

Approval: Centre, staff, site,  
and qualification.

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## Policy statement

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Approval is the process of verifying that an organisation has the necessary resources, governance, policies, and qualified staff to deliver, assess, and quality assure YMCA Awards qualifications.

Becoming an approved centre with YMCA Awards means delivering respected, high-impact qualifications with expert support and a strong quality assurance framework—empowering your learners and your organisation.

This policy outlines the requirements and processes used to approve organisations (Centres), staff, sites, and qualifications.

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## Scope

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This policy applies to:

- Organisations seeking YMCA Awards approval as a centre.
- Staff involved in delivering and assessing YMCA Awards qualifications.
- Sites used for qualification delivery and assessment.
- Approval of qualifications for delivery by centres.

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## Approach

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YMCA Awards is committed to a collaborative and supportive approach throughout our approval process. We provide opportunities for centres to engage with our team through dedicated support calls, designed to discuss specific requirements, address any queries, and align our services with the centre's needs. These sessions enable detailed discussions to ensure a shared understanding of expectations and to support centres with demonstrating how to meet the standards required for approval.

YMCA Awards takes a risk-based approach to organisation approval, assessing the information and evidence provided at the point of application to determine whether a centre presents a lower risk.

Low-risk centres are those that demonstrate financial stability, have sufficient staff and resources to deliver qualifications effectively, and can evidence a history of compliance with awarding organisation requirements. These centres typically have no unresolved issues or actions with other awarding organisations and a proven track record of delivering equivalent regulated qualifications successfully. Centres assessed as low risk may be offered a streamlined approval route, reflecting their strong track record and commitment to meeting high standards.

## New organisation (centre) approval

Our new organisation (centre) approval process consists of five stages:

1	<b>Initial enquiry</b> Book a call with one of our team to discuss how YMCA Awards qualifications can support your learners. This initial stage provides an opportunity to address any questions you may have about becoming an approved centre.
2	<b>Application</b> Complete your application, choosing between two approaches. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If you are confident in understanding the requirements and have all necessary evidence prepared, completed the application form independently.</li><li>• Alternatively, if you like support with completion of the application form, our team can provide direct assistance to guide you through the questions and evidence required.</li></ul>
3	<b>Desk-based review</b> A desk-based review will be conducted to review whether the information provided aligns with YMCA Awards' approval requirements. Centres identified as low risk at this stage will progress to the outcome stage.  Applications requiring an evaluation meeting will be made aware and support will be provided to prepare for the meeting and booking in the earliest available date/time.
4	<b>Evaluation</b> The evaluation meeting allows for an in-depth review of the submitted evidence and its alignment with YMCA Awards' approval requirements. During this stage, we will explore your plans for delivering qualifications, the learner journey (including teaching, assessment, and quality assurance processes), and your approach to maintaining high standards of learner support. This meeting also provides an opportunity for you to ask any further questions about the approval, qualifications being requested or ongoing responsibilities.
5	<b>Outcome</b> Following the review and, where applicable, the evaluation meeting, we will provide feedback detailing the outcome of your application. This feedback will outline the decision, including any actions, if required. Our team will be on hand to answer any questions and support the next stage of your journey with YMCA Awards.

Further information for each stage has been provided across the following pages.

## 1. Initial enquiry

Centre approval usually starts with a call to YMCA Awards to understand the approval requirements and to gain access to Y-Connect. During the initial call, we will discuss key considerations for prospective centres, including:

Area	Considerations
<b>Commitment and organisational goals</b>	<p>YMCA Awards centre approval requires organisations to meet YMCA Awards' high standards for teaching, assessments, and learner support. Prospective centres should consider how YMCA Awards qualifications fit with their organisational objectives and values.</p> <p>Delivering our qualifications presents a valuable opportunity to offer life-changing education and training. The partnership offers the chance to deliver qualifications supported by a trusted awarding organisation, committed to quality and fairness.</p>
<b>Familiarity with YMCA Awards Policies</b>	<p>Prospective centres should be familiar with our requirements and expectations. Reviewing key documents such as the Centre Agreement, Fair Assessment and External Quality Assurance Policy is essential.</p>
<b>Supporting Learners</b>	<p>Effective plans should be in place/developed to ensure learners are well-supported, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Processes for conducting learner inductions and recognising prior learning and achievement.</li><li>• Processes for providing reasonable adjustments for those with disabilities or additional support needs.</li><li>• Secure systems for storing learner records, complying with data protection legislation.</li><li>• Clear, accessible systems for handling complaints and appeals.</li><li>• Mechanisms for engaging learners and monitoring their progress.</li><li>• A strong internal quality assurance (IQA) strategy to ensure fairness and consistency in assessment decisions.</li><li>• Regular review and use of learner feedback to improve delivery and support.</li></ul>
<b>Subcontracting</b>	<p>For organisations planning to use subcontractors, there must be written agreements in place. Monitoring processes should also ensure subcontractors meet requirements set out in YMCA Awards' centre subcontracting policy.</p>
<b>Approval requirements</b>	<p>During approval we will check to ensure prospective centres have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• safe and accessible locations for learning and assessment, with adequate resources, such as equipment specific to the qualifications offered.</li></ul>

Area	Considerations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a team with relevant qualifications and experience in teaching, assessment, and internal quality assurance (IQA)</li> <li>sufficient policies and procedures in place to support delivery of teaching and assessment.</li> <li>adequate financial resources</li> </ul> <p>See approval requirements in the next table for more information.</p>

## 2. Application: New organisation enquiry/approval request form

To become a YMCA Awards' approved centre, organisations must complete the New organisation enquiry/approval request form in Y-Connect.

The New organisation enquiry/approval request form guides centres through the process of providing information on:

Information	Approval requirements
<b>Qualifications</b>	Organisations seeking approval must identify the qualifications they wish to offer and ensure they have the necessary expertise, resources, and equipment to support their chosen delivery model and meet learners' needs. Full details of qualification requirements, including specifications and assessment criteria, are available on the <a href="#">YMCA Awards website</a> .
<b>Financial stability</b>	Financial stability is key to sustaining the operations needed to deliver qualifications. Prospective centres are required to ensure financial resources are sufficient to cover ongoing costs, including YMCA Awards' fees, staff training, learner support and quality assurance activity.
<b>Sites</b>	Organisations must provide details of locations they intend to use to teach and assess our qualifications through the new site approval request form in Y-Connect  See Site approval.
<b>Staff</b>	Organisations must provide details of all staff that will be involved in teaching, assessment and quality assurance of YMCA Awards qualifications. This includes sharing copies of qualification certificates, experience and CPD records through the new staff approval request form in Y-Connect.  See Staff approval
<b>Policies and procedures</b>	Organisations must assure us that they have adequate policies and procedures in place to manage the delivery and assessment of our qualifications. This will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conflict of interest policy</li> <li>Equality and diversity policy</li> </ul>

Information	Approval requirements
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health and safety policy</li> <li>• IQA policy and strategy</li> <li>• Learner appeals policy</li> <li>• Learner complaints policy</li> <li>• Learner induction procedure</li> <li>• Maladministration and malpractice policy</li> <li>• Privacy/data protection/data processing policy</li> <li>• RPL and exemption procedure</li> <li>• Safeguarding policy</li> <li>• Video assessment policy (where applicable).</li> </ul> <p>These policies should reflect the organisations structure, current best practices and align with regulatory and legal requirements.</p>
<b>Relationships with other organisations</b>	Organisations must provide details of relationships with other awarding organisations and professional bodies, including previous external quality assurance reports. We also require organisations to make declarations around previous removal of approval or restrictions on registration or certification.

### 3. Desk-based review

Once the New organisation enquiry/approval request form has been completed, YMCA Awards completes a desk-based review. Where information is unclear or does not fully meet our requirements, we will continue communication with the prospective centre to request further information or evidence to support the application.

During the desk-based review, a member of the YMCA Awards Quality team makes a judgement on whether a pre-approval external quality assurance activity should take place. This judgement is made by reviewing all the evidence submitted to support the application and considers associated risks, including:

Risk factor	Considerations
<b>Expected learner numbers and delivery model</b>	<p>High learner numbers would pose a greater risk should delivery and assessment arrangements be insufficient. We would therefore expect high volume centres to undergo pre-approval external quality assurance, unless a recent EQA report from another regulated awarding organisation for similar qualifications reduced this risk.</p> <p>Fully remote centres pose a greater risk to delivery and assessment. We would therefore need to ensure we were confident that the posed delivery method would be likely to meet the needs of learners and fully prepare them for assessment.</p>

Risk factor	Considerations
<b>Centre type and subcontracting arrangements</b>	<p>Schools and colleges generally have well established systems and processes making them a lower risk to delivery and assessment</p> <p>Subcontracting arrangements could result in increased risk and we would need to be confident that arrangements provide us adequate access to monitor subcontractors involved in delivering our qualification.</p> <p>New organisations may not have established policies and procedures and may have limited experience with qualification delivery which increases the risk of an application and will result in pre-approval external quality assurance activity.</p>
<b>Financial health</b>	New organisations or sole traders with limited financial information available are higher risk. Organisations with financial instability are a higher risk and will likely be required to pay up front for products and services.
<b>Experience of qualification delivery</b>	Established centres with a history of delivering similar qualifications well with another regulated awarding organisation pose a lower risk to approval.
<b>Relationships with other awarding organisations</b>	Established centres with a history of delivering similar qualifications with another regulated awarding organisation and have no outstanding actions or compliance concerns pose a lower risk to approval.
<b>Other intelligence</b>	Notifications of malpractice from other awarding organisations and Ofsted reports support us in determining the potential risk posed by the centre.

Where we determine that pre-approval external quality assurance activity is not required, the organisation approval progresses to 5. Outcome: New organisation approval decision. In these circumstances, we work with the centre to organise early external quality assurance activity of their first cohort.

#### 4. Evaluation: Pre-approval external quality assurance activity

Where we determine that pre-approval external quality assurance activity is required, we communicate this to the centre with details of:

- the focus of the activity
- the member of the YMCA Awards Quality team that will complete the activity.

Pre-approval external quality assurance activity includes:

Area	Examples
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<b>Administration and management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• administration and tracking systems</li> <li>• learner enrolment and induction materials</li> <li>• learner support and guidance</li> </ul>
<b>Physical resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• premises and equipment</li> <li>• health and safety procedures</li> <li>• teaching and learning materials (scheme of work, lesson plans, GLH/TQT and other learner resources)</li> </ul>
<b>People resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• main centre contact</li> <li>• tutor, assessor and IQA staff</li> <li>• staff CVs, certificates and CPD evidence</li> </ul>
<b>Assessment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• learner assessment records</li> <li>• internal and external assessment procedures</li> <li>• reasonable adjustment procedures and recognition of prior learning</li> </ul>
<b>Internal quality assurance (IQA)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IQA strategy</li> <li>• IQA plan</li> <li>• observation and report templates</li> </ul>

Pre-approval external quality assurance activity findings are documented within Y-Connect. The outcomes of this activity are used to inform the decision on the centre's approval application. This may include actions for the centre to complete before a final approval decision can be made (e.g. completing standardisation for the qualification(s) they are seeking to deliver).

Completion of actions by a centre does not guarantee approval. There may also be circumstances in which actions can be completed after approval is granted, if appropriate.

## 5. Outcome: New organisation approval decision

Once the prospective centre has been recommended for approval, the New organisation enquiry/approval request form is closed. The outcome is communicated to the centre by:

- updating the YMCA Awards' decision section of the New organisation enquiry/approval request form
- creating a Contact organisation form to provide details of next steps.

Following approval of a new centre, the YMCA Awards Customer Support team make contact with the centre to commence onboarding, including training on our systems and processes.

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## Site approval

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Centre must gain approval for all locations they intend to use for teaching and assessment.

Sites are initially approved through the new organisation approval process but can be added at any other time using the New site approval request form in Y-Connect.

We collect this information to ensure centres can provide access to all learners (in line with the requirements of Fair assessment policy: Reasonable adjustments, special consideration and minimising bias) and do not unfairly disadvantage any individual or groups of learners. Site approval allows us to ensure that any location used for teaching and/or assessment meets the requirements for each qualification being delivered at that location. This includes:

- checking all sites are accessible, have appropriate lighting, heating and ventilation, and meet our requirements regarding space and equipment
- ensuring the site is adequate to allow learners the opportunity to obtain and then demonstrate the knowledge, skills and behaviours outlined within the qualification specification.

Sites may include:

- a workplace (e.g. gym, studio, sports hall etc)
- an educational environment with equipment appropriate to the qualification (e.g. a college with a fitness suite, pool etc).

We would not expect a residential property to be appropriate for the majority of our qualifications.

Where you intend to add a site for blended/distance you must review the requirements set out in Distanced/blended learning and assessment policy and ensure you understand the information needed for us to be able to approve the application.

Review of applications is carried out by an appropriately trained member of the YMCA Awards team and a decision communicated to the centre prior to the location being permitted to deliver YMCA Awards qualifications.

Ongoing external quality assurance activity and monitoring enables YMCA Awards to review compliance with the use of approved sites in line with Centre Agreement/Terms and Conditions for Approved Providers.

Where a centre is found to be using a site that has not been approved it is likely that an action will be set for the centre to address this, and the risk status of the centre amended to reflect the identified concern. The centre may also be given a Sanction.

In exceptional cases, a centre may apply for retrospective site approval for a location that did not have prior approval. However, this will only be given when the necessary requirements are met and there are no concerns regarding conflict of interest, malpractice or maladministration.

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## Staff approval

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Staff approval allows us to ensure that individuals teaching, assessing and quality assuring our programmes are suitably experienced and qualified. To reach our decision, centres provide us with details of each member of delivery staff, uploading copies of CVs and certificates to our Y-Connect system.

We expect all staff involved in teaching, assessment and quality assurance to hold:

- an appropriate subject matter qualification
- a technical qualification appropriate to their role (see [Tutor](#) requirements, [Assessor](#) requirements and [Internal](#) Quality Assurer (IQA) requirements)
- appropriate sector specific experience in the subject they intend to support.

We collect this information to ensure that staff have the necessary knowledge, understanding and skills required to deliver, assess and quality assure YMCA Awards qualifications

Centre staff involved in the delivery of YMCA Awards qualifications are approved initially through the new organisation approval process. Once approved, centres can request approval for new staff to teach, assess or quality assure these qualifications by completing a New staff approval request form in Y-Connect.

Review of applications is carried out by an appropriately trained member of the YMCA Awards team. A decision must be communicated to the centre prior to the staff member being permitted to deliver YMCA Awards qualifications. Ongoing external quality assurance activity and monitoring enables YMCA Awards to review compliance of the use of approved staff in line with our Centre Agreement.

Where a centre is found to be using staff that have not been approved it is likely that an action will be set for the centre to address this, and the compliance/risk status of the centre amended to reflect the identified concern. The centre may also be given a sanction, see our sanctions policy.

In exceptional cases, a centre may apply for retrospective staff approval for a member of staff who did not seek prior approval. However, this will only be given when the member of staff meets all the necessary requirements and there are no concerns regarding conflict of interest, malpractice or maladministration.

### Tutor requirements

Tutors are responsible for planning, delivering, and evaluating learning programs for learners registered on YMCA Awards qualifications. They typically require:

- A discipline-specific qualification at or above the level they intend to teach.
- A teaching qualification, such as:
- YMCA Level 3 Award in Education and Training.
- Bachelor of Education (BEd).
- Certificate in Education (Cert Ed).
- Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE).

Individuals working towards a teaching qualification may be considered, provided there is a plan to achieve it within 12 months of approval.

## Assessor requirements

Assessors use their subject matter and technical expertise to evaluate the evidence produced by learners, ensuring it meets the required standards. Assessors must:

- Possess a discipline-specific qualification at or above the level being assessed.
- Hold an assessing qualification, such as:
  - YMCA Level 3 Award in Assessing Vocationally Related Achievement.
  - YMCA Level 3 Award in Assessing Competence in the Work Environment.
  - YMCA Level 3 Certificate in Assessing Vocational Achievement.

Individuals working towards an assessor qualification may be approved if:

- There is a documented support plan for the trainee assessor.
- The qualification will be achieved within 12 months of approval.
- Assessment decisions are countersigned by a qualified assessor to ensure standards are met.

An assessor can also serve as a tutor but cannot internally quality assure their own assessment decisions.

## Internal Quality Assurer (IQA) requirements

IQAs maintain standards by reviewing the practices and decisions of the assessment team. They must:

- Hold a discipline-specific qualification at or above the level being delivered.
- Possess an internal quality assurance qualification, such as:
  - YMCA Level 4 Certificate in Leading Internal Quality Assurance.
  - SVQ Learning and Development Unit 11: Internally Monitor and Maintain the Quality of Workplace Assessment.
  - V1 Conduct Internal Quality Assurance of the Assessment Process.

Individuals working towards an IQA qualification may be approved if:

- There is a documented support plan for the trainee IQA.
- The qualification will be achieved within 12 months of approval.
- Quality assurance decisions are countersigned by a qualified IQA to ensure consistency.

It is recommended that IQAs also hold a recognized assessor qualification but cannot quality assure their own assessment decisions.

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## Additional qualification approval

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YMCA Awards approved centres are granted approval for specific qualifications. We initially provide qualification approval through the new organisation approval process. Once approved, centres can request approval to deliver additional qualifications by completing an Additional Product Approval Request form in Y-Connect.

### Approval requirements

To ensure centres have the necessary resources to support learners, centres must provide details of:

- Teaching, assessment, and quality assurance staff (new staff approval process)
- Teaching and assessment locations (new site approval process)

If new staff or locations are involved, centres must complete the new staff and/or new site approval processes before submitting the additional product approval request.

### Application review process

Applications are reviewed by a trained member of the YMCA Awards Quality team and the decision will be communicated to the Centre. Centres must not advertise or deliver the qualification to learners before permission to deliver the specified qualification is granted.

YMCA Awards recognises that the release of new qualifications, including those that may not have existed previously as regulated qualifications or those covering specialised subject areas, may require additional support for centres.

To ensure effective delivery and maintenance of standards, YMCA Awards provides the following support:

- **Centre-specific training sessions** on the qualification's content, structure, and assessment methodology
- **Standardisation meetings** to ensure consistent assessor and internal quality assurance practices

As part of the product development process, YMCA Awards will engage with stakeholders to determine appropriate support needs. Centres will be clearly informed of the requirements for staff qualifications, experience, and centre resources, along with guidance provided on how YMCA Awards can support centres in preparing for the delivery of new qualifications.