via face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews, by post or by email.
- Whichever method is used, the investigator will have a set of prepared questions. The responses will be recorded and attached as relevant to the Malpractice/Maladministration Form. Investigators should log the number of attempts made to contact an individual.

Stage 5: Documentary evidence

- Wherever possible documentary evidence should be authenticated by reference to the author; this may include asking learners and others to confirm handwriting, dates and signatures.
- Receipts should be given for any documentation removed from a centre.
- Where relevant, independent expert opinion may be obtained from subject specialists about a learner's evidence and/or from a specialist organisation such as a forensic examiner, who may comment on the validity of documents.

Stage 6: Conclusions

- Once the investigators have gathered and reviewed all relevant evidence, the draft findings and recommendations should be forwarded to the RO, to enable a decision to be made on the outcome of the investigation and any appropriate actions that should be undertaken. (For example notifying relevant parties, applying actions and/or sanctions; amending Crossfields Institute's internal arrangements and/or centre guidance, etc.). The RO may consult with the Quality Committee for their opinion when making a judgement.

Stage 7: Reporting

- The final outcomes are submitted to the relevant parties (eg centres) in accordance with the arrangements outlined in Crossfields Institute's Malpractice and Maladministration Policy.

Stage 8: Actions

- Any resultant action plan, sanction and/or internal lessons learnt are implemented and monitored appropriately by the RO.

The RO, will complete a 'lessons learned' summary at the end of each investigation. They will make recommendations to the Senior Management Team (SMT) to ensure lessons are learnt

from experiences of malpractice and maladministration and improve systems and guidance as appropriate. The RO will also notify Ofqual and any other relevant awarding organisations of the malpractice/maladministration that has taken place.

The investigation report will be produced and maintained in Crossfields Institute's Mercury system and in doing so will produce an up to date log showing how many investigations are underway at any one time and the status of any closed investigations.

8) Registration and Certification

Registration

Centres should register all new learners within 4 weeks of the programme commencing. Centres delivering qualifications or Quality Mark programmes should register learners through the online Mercury system which allows centres to manage their learner registrations and view learner records. Support with this can be requested from the Academic Administration Team info@crossfieldsinstitute.com.

Centres should familiarise themselves with the CI Registration and Certification policy which can be found at www.crossfieldsinstitute.com/resources and which is available from the "documents" section of Mercury. Registration fees for specific qualifications are available through the CI Fees and Invoicing Policy at www.crossfieldsinstitute.com/resources.

Centres need to register a minimum of 5 learners per cohort or each qualification/programme and should not duplicate learner registrations. Learner registrations are non-refundable.

Certification

Certificate claims should be made through Mercury, and can be supported by the Academic Administration Team (contact info@crossfieldsinstitute.com). Centres should ensure that all claims are accurate and have undergone the appropriate quality assurance procedures.

Replacement or reprints of certificates can be ordered through the centre within the first year of completion and directly to Crossfields Institute thereafter. Learners applying directly to Crossfields Institute for a replacement certificate need to provide ID in the form of a photocopied passport, driving licence or birth certificate, as well as a proof of address if learners apply directly to Crossfields Institute (utility bill, bank statement). Consult the CI Registration and Certification policy for full details and fee information. Replacement certificates will only be issued when payment is received by Crossfields Institute.

9) Recognition of Prior Learning

Requests for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) can only be approved in line with decisions taken at qualification design stage.

For the full CI Recognition of Prior Learning policy and procedure visit www.crossfieldsinstitute.com/resources or the “Documents” section of the Mercury online system.

Requests for, and assessment of, RPL should be made as soon as possible once the learner is registered on a qualification. They should not be left until delivery and assessment activities have come to an end, as this could seriously disadvantage the learner if their request is rejected.

Centres should ensure that they have their own RPL policy in place that is in accordance with the policy and procedure set out by Crossfields Institute.

10) Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations

The full Crossfields Institute Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations policy can be viewed at www.crossfieldsinstitute.com/resources or through the “Documents” section of the Mercury online system. Centres should familiarise themselves with the policy and, should any areas require clarification, request assistance from Crossfields Institute.

Centres should ensure that they have their own reasonable adjustments and special considerations policy in place that is in accordance with the policy and procedure set out by Crossfields Institute.

11) Centre Quality Assurance Process

11.1 Overview

New centres wishing to offer a Crossfields Institute qualification will need to complete a Centre Approval Application request through the Mercury system. When a centre is applying for approval, the Head of Quality assigns a member of the Quality Team to visit the centre. This visit is to ensure that they have the appropriate resources in place to be able to deliver the provision in accordance with the qualification specification (for example suitably qualified and experienced staff and adequate facilities and resources).

Once a centre is approved, all centre staff involved in the delivery, assessment and quality assurance of a Crossfields Institute qualification are expected to undertake mandatory holistic assessor and internal quality assurance training prior to the start of delivery.

Already approved centres applying to offer further Crossfields Institute qualifications, will need to complete a Qualification Approval Application request to add additional qualifications to their centre profile. This can be done through the Mercury system. The Head of Quality has oversight of this process.

Visits from a member of the Quality Team are not required for ‘qualification approval’ only applications, unless there are concerns about the centre’s track-record and/or ability to deliver a new qualification type effectively.

The Quality Team reviewer will review any centre devised assessment activities that the centre is considering using (if they are seeking recognition and approval for a regulated qualification) with

views sought from the Head of Quality as appropriate. The reviewer may also outline the process the centre needs to go through to seek approval of future assessment activities.

Crossfields Institute reserves the right to make review visits to centres at any time to ensure that agreed practice and procedures are being adhered to. Centres will be required to provide access to learners, staff and learning records at these visits. These visits can be made with a minimum of 24 hours' notice to the centre, and will be decided by the Head of Quality in consultation with the Chief Executive Officer.

Qualification Specification: Crossfields Institute will provide a detailed qualification specification for each of the qualifications (and its associated units/modules) that a centre intends to deliver. These will be available to centres through our website or the Mercury system.

11.2 Centre Monitoring

This is an annual visit conducted by a member of the Quality Team appointed by the Head of Quality to review the centre's arrangements for learner support and guidance, centre resources, quality management systems, administrative systems, policies and procedures, management and assessment practice. Reviews may be conducted either as standalone events or as part of a wider EQA visit that includes sampling of learner work. Crossfields Institute operates a risk based approach to Centre Review so in cases where more than one visit is necessary another visit will be arranged. Details of the risk profile of each centre are stored on Mercury so that staff at Crossfields Institute can monitor whether the centre is deemed high risk, low risk, etc. for each of the risk categories.

A visit will normally be conducted at least once a year – although additional visits will be carried out if there are concerns about the centre's performance, there has been a significant change in the number of qualifications they are offering, the number of learners registered, or they are using a new form of assessment at the centre. Quality Improvement Actions may be agreed as a result of these reviews, to be implemented during the year.

Any centre classified as high risk for any category will be monitored by the Head of Quality. This will include increased monitoring such as additional EQA visits.

Additional visits may also be carried out in response to issues that may have emerged from an investigation into a complaint or appeal. If issues have been raised by another AO we will initiate an extra visit.

In addition to the regular EQA visits (either remote or to a site), Crossfields Institute reserves the right to carry out other pre-arranged or unannounced visits in the interests of ensuring maintenance of quality standards. Such visits may be undertaken by the EQA or other representative(s) of Crossfields Institute.

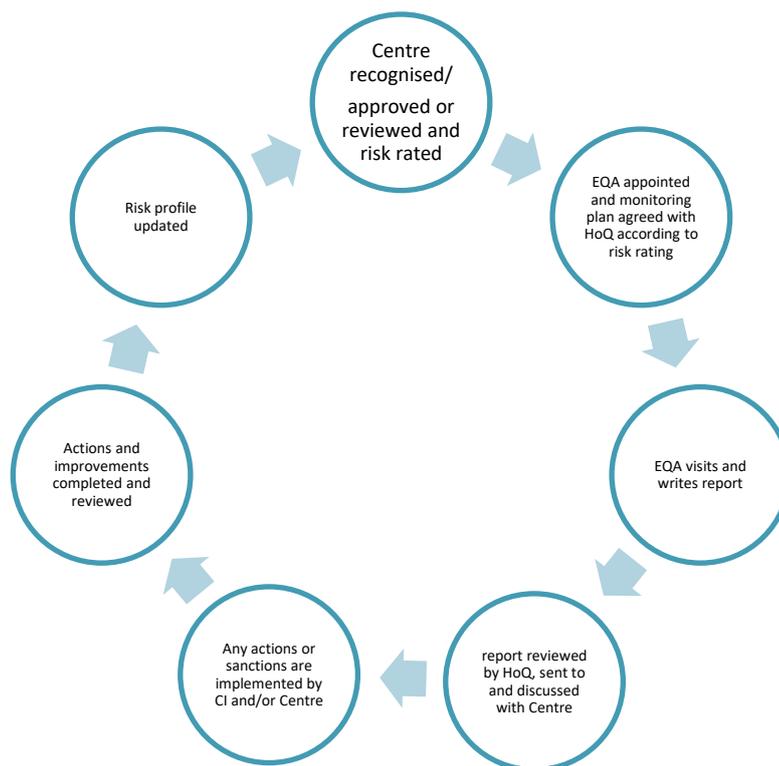
Each centre may also be contacted by a member of the Quality Team to assess their level of activity/plans and to identify additional needs. This contact will usually be undertaken remotely, between a member of the Quality Team and the Crossfields Institute approved centre contact. The purpose of this will be to identify whether there have been any significant changes (or planned changes) that may warrant an additional visit or a planned visit being brought forward. All such remote engagements are recorded in the Mercury system.

11.3 External Quality Assurance Visit

Crossfields Institute also conducts External Quality Assurance (EQA) visits to focus on delivery, certification, assessment, internal quality assurance (IQA), sampling learner portfolios, learner experience, assessor feedback, IQA reports and standardisation activities. During these visits EQAs will aim to meet learners, assessors and IQAs and observe assessment activities where possible. This visit may be combined with the centre review visit.

For centres that are judged low risk, Crossfields Institute may also perform remote external quality assurance, (desktop) sampling documentation that has been posted, emailed or uploaded to the relevant EQA. The EQA will sample the documents and compile a report which is submitted to the Head of Quality.

EQA Cycle



The Head of Quality is responsible for managing this process.

11.4 Visit Preparation

Prior to any engagement with the centre the EQA will review the centre's online profile to ascertain the latest information and overview of the centre and to inform the level and type of engagement.

In relation to actual visit based activities, an EQA will contact the centre in advance of a centre visit to explain the scope of the visit and the verification and sampling activities that will take place. Where possible, this contact will include making arrangements to observe assessments taking place.

Where appropriate, the EQA may decide to request information from the centre in advance of the visit to help inform the sample that will be undertaken at the visit, as well as reviewing information that Crossfields Institute holds on the centre in their centre profile (e.g. details of previous enquiries, complaints, appeals, etc.).

Centres are obliged to comply with any requests for access to premises, people and records for the purposes of external quality assurance. If a centre fails to provide access the EQA will inform the Head of Quality who will then decide on the appropriate action to take with the centre.

Once a visit date has been agreed, the centre will need to ensure that the appropriate members of staff attend the meeting, all requested documentation is provided and access to course and staff records is available.

If a centre cancels an EQA visit at short notice the EQA will contact the Head of Quality who must be satisfied that there was a legitimate reason for the cancellation. If this cannot be established, Crossfields Institute will reserve the right to withhold certification claims until a monitoring visit is completed.

11.5 EQA Visits/Monitoring

Whilst undertaking a visit and/or as part of the overall monitoring approach, each EQA should:

- Ensure, through appropriate sampling/moderation, that assessment arrangements are fit for purpose and the criteria against which learners' performance is differentiated are being applied consistently by assessors in accordance with requirements specified for each qualification
- Check that any centre based assessment activities for Ofqual regulated qualifications have been submitted to Crossfields Institute for approval and reviewed by the Lead EQA or Head of Quality, and are being implemented appropriately and consistently
- Ensure the centre is taking all reasonable steps to prevent the occurrence of malpractice or maladministration
- Confirm that previously identified action points have been met
- Confirm that assessments are conducted by appropriately qualified and occupationally expert assessors
- Confirm the centre has the appropriate resources and expertise to deliver qualifications in accordance with Crossfields Institute, sector and/or regulatory requirements
- Sample assessment decisions to confirm that the learner evidence is authentic and valid, and that qualification standards are being consistently maintained and regulatory requirements adhered to
- Confirm that assessment decisions are regularly sampled, through internal quality assurance, for accuracy against the qualification standards
- Check that claims for certification are authentic, valid and supported by auditable records and that learners have met the specified level of attainment
- Ensure that the centre is retaining appropriate records of assessment and internal quality assurance decisions for three years
- Ensure that the centre is meeting Crossfields Institute requirements for learner data retention as set out in Crossfields Institute's guidance to centres
- Advise and support centres on the interpretation of qualification standards, learning outcomes and assessment criteria
- Provide centres with feedback and support in relation to internal quality assurance activities
- Provide centres with up to date information and advice in line with Crossfields Institute and regulatory authority guidance and requirements
- Recommend the application of appropriate sanctions in line with Crossfields Institute's Sanctions Policy (see www.crossfieldsinstitute.com/resources), for centres that fail to meet the requirements
- Identify opportunities at the centre for them to offer additional Crossfields Institute qualifications (where appropriate)

11.6 Sampling at a Centre

The EQA should record details of the sample they select at a centre, and the rationale behind its selection, so that the Head of Quality can monitor the characteristics of selected samples over time as well as the effectiveness of the sampling being carried out.

In order to make decisions on the matters listed above, an EQA should see evidence of the following at each visit and over a suitable period of time:

- Evidence that assessors, trainers and internal quality assurers have appropriate qualifications and/or experience to meet the assessment strategy for the awards/units they assess/quality assure
- Evidence of continuous professional development (CPD) for assessors, tutors and internal quality assurers, and hold appropriate records on them
- Evidence that learners have access to fair and unbiased assessment
- Evidence of valid claims for exemptions and/or RPL (recognition of prior learning)
- Evidence that assessments are structured effectively in terms of planning, assessing, review and feedback
- Assessment instruments, evidence, tasks and assessment methods (e.g. learner portfolio or other evidence or assessment conditions) to ensure they are appropriate and that centre based assessment activities have been approved by the Lead EQA or Head of Quality in advance of their use
- Evidence that assessors are taking part in standardisation activities
- Evidence that the centre is complying with Crossfields Institute policies and procedures
- Evidence of the assessment decisions of all assessors
- Evidence from all assessment locations to ensure standards are being consistently applied
- Internal quality assurance and assessment records including feedback to assessors
- Evidence of learner registration and claim records for units and qualifications
- Evidence of internal quality assurance strategy and sampling records
- Evidence of details of any appeals, or reasonable adjustments
- Evidence that the centre has an Equality and Diversity Policy, Appeals Policy and Complaints Policy and effective arrangements to prevent and investigate instances of malpractice and maladministration, and that staff and learners are able to access these policies and procedures

The Crossfields Institute EQA will also report back to the Head of Quality concerning any training needs that have been identified at the visit.

To assist the EQAs in their sampling activities, they will have access to information on the learners registered by the centre and whether their learning is in progress or completed.

In developing a sampling strategy, an EQA must take into account the specific circumstances of the centre being visited. Particular factors which will determine the scope of a sample may include:

- Number of registered learners
- Number of certificates claimed
- Assessor and IQA qualifications and/or experience
- Learner/assessor ratios
- IQA/assessor ratios
- Number of sub centre/satellite sites and their geographical location. Where a centre has a number of assessment sites the sampling plan must enable the EQA to verify that assessment and internal quality assurance practices are maintained with equal rigour and consistency at all locations

- The centre's track record in complying with Crossfields Institute's requirements and any agreed action plans
- Rate of staff turnover

The EQA should ensure that their sampling strategy involves not only the inspection of evidence, but also meetings with IQAs, assessors and learners, in order that the EQA can confirm whether the process of assessment, as well as the standards being used to judge learner competence, are consistent and meet qualification standards.

The EQA should ensure that the selection of learners, assessors and IQAs for sampling is not left solely to the discretion of the centre and should therefore select learners without prior notification to the centre, to minimise the risk of fraudulent claims for certification.

If a centre fails to make available the learners selected for interview the EQA will inform the Head of Quality who will require the centre to provide proof that these learners exist. If this cannot be clearly established the Responsible Officer will decide on what sanctions should be applied and the nature of any potential malpractice or maladministration investigation.

The final sample must be sufficient for the EQA to:

- Confirm the consistency and authenticity of assessment decisions
- Confirm the validity of claims for certification and authenticity of learners' evidence
- Provide evidence to support their conclusions

If the sample shows that the centre is not applying the required standards, the EQA will:

- Identify and record the specific area of concern
- Confirm that they will overturn or remark assessments carried out by the centre
- Notify the Head of Quality/Responsible Officer to assess the impact on Crossfields Institute's qualifications, materials and/or certificates that have/have not been awarded
- Feedback immediately to the IQA and/or the centre representative and request a further sample to ascertain the extent of the non-compliance
- Record the findings in the EQA report
- Recommend sanctions, if appropriate
- Create an appropriate action plan for the centre

It should be noted that some qualifications may include stimulus materials provided by Crossfields Institute to support assessments, or that may be provided by the centre. The use of these should be reviewed from time to time during centre visits to ensure that they, and the language they use, are appropriate. Stimulus materials are only appropriate if they:

- Enable learners to demonstrate their level of attainment
- Require knowledge, skills and understanding which are required by the qualification
- Are clear and unambiguous (unless ambiguity forms part of the assessment)
- Are not likely to cause unnecessary offence to learners

In considering whether language and stimulus materials for an assessment are appropriate, an EQA must take into account in particular:

- The age of learners who may reasonably be expected to take the qualification
- The level of the qualification
- The objective of the qualification
- The knowledge, skills and understanding assessed for the qualification
- Whether it contains language or content which could lead a group of learners who share a common attribute or circumstance to experience – because of that attribute or circumstance – an unreasonable disadvantage in the level of attainment that they are able to demonstrate in the assessment

11.7 EQA Reports

At the end of each visit the EQA will provide a report to the centre and Head of Quality, that:

- Records the date of the visit
- Details the monitoring and verification activities undertaken, including information on any sampling undertaken and who was interviewed
- Contains feedback to the centre on the quality and consistency of its assessment process and the effectiveness of internal quality assurance arrangements
- Highlights areas of good practice
- Specifies what actions the centre must take if its performance does not meet Crossfields Institute's requirements, when these actions must be completed and who is responsible for completing them
- Gives details of any sanctions that will be imposed (if applicable), or will be recommended to the Head of Quality to impose with a rationale for such a decision

EQAs will be familiar with Crossfields Institute's Malpractice and Maladministration policy and their responsibility to report any potential or alleged malpractice immediately to the Head of Quality.

If the centre is unhappy with the conduct or outcome of a quality assurance visit, the matter should be taken up through Crossfields Institute's Appeals procedure (see section 6.6 of this handbook and Crossfields Institute's Appeals policy at www.crossfieldsinstitute.com/resources).

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Reviewed by: Head of Quality and Responsible Officer, Alison Richards