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Pensions Management Institute

Centre Approval Guidelines

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1. Introduction

The Pensions Management Institute

- 1.1 Founded in 1976, the Pensions Management Institute (PMI) is the UK's largest and most recognisable professional body for employee benefit and retirement savings professionals, supporting over 6,500 members in 32 countries.

PMI's members are responsible for managing and advising some of the largest institutions in the world accounting for £1 trillion invested in pensions. We promote excellence through a range of services for the benefit of members, the wider economy and with over six million now saving as a result of automatic enrolment, society as a whole.

- 1.2 The purpose of the Institute is *"To set and promote standards of excellence and lifelong learning for employee benefits and retirement savings professionals and trustees through qualifications, membership and ongoing support services"*.
- 1.3 We do this by embedding professional standards, setting the benchmarks for best practice; producing qualifications that have a reputation for excellence and ensuring that employee benefits and retirement savings professionals, whether they are scheme managers, consultants, administrators or trustees, are educated to the very highest standards and the latest legislation. We provide continued lifelong learning designed to strengthen the knowledge and skills of employee benefit and retirement savings practitioners in performing to the best of their ability.
- 1.4 PMI is an awarding organisation, regulated and accredited in England by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual), and can award a range of professional, vocational and academic qualifications. Our qualifications are developed specifically for pensions professionals working in the industry and are offered on a flexible basis, encouraging Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and the promotion of lifelong learning.
- 1.5 PMI qualifications are developed in light of industry needs and reflect current industry trends through the learning outcomes. This facilitates the measurement and control of assessment and provides learners with realistic and practical understanding of the objectives of each unit.
- 1.6 This guide contains notes for the guidance of UK Accredited Colleges, Training Providers and Employers on the procedures for applying for approval to deliver PMI Awarding Organisation qualifications and assessments. These criteria align with the conditions set out in Ofqual's General Conditions of Recognition.
- 1.7 PMI offers centre approval to UK accredited colleges and universities, UK training providers and employers that meet the criteria given in these guidelines, subject to a successful centre approval visit and continuing centre monitoring visits.

1.8 PMI Awarding Organisation centre approval is granted to organisations that meet the application criteria in full (see Section 4). Approval is initially granted for a period of one year. Each year afterwards, subsequent to the monitoring visit, there will be an annual fee charge.

2. Becoming an Approved Centre

2.1 Becoming an approved centre for PMI involves three stages:

- Stage 1 - Completion of the application form
- Stage 2 - Approval visit – carried out by PMI
- Stage 3 - Compliance with any action plan and deadlines agreed during the approval visit.

2.2 When a centre is applying for recognition, an External Verifier (EV) will visit the centre to ensure that they have the appropriate resources (such as suitably qualified, experienced staff and facilities) in place to be able to deliver PMI provision, in line with the various qualification specifications. At these visits the EV may review any centre devised assessment activities they are considering using (if appropriate to the qualification they are seeking recognition and approval for) with views sought from the Chief Examiner as appropriate. The EV may also outline the process centres need to go through to seek approval of future assessment activities (see next paragraph). The EV will also outline our quality expectations of the centre to ensure it understands our approach to quality assurance and the actions/sanctions that may be imposed on the centre should it fail to deliver our qualification(s) appropriately.

2.3 External Verifier visits are not required for 'qualification approval', only for initial applications, unless there are concerns about the centre's track-record and/or ability to deliver a new qualification type effectively (e.g. if the centre has not delivered it before through another awarding organisation and/or it specifies a different mode of assessment not previously delivered by the centre; or if the centre's risk or compliance profile indicates there are/maybe concerns about the centre that would warrant an additional visit).

2.4 Upon receiving a satisfactory report from the External Verifier, the PMI will recognise the centre accordingly, and approve it to offer the relevant qualification(s). Based on the recommendations of the EV report PMI reserves the right to assign conditions/actions to this recognition/approval if required.

Definition of a Centre

2.5 In this guide the word 'centre' is used to describe:

- i. **A UK Accredited College:** any accredited academic institution, that is, a college or any institution accountable to an awarding organisation for the training delivery and assessment arrangements leading to a qualification. The centre must have formal recognition or accreditation from an approved body such as:
 - Department for Education inspected by OFSTED
 - Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)
 - The British Accreditation Council (BAC)
 - Accreditation Service for International Colleges (ASIC)
 - The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)
 - Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI)
- ii. **Training Providers or Employers** accountable to an awarding organisation for the training delivery and assessment arrangements leading to a qualification. In order to obtain centre approval, a Training Provider or Employer must be able to demonstrate that they have the following in place:
 - appropriate management structure and quality assurance procedures
 - appropriately qualified staff
 - appropriate physical and practical teaching/training facilities
 - learning support facilities

2.6 Any of the above organisations will need to provide evidence that they meet the above criteria both at the time of application and throughout the period of approval.

2.7 The PMI Awarding Organisation reserves the right to remove centre approval at any time from organisations which fail to meet the criteria and standards required.

Different types of Centre

2.8 There are two possible types of centre. We will discuss with you during the approval visit which type of centre would best suit your needs. If your circumstances change in the future, you will be able to change to a different type of centre if that will suit your needs better.

Single site centre

This is a centre where all your learners are at one location.

Multi-site centre

A multi-site centre consists of one main centre and a minimum of one satellite centre. If you expect to have learners at more than one location, you may choose to become a multi-site centre. If you decide to become a multi-site centre, you must appoint a centre contact who will be responsible for dealing with the administration of the qualification across all your locations. All correspondence and examination material will be sent to the centre contact who will be responsible for distributing it to the different locations. Each location must have designated invigilators. The alternative is to register each location as a single-site centre each with its own centre

contact.

3. The Application Form

- 3.1** An application form for centre approval for each qualification can be downloaded from the website. We can also provide the form by e-mail on request.

Centre details

Please fill in the main details about your organisation (centre). The form **must** be signed by a senior person with authority to agree to the organisation becoming a PMI approved centre.

Centre contact and invigilator details

The centre contact is the person who will have administrative responsibility at the centre and who will be the main point of contact with the PMI. Please see section 4.1 for further details about the responsibilities of the centre contact. You must also provide information about your proposed assessment and invigilation team(s).

The Approval Visit

- 3.2** Once we have received your application form, we will make arrangements for your centre to have an approval visit. This will usually take place within 6 weeks of the receipt of your application form.

The approval visit enables the PMI to ensure that you have the resources to administer the qualification including:

- . A centre contact to deal with the administration
- . Sufficient invigilators, assessors and verifiers for the qualification(s) and learners
- . Appropriate examination accommodation if required
- . Suitable arrangements to deal with the assessment materials
- . Security for the examination papers
- . Management support for the qualification

- 3.3** All these issues will be discussed during the approval visit. The outcome of the visit will be a report and an agreed action plan with time scales to enable you to meet any criteria you are unable to meet at the time of the approval visit. You will be sent a copy of the report within 4 weeks of the approval visit and will be asked to give your formal agreement to the action plan. Centre Approval is subject to your agreement to and compliance with any action plan.
- 3.4** You have a right of appeal against the outcome of the approval visit (see section 5.3).

Completion of Centre Approval

- 3.5** Centre approval is complete when you have been notified in writing by the Lifelong Learning Department at the PMI. You will be sent a centre certificate/plaque confirming that your centre has been approved. You will be invoiced annually for a centre fee.

4. Your Responsibilities as an Approved Centre.

The role of the Centre Contact.

- 4.1 The centre contact is the person to whom the PMI will send all information about our qualifications. They must have the authority and competence to undertake all communication with the PMI and for carrying out the responsibilities described in this section. If the responsibilities are to be shared with more than one person, we will need to know who is authorised to sign the various forms used in the administration of our qualifications.

Learner Registration

- 4.2. You may register new learners as soon as centre approval is complete. You must use the forms provided by the PMI:
- Entry requirements for learner registration are contained within the individual qualifications specifications.
 - You must return the completed form to the PMI with the correct fee.
 - We will confirm your learner registrations via receipt of payment. Certificates of unit credit and final certificates are issued using these records.
 - You must inform learners of their learner number when you receive confirmation of the registrations from PMI.
 - You should aim to ensure that your learners complete the qualification in a prompt and timely manner. Should a learner not complete a qualification in the specified registration period they may have to re-register.
 - Unique Learner Number (ULN): It is an Ofqual requirement that learners in school have a Unique Learner Number (ULN) and that Awarding Bodies must capture the Unique Learner Number (ULN) for all learners where they have one. The Learner Registration Service (LRS) will allocate a ULN to every person undertaking education and training. The ten-digit number will remain with them for life and will not be recycled. A ULN is not mandatory if the learner doesn't already have one. Where relevant, PMI will check the ULN and the learner details with the LRS. Learner details submitted to PMI need to match those on the LRS exactly. If there are any differences, PMI will be unable to validate the ULN.

For more information and to generate a ULN, please refer to the Learning Records Service – Learner Registration Area: www.learningrecordsservice.org.uk

NOTE: It is not a mandatory requirement to have a ULN

Invigilators, Assessors, Verifiers

- You must inform us of the names and roles of your assessment team members using the forms provided by the PMI.
- You must ensure that you have sufficient staff to support the delivery and assessment of the qualification.
- You may not use current learners for any of PMI's qualifications as part of your delivery team.

Administration of Examinations

4.3. If you are offering qualifications that are assessed by means of examinations, you should note that the PMI will set the papers and appoint examiners to mark the scripts. Learners sit the examinations at their own centre. Learners may enter for as many units as they wish and in the order they prefer. We send you all the information you need to run the examinations, but you will need to:

- check what we send you, and follow instructions on what to do with it
- ensure the examination papers are stored securely until the day of the examinations
- ensure that a room is available where the learners can sit the examinations
- arrange invigilation
- * send completed scripts and the attendance register to the correct examiner
- * send a copy of the attendance register to the Qualifications Department. once the PMI exam system is automated run exams onscreen according to the invigilation instructions

Examination entry

- We send you an examination entry form five months in advance of the examination.
- You must complete it and send it to the PMI with the correct fee by the closing date.
- **We do not accept any entries received after the closing date. We cannot accept entries without payment.**
- We confirm your entries via email.

Non confidential material

- Approximately six weeks before the examinations take place, we send you an email containing links for non-confidential material. This includes:
 - - tables of factors
 - scheme booklets
 - advice and notice to learners
 - examiner's report for the previous set of exams

You must give these to the learners entered for the examinations as soon as possible.

- We request a confirmation email from you to tell us that you have received the material

Confidential material

- On a specified date, approximately one week before the examinations, we send the confidential material to the centre contact or a named replacement (if the centre contact will not be in on the specified date. This includes:
 - the examination papers in sealed packets - these **must not** be opened prior to the examination. They are labelled on the outside so that you can check that you have the correct papers without opening the packets
 - instructions on the conduct of the examinations and for the despatch of the completed scripts
 - answer booklets and spare paper, you must check you have the correct number of answer booklets
 - check the confidential material and return the reply slip to us immediately to confirm that you have received the correct items.
 - **Contact us immediately if there are any concerns.**
 - **Lock the examination papers away in a secure depository in a secure room until the date of the examination e.g. a safe or lockable cabinet in a lockable room.**

Other pre examination preparations

- Ensure that a suitable room is available for the learners to take the examinations. Usually this will be on the employer's premises, but you may arrange alternative accommodation if this is more convenient.
- Ensure that the invigilators are available to invigilate the examinations.

Conduct of the examinations

You will have been sent a copy of *Instructions for the conduct of examinations* with your confidential material. You must ensure that you have read this carefully and that a copy is available for the invigilators during the examinations. The main requirements are that:

- the room is quiet
- the learners are seated separately and not allowed to communicate with each other
- the learners are invigilated throughout the examination. Invigilation may be shared among several of your invigilators provided the learners are continuously invigilated.

At the end of each examination you must ensure that the completed scripts and the relevant attendance sheet are sent to the correct examiner according to the instructions provided by the PMI.

At the end of the examination you must also send the duplicate attendance sheet to the PMI so that we know which learners were absent.

Please note that the PMI may arrange for an unannounced visit to any centre without notice to ensure that the examinations are being properly conducted.

NB. From Autumn 2019 PMI will begin the transferring of all qualifications' examinations from paper based to online delivery. As it stands, the only exam we expect to be paper based in Spring 2020 is the CPC

Results

Results for exams are published approximately 6 weeks after the examinations take place.

The results are posted to you first class on a specified date. The envelope is marked '*To be opened by addressee only*' and includes certificates of unit credit. You may telephone for the results if they do not arrive on the day after posting. We will only disclose results to the centre contact and not directly to learners unless you instruct us otherwise.

Certificates of Unit Credit

Learners are issued with a certificate of unit credit each time they pass a unit. Certificates of unit credit are sent to you with the examination results.

Examiners' Report

The PMI Examiners Board produce an Examiners' Report after each exam series. The Report contains guidance for learners on what the Examiners expect and also what they found. There is also an appendix to the Report which contains a summary of the answers. You must make this available for your learners. You may photocopy it.

4.5 Applying for a Final Certificate

An application for a final certificate can only be made once a learner has received unit certificates for all of the units that make up the qualification. You may apply for a final certificate for your learners by completing the application form and returning it to us with the correct fee. The application form can be found on the website.

Final certificates will be completed and issued within 10 working days from receipt of payment. This application form does not relate to the ADRP or the MCQ exams.

4.6 Online learning programmes

An online learning programme is available for all the examined units. The online learning programmes will guide each learner through their preferred learning style enabling them to define what they want to learn and how.

The online learning programmes are accessible from any computer with internet access. Each programme will keep a record of a learner's progress and monitors their results as they are learning.

You will need to purchase an access key for each unit programme a learner wishes to participate in.

Registration of learners for online learning

An online learning registration form can be downloaded from the website. Please complete the form and return it to PMI with the correct fee.

We will issue you with an individual access key for each programme each of your learners wishes to participate in. Each access key will be assigned to a particular learner and you should keep a record of any access keys that have been issued, which units they are for and who they have been assigned to. It is your responsibility to pass on each access key to the correct learner. If an access key is lost either by the centre or the learner, we will charge a fee for its re-issue. Please note that access keys cannot be shared between learners.

Instructions for learners on how to use the online learning system will be provided with their access keys.

Access keys are activated on the date that the learner first uses the access key to log on to the relevant online learning programme on the PMI learning website.

4.7 Special Assessment Arrangements

Under certain circumstances the PMI will authorise assessment arrangements for learners with particular assessment requirements. However, any special arrangements will require the learners to meet the national standards and will ensure that those learners do not gain an unfair advantage over others.

- If you have any learners for whom special assessment arrangements may be required, you must contact us in the first instance to discuss the options.
- You must make applications in writing to the PMI for special assessment arrangements, detailing the reasons why the special arrangements are required, for whom and for how long.
- Any special arrangements requested on medical grounds must be supported by written evidence of the medical grounds.
- Where we agree to special assessment arrangements, the details and the duration of these arrangements will be confirmed to you in writing.
- You must not implement special arrangements prior to receiving written confirmation from us that the proposed arrangements are acceptable.
- We will only authorise special arrangements for any learner for one examination series at a time. You must seek re-authorisation each examination series that the special arrangements are required.
- Under no circumstances will we allow learners to take any examination at a different date or time from that specified.
- Requests for special arrangements should be made when submitting the entry for the learner concerned or, in the case of a situation arising after the entry has been submitted that necessitates special arrangements, as soon as possible after that situation has arisen.

4.8 Maintenance and retention of records

It is an important part of your role as a centre to maintain records of learners and their achievements via the State of Play form. You should keep copies of any communication and documentation connected with the qualification.

4.9 Provision of information to The Pensions Management Institute

You must keep us informed of any changes to learner, invigilator and centre contact details.

For existing learners, it is important that you inform us of changes of name and/or marital status. All certificates are issued on the basis of the information which we currently hold on our computer system.

You must inform us, using the Learner Transferring Form, if existing learners join your centre from another employer. We transfer their records to your centre and confirm their learner number and which units, if any, they have already gained.

If any of your learners leave your centre or give up for any reason, please let us know so that we can remove them from your centre records.

PMI Awarding Organisation policy documents

When consulting the centre approval guidelines, all organisations should also consult the:

- Qualifications specifications (found on the PMI website)
- PMI Awarding Organisation documents, which can be found on the PMI website and also in Appendices at the end of these guidelines. We will expect all approved centres to have equivalent policies and implement them accordingly.

5. The Role of the Pensions Management Institute.

5.1 Awarding Organisation

The PMI is an Awarding Organisation. We administer all aspects of our qualifications and are responsible for their quality assurance.

5.2 Our commitment to you

Prompt service

The PMI is committed to providing a customer- focused, prompt and professional service to all its approved assessment centres. All centres should have a copy of our Customer Service Statement which includes timescales for our administration, so that you know when you should expect to receive specific information. Centres requiring additional copies should contact the Qualifications Department.

- **Help line**

For enquiries:

- telephone the Qualifications Department on 020 7392 7400
- write to us at Floor 20, Tower 42, 25 Old Broad Street, London, EC2N 1HQ
- e-mail us on KHoodless@pensions-pmi.org.uk

We aim to deal with enquiries within 10 working days.

- **Regional groups**

The PMI has a number of regional groups that welcome local members with an interest in pensions. They do not have to be Fellows, Associates or Students of the PMI. For details of your nearest group, please contact us or look on the main PMI website.

- **PMI's website**

Information about all of our qualifications can be found on the PMI's website from which it is possible to download centre mailings, forms, past examination papers and Examiners' Reports.

- **Equal opportunities**

The PMI fully supports the principles of equal opportunities and is committed to satisfying these principles in all its activities and in its published material.

5.3 What should you do if you have a complaint and/or appeal?

Please see the Complaints & Appeals policy.

5.4 Malpractice and Maladministration Policy

PMI has a responsibility to have in place policies and procedures to prevent malpractice and/or maladministration in the development, delivery and award of its qualifications. PMI is applying this policy to ALL of its qualifications whether they are regulated or not.

This policy is aimed at PMI's customers, including learners taking our qualifications and centres delivering, awarding and accommodating the assessment of PMI examinations and/or work-based assessments within or outside the UK.

* **NOTE – All forms/policies can be found under the [Wider Information Set \(WIS\)](#)**

Contacts at PMI

If you have any queries or need further information, please contact the individual who is responsible for the department, otherwise, use the generic phone number;

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