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Moving pensions forward

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CERTIFICATE IN PENSIONS ADMINISTRATION Level 3 (QCF)

REGULATIONS AND GUIDANCE NOTES FOR CENTRES

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section	Page
1. The Qualification	4
1.1 What is the Certificate in Pensions Administration (CPA)?	4
1.2 Is CPA appropriate for your employees?	4
2. Qualification Structure for Certificate in Pensions Administration	5
3. What does the employer need to put in place in order to run this qualification?	6
3.1 The Qualification Team	6
3.2 Who can be an assessor?	6
3.3 Who can be a mentor?	6
3.4 Who can be an internal verifier?	7
3.5 Who can be a quality assurance co-ordinator?	7
3.6 Qualifications in Assessment and Verification	7
4. Becoming an approved centre	8
4.1 What is meant by centre approval?	8
4.2 How do you become an approved CPA centre?	8
4.3 Different types of centre	8
4.4 The application form	9
4.5 Approval Visit	9
4.6 Completion of centre approval	10
5. What are your responsibilities as an approved centre?	10
5.1 Candidate registration	10
5.2 Administration of the work based assessments	10
5.3 Applying for certificates of unit credit	11
5.4 Applying for a final certificate	11
5.5 Administration of the case study examinations	11
5.6 Maintenance and retention of records	13
5.7 Provision of information to the Pensions Management Institute	13
5.8 Review of quality assurance arrangements	13
5.9 Produce a centre appeals procedure	14
6. How do you maintain centre approval?	14
6.1 Compliance with recommendations from your external verifier	14
6.2 Changes to the qualification team	14
6.3 Payment of the annual centre fee	14
7. What are the roles and responsibilities of the assessment team?	15
7.1 What is the role of the centre contact?	15
7.2 What are the assessor's and mentor's roles and responsibilities?	15
7.3 What is the internal verifier's and quality assurance co-ordinator's role and responsibilities?	15
7.4 What happens if you do not have staff available to become assessors or internal verifiers?	16

Section	Page
8. Replacement Certificates	17
9. Special Assessment Arrangements	17
10. What happens if your centre has no candidates?	8
11. External Verification	18
11.1 What is external verification?	18
11.2 Who can be an external verifier?	18
11.3 What are the external verifier's role and responsibilities?	18
11.4 When is your external verifier allocated to your centre?	18
11.5 When do external verifier's visits take place?	19
11.6 How to prepare for your external verifier's visit	19
11.7 The external verification visit	19
11.8 The external verifier's report	20
12. What is the role of the Pensions Management Institute?	21
12.1 Awarding Organisation	21
12.2 Our commitment to you	21
12.3 What should you do if you have a complaint?	22
12.4 Appeals procedure	22
Appendices	
Appendix A – Equal opportunities statement	23
Appendix B – Confidentiality/Conflicts of Interest Policy (Qualifications)	24
Appendix C – Reporting Malpractice	25
Contacts at PMI	26

1 THE QUALIFICATION

1.1 What is the Certificate in Pensions Administration (CPA)?

Certificate in Pensions Administration is suitable for pension scheme administrators working of either DB or DC pension schemes – or both. The qualification is designed to allow organisations and their pensions administrators to select and construct a competence based qualification that reflects their normal working activities. It is based on standards of occupational competence which have been defined by the industry. The qualification also allows the potential for the completion of a customer service unit.

It is awarded by The Pensions Management Institute (PMI), which is the professional body for those working in all sectors of the pensions industry.

The units that make up the Certificate which have been accredited on the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF). Within the QCF the levels represent 'the complexity, autonomy and/or range of achievement expressed within the unit. Each individual unit will have its own level and the predominate level over all of the units determines the qualification level.' The Certificate is a qualification at level 3.

1.2 Is CPA appropriate for your employees?

The qualification is for administrators of occupational pension schemes in all sectors of the pensions industry whether they work on DB and/or DC pension schemes. The structure of the qualification allows flexibility and choice to make it as appropriate as possible for the day to day activities carried out in your role as a pension scheme administrator.

The qualification also includes customer service units. These units have been taken from existing customer service units and qualifications. If you are already taking these within your organisation you can cross reference them to this qualification if there is a match.

Certificates are issued on a unit by unit basis and when you complete CPA you can claim a final certificate, which is signed by the Chief Executive for PMI and the PMI President.

2 QUALIFICATION STRUCTURE FOR CERTIFICATE IN PENSIONS ADMINISTRATION

Any 8 units – should be completed within 5 years of registration. The 8 units required to complete the qualification can include any of 10 work-based units or 4 examined units. Unit 1 of the work-based units is mandatory.

Unit Titles		
Applying Overriding Regulatory Requirements	Mandatory Group	Work based unit
Monitor Ongoing Entitlement to Pension Scheme Benefits		Work based Unit
Payment of Pension Scheme Benefits		Work based Unit
Create and Update Pension Scheme Records for New and Existing Members		Work based Unit
Process Applications for Pension Scheme Transfers Out		Work based Unit
Process Pension Scheme Retirement Benefits		Work based Unit
Process and Validate Pension Scheme Data for Periodic Events		Work based Unit
Process Applications for Pension Scheme Early Leavers		Work based Unit
Process Pension Scheme Death Benefits		Work based Unit
Process Pension Scheme Transfers In		Work based Unit
Calculate and Quote DB & DC Pension Scheme Death Benefits for Members without Special Circumstances		Exam based unit
Calculate and Quote DB & DC Pension Scheme Leavers Benefits for Members without Special Circumstances		Exam based unit
Calculate and Quote DB & DC Pension Scheme Retirement Benefits for Members without Special Circumstances		Exam based unit
Calculate and Quote DB & DC Pension Scheme Transfers In and Transfers Out		Exam based unit

Details of the content of each of these units can be located on the PMI website [Certificate in Pensions Administration - The Pensions Management Institute \(pensions-pmi.org.uk\)](https://www.pensions-pmi.org.uk)

3 WHAT DOES THE EMPLOYER NEED TO PUT IN PLACE IN ORDER TO BE ABLE TO RUN THIS QUALIFICATION?

CPA is designed to assess competence at work. For that reason it involves your commitment to become an approved Examination Partner to offer CPA. Part of the qualification is assessed during the course of normal work. All CPA candidates should have access to equal and fair assessment. You will be responsible for ensuring the resources are in place to allow assessment to be carried out effectively and with appropriate quality assurance processes set in place via an in-house Qualification Team. The rest of the qualification is assessed by case study examinations which you will be responsible for administering.

The PMI recognises and supports an Employer Focused model for assessment and internal verification. Many employers see gaining the Assessor and Internal Verifier qualifications as an obstacle given that those carrying out these functions are pensions professionals and trainers often working in small offices without the human resources to make these qualifications possible or appropriate.

3.1 THE QUALIFICATION TEAM

As an employer offering this qualification to your employees you need to establish a Qualification Team. The roles in the Team will be:

Centre Contact – a single named point of contact at the organisation – see section 7.1 for specific details of the role

Assessor(s)/Mentor(s) – Assessor(s) should be occupationally competent (in the areas covered within the qualification) individuals who may be qualified assessors (they hold the D33 or the A1) or, alternatively, they can be Mentors – further details are in section 7.2.

Internal Verifier(s)/Quality Assurance Co-ordinator- Internal Verifier(s) should be occupationally competent (in the areas covered within the qualification) individuals who may be qualified internal verifiers (they hold the D34 or the V1) or, alternatively, they can be Quality Assurance Co-ordinators – further details are in section 7.3.

Invigilator(s) for the examined units in the qualification. Individuals identified to act as Invigilators may not be current candidates for any of PMI's Vocational Qualifications.

3.2 Who can be an assessor?

Assessors must have up-to-date knowledge of the subject area(s) that the qualification covers, they may also have occupational experience of the role that the qualification covers, although that may not be their current job role. They do not have to hold any formal pensions qualifications. Current candidates on any of the PMI's vocational qualifications may not be an assessor.

Assessors must have gained the D33 or A1, the recognised qualifications for assessors.

It is **desirable** for the assessor to have experience or knowledge of

- money purchase/defined contribution schemes
- salary related/defined benefit schemes
- schemes which are and are not contracted out
- contributory and non contributory scheme

3.2 Who can be a mentor?

Mentors must have up-to-date knowledge of the subject area(s) that the qualification covers, they must also have occupational experience of the role that the qualification covers, although that may not be their current job role. They do not have to hold any formal pensions qualifications. Current candidates on any of the PMI's vocational qualifications may not be a mentor.

It is **desirable** for the assessor to have experience or knowledge of

- money purchase/defined contribution schemes
- salary related/defined benefit schemes
- schemes which are and are not contracted out
- contributory and non contributory schemes.

Mentors must keep their knowledge and skills up to date through Continuing Professional Development (CPD). CPD must be demonstrated each year through involvement in at least two relevant activities – one is to be related to technical development (in the areas covered by the qualification) and the other is to be related to the qualification/assessment CPD. Please contact the PMI for further information about CPD for Mentors and what activities will qualify for CPD.

3.4 Who can be an internal verifier?

Internal verifiers must have up-to-date knowledge and experience of the areas that the qualification covers, although that may not be their current job role. They do not have to hold any formal pensions qualifications. Current candidates on any of the PMI's vocational qualifications may not be an internal verifier.

It is **desirable** for them to have experience or knowledge of

- money purchase/defined contribution schemes
- salary related/defined benefit schemes
- schemes which are and are not contracted out
- contributory and non contributory schemes.

They must have gained D34 or V1, the recognised qualifications for internal verifiers.

3.5 Who can be a quality assurance co-ordinator?

Quality Assurance Co-Ordinators must have up-to-date knowledge of the subject area(s) that the qualification covers, they must also have occupational experience of the role that the qualification covers, although that may not be their current job role. They do not have to hold any formal pensions qualifications. Current candidates on any of the PMI's vocational qualifications may not be a Quality Assurance Co-Ordinator.

It is **desirable** for them to have experience or knowledge of

- assessment practices/procedures and documentation
- procedures for quality assuring assessments
- standardisation processes and reviewing qualification progress

Quality Assurance Co-Ordinators must keep their knowledge and skills up to date through Continuing Professional Development (CPD). CPD must be demonstrated each year through involvement in at least two relevant activities. Please contact the PMI for further information about CPD for internal verifiers and what activities will qualify for CPD.

3.6 Qualifications in assessment and verification

The PMI recognises and supports an Employer Focused model for assessment and internal verification. Many employers see gaining the Assessor Qualification and Internal Verifier Qualification as an obstacle given that those carrying out these functions are pensions professionals and trainers often working in small offices without the human resources to meet the requirements for these qualifications possible or appropriate

However, if you would like to have qualified assessors and internal verifiers in your organisation then PMI does provide a distance learning route to enable assessors to gain the appropriate qualifications:

Understanding the Principles and Practices of Assessment
Assess Occupational Competence in the Workplace for Assessors
Understanding the Principles and Practices of Internally Assuring the Quality of Assessment
Internally Assure the Quality of Assessment

For further details of the training and support provided by the PMI please contact the Department. Information is also available on our website.

4 BECOMING AN EXAMINATION PARTNER

4.1 What is meant by centre approval?

The PMI as the awarding organisation for CPA has to ensure that a potential centre meets the regulatory criteria to become an approved centre. Ofqual lays these criteria down for centres offering qualifications that are in the QCF:

Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) States:

As an awarding organisation, PMI must have procedures in place to recognise, and monitor on an ongoing basis, centres to offer assessment leading to awards within the QCF. These procedures must ensure that each centre:

- has arrangements in place to identify a single named point of accountability for the quality assurance and management for the assessment of units and qualifications.
- can hold and transmit securely details of assessment outcomes to the awarding organisation.
- has the staff, resources and systems necessary to support the assessment of units and the award, accumulation and transfer of credits and, where necessary, the recording of exemptions.
- has administrative systems in place to track the progress of learners towards their target awards.
- agrees to provide the awarding organisation and the qualifications regulators with access to premises, people and records, and to cooperate with the awarding organisation's monitoring activities.

As an Examination Partner you have an important role to play in complementing the PMI's quality assurance activities.

In particular you will be responsible for:

- providing a sufficiently resourced and competent qualification team
- verifying the quality and consistency of assessment practices and decisions within the centre
- maintaining auditable records
- providing the PMI with the data that we require
- ensuring that the appropriate administrative arrangements are made for the conduct of the case study examinations

If you are currently active as a QPA or QPSA centre then CPA will automatically be added to your centre free of charge. Alternatively, you must apply to be a registered centre – details are in the following sections.

4.2 How do you become an Examination Partner?

Becoming an approved examination centre for CPA involves three stages:

- | | |
|---------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Stage 1 | Completion of the application form – available on our website www.pensions-pmi.org.uk |
| Stage 2 | Approval visit – carried out by PMI |
| Stage 3 | Compliance with the action plan and deadlines agreed during the approval visit |

4.3 Different types of centre

There are 2 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 candidates are at one location and is broken down into two categories:

- Small centres** – that have 10 or fewer candidates taking the qualification
- Large centres** – than have 11 or more candidates taking the qualification

Multi site centre

If you expect to have candidates 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 qualification team. The alternative is to register each location as a single site centre each with its own centre contact.

4.4 The application form

An application form for CPA centre approval can be downloaded from the website at [1centre-recognition-form.pdf \(pensions-pmi.org.uk\)](https://www.pensions-pmi.org.uk/centre-recognition-form.pdf) We can also provide the form by e-mail on request.

Centre details

Please fill in here the main details about your organisation (centre). It is very useful for PMI to have some indication of likely take up of any qualifications within your organisation although we fully realise that this is not set in stone. The form **must** be signed by a senior person with authority to agree to the organisation becoming a PMI approved centre.

Centre contact and qualification team details

The centre contact is the person who will be the main point of contact with the PMI. You must also provide information about your proposed qualification team including the roles they will play within the team – see THE QUALIFICATION TEAM above for further details of the different roles.

Outline how you will run the qualification

In this section outline how the qualification team will work and how evidence for the workbased units will be collected and documented. PMI encourages organisations to utilise their own in-house checking documents to record evidence of competence.

4.5 Approval Visit

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:

- the centre's support mechanisms for candidates to enable them to meet their targets towards completion of the qualification(s)
- the assessment of workbased units in the centre and the recording of assessment decisions
- the internal quality assurance and control of the assessors/mentors activities and decisions
- Appropriate examination accommodation
- Suitable arrangements to deal with the examination material
- Security for the examination papers
- Management support for the qualification

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 asked to give your formal agreement to the action plan. Centre approval is subject to your agreement to and compliance with any action plan.

You have a right of appeal against the outcome of the approval visit.

4.6 Completion of centre approval

Centre approval is complete when you have been notified in writing by the Qualifications Department at the PMI. You will be sent a centre certificate confirming you are an approved centre for CPA. This certificate is issued annually once you have paid your annual centre fee and continue to meet the criteria for running the qualification.

5 WHAT ARE YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS AN Examination Partner?

As an awarding organisation, PMI must have procedures in place to recognise, and monitor on an ongoing basis, centres to offer assessment leading to awards within the QCF. These procedures must ensure that each centre:

- has arrangements in place to identify a single named point of accountability for the quality assurance and management for the assessment of units and qualifications.
- can hold and transmit securely details of assessment outcomes to the awarding organisation.
- has the staff, resources and systems necessary to support the assessment of units and the award, accumulation and transfer of credits and, where necessary, the recording of exemptions.
- has administrative systems in place to track the progress of learners towards their target awards.
- agrees to provide the awarding organisation and the qualifications regulators with access to premises, people and records, and to cooperate with the awarding organisation's monitoring activities.

Four of the CPA units are assessed by case study examinations which are held twice a year in May and November. The PMI sets the papers and appoints examiners to mark the scripts. Candidates sit the examinations at their own centre. Candidates may enter for as many units as they wish and in the order they prefer.

5.1 Administration of the work based assessment

The work-based units are assessed during the course of normal work. PMI encourages centres to utilise existing documentation that may already be in place to check their employees practices and procedures as part of their normal work. This documentation should be mapped to the standards for each unit that the candidate is taking and any gaps identified and filled with an appropriate assessment method – eg question and answer.

Candidates do not have to complete these units in any particular order nor do they have to complete one unit before starting another. Evidence put forward for assessment and verification can be **up to 2 years old** only if the appropriate members of the qualification team agree it is appropriate, relevant and valid.

Candidates may be assessed at any time which is convenient for them and their assessors.

You are responsible for

- providing sufficient competent members in the qualification team to carry out their roles
- creating and reviewing an individual plan for each candidate to take them through their work-based units
- internally verify/quality assure assessment decisions and practices within the centre to check that quality and consistency is maintained across all candidates and all assessors/mentors
- maintaining records of candidates achievements which can track their progress through the qualification

5.2 Applying for certificates of unit credit

You may apply for a certificate of unit credit as soon as the candidate has completed a unit, only if:

- the unit has been signed off by an assessor/mentor and an internal verifier/quality assurance co-ordinator
- the external verifier has approved the issue of certificates of unit credit for that unit

The PMI processes applications for certificates of unit credit weekly. The certificates will be sent to you and not directly to the candidates. Please contact us if you have not received your certificates within 10 working days of submitting your form. We will contact you if for any reason your application cannot be processed immediately. We cannot issue certificates of credit to candidates who have been registered for less than 10 weeks.

5.3 Applying for a final certificate

An application for a final certificate can only be made once a candidate has received unit certificates for all of the units that make up CPA. **Centres must keep copies of all requests sent, in their candidates records.**

Final certificates will be processed and issued within 10 working days of receipt of payment.

5.4 Administration of the case study examinations

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 candidates 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.

Certificates of unit credit

Candidates 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 VQ Examiners' Committee produce an Examiners' Report after each exam series. The Report contains guidance for candidates 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 candidates. You may photocopy it.

5.5 Maintenance and retention of records

It is an important part of your role as a centre to maintain records of assessment and verification/quality assurance which are reliable and auditable. As a minimum you must hold:

- records of CPA candidates including candidate name, date of birth, contact address, workplace address and contact details and date of registration with the PMI - keep a copy of their initial registration form as all of these details are contained in that.
- records of your qualification team, their roles and how they work as a team and with their candidates – details are contained in your centre approval application and all EV report forms, etc
- assessment records (recording who was assessed, who conducted the assessment, what was assessed, when it was assessed – keep a copy of the assessment decision form which is sent in with each unit certificate claim
- evidence files/portfolios the assessment decision, the assessment methods used for each unit/component and the location of the supporting evidence
- records of internal verification/quality assurance activity detailing who verified what and when, details of the sample selected and its rationale, records of internal verifier/quality assurance standardisation meetings, records of assessor/mentor support meetings and CPD records where applicable
- records of certificates claimed including who claimed the certificate and when – keep a copy of the actual claim form on file

You must ensure that these records are available to the external verifier and that they provide an audit trail which can clearly substantiate claims for certificates of unit credit. The records must be made available to Ofqual and/or PMI on request.

You must keep all records of assessment and internal verification activity for a minimum of 3 years and a maximum of 5 years following the completion of the units to which they relate. You must retain the candidates' evidence files/portfolios until after the external verification visit immediately following the claim for certificates of unit credit based on this evidence. The external verifier will want to see the evidence for some of the certificates of unit credit claimed for work based units since the last external verification visit.

5.6 Provision of Information to The Pensions Management Institute

You must keep us informed of any changes to candidate, centre contact, assessor, mentor, invigilator, quality assurance co-ordinator and internal verifier information.

For existing candidates 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 Candidate Transferring Form, if existing CPA candidates join your centre from another employer. We transfer their records to your centre and confirm their candidate number and which units, if any, they have already gained.

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

You must inform the PMI of any change which affects the ability of your centre to continue to meet the full requirements of the approved centre criteria. We will agree with you a plan of action to help you to meet the criteria in the future.

5.7 Review of quality assurance arrangements

You have a responsibility to monitor the effectiveness of your quality assurance systems. You must undertake regular reviews of your assessment and verification systems against the approved centre criteria and take action as required. Your external verifier will need to see evidence that monitoring has occurred and corrective action has been taken where necessary.

5.8 Produce a Centre Appeals procedure

The internal verifier or quality assurance co-ordinator must produce a documented appeals procedure and make it available to all candidates. This must specify:

- the route candidates must take if they have a grievance
- the grounds for appeal
- timescales for submitting the appeal and dealing with it.

This procedure may mirror company grievance procedures or be a separate procedure for CPA. The PMI has a procedure for appeals against assessment of the case study examinations and assessment decisions which is outlined in this document.

You must keep a record of all appeals and their outcome and this should be made available to the external verifier.

6 HOW DO YOU MAINTAIN CENTRE APPROVAL?

6.1 Compliance with recommendations from your external verifier

As an approved centre you will have regular visits from your external verifier. Your centre will continue to be assessed against the criteria used in the initial approval visit. The outcome of each visit will usually be an agreed action plan with timescales. The external verifier will try to help you to meet the criteria but, if you consistently fail to do so, your centre may be sanctioned including extra EV visits (which the centre will be required to pay for) or even withdrawal of centre approval in extreme cases.

6.2 Changes to the qualification team

Where changes in your qualification team affects your ability to meet the approved centre criteria you must inform the PMI immediately.

6.3 Payment of the annual centre fee

Once your Examination Partner form has been approved, an annual centre fee is payable every year starting in the year following approval. We send you a notification at the beginning of each year. Examination Partner approval will be withdrawn if the annual fee is not paid

7 WHAT ARE THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE ASSESSMENT TEAM?

7.1 What is the role of the centre contact?

The centre contact is the person to whom the PMI will send all information about CPA. An internal verifier/quality assurance co-ordinator or an assessor/mentor may be the centre contact or you may choose to nominate someone else. However, a VQ candidate **may not** be the centre contact.

The centre contact is responsible for all communication with the PMI including:

- registering candidates and informing them of their registration status
- submitting candidate entries for the case study examinations
- ensuring that all examination materials are checked and dealt with as required
- informing the PMI of changes affecting the centre e.g. changes to the assessment and verification team, or to the candidates
- submitting applications for certificates of unit credit and final certificates on behalf of the candidates.

7.2 What are the assessor's and mentor's role and responsibilities?

Assessors and Mentors are responsible for a specified individual or group of candidates. They must:

- agree an assessment plan with each candidate and monitor progress
- ensure that each candidate has the opportunity to gain the relevant work experience to complete CPA
- provide alternative assessment opportunities where the relevant work experience is not available or select another unit that is more appropriate
- judge the candidate's evidence against the national standards and make timely assessment decisions.
- to decide whether the candidate has demonstrated competence
- ensure the validity, authenticity and sufficiency of evidence produced by the candidate
- provide constructive feedback to the candidate
- complete all the relevant documentation when the candidate has demonstrated competence
- review the assessment plan with the candidate and agree revisions when necessary
- keep accurate and verifiable records of candidate assessment and achievement
- ensure that assessments are internally verified
- assist the candidate with their preparations for the case study examinations by providing advice and support.

7.3 What is the internal verifier's and quality assurance co-ordinator's role and responsibilities?

Internal verifiers and quality assurance co-ordinators will be responsible for the quality assurance of the qualification within the centre.

They must

- establish procedures to develop a common interpretation of the CPA Standards between assessors
- verify assessments by regularly sampling assessment decisions and ensuring that assessments are consistent and in line with the standards for CPA
- advise and support assessors and ensure that they have the necessary training to perform that role
- ensure that records of assessment are accurate and up to date
- keep accurate, up to date and auditable records of internal verification/quality assurance and sampling activity and ensure that these are available for the purposes of external verification
- liaise with the external verifier to manage and co-ordinate visit requirements
- provide feedback to the external verifier on the effectiveness of assessment
- ensure that any corrective actions required by the external verifier or the PMI are implemented within agreed timescales
- monitor and review the operation of CPA at the centre
- liaise with the centre contact to register candidates and inform candidates of their registration status
- liaise with the centre contact to submit candidate entries for the case study examinations
- ensure that the appropriate administrative arrangements are made for the conduct of the examinations

- apply for certificates of unit credit and final certificates on behalf of candidates no longer than 6 months after date of final assessment if the External Verifier has already given authority to claim certificates – otherwise the portfolio must be available to the External Verifier at the next visit and if approved the claim for the unit or final certificate must be made within one month from the date of the External Verifier visit.

At a **large or multi site centre** with several internal verifiers/quality assurance co-ordinators, one internal verifier/quality assurance co-ordinator may be given sole responsibility for some of the above tasks such as:

- liaison with the external verifier
- candidate registration
- examination entries
- applications for certificates of unit credit and final certificates.

7.4 What happens if you do not have staff available to become assessors or internal verifiers?

If you do not have staff available to act as assessors or internal verifiers or both, you may employ suitably qualified people to carry out these roles. The PMI maintains a datafile of people willing to act as peripatetic assessors and internal verifiers on a freelance basis. If you contact us we will put you in touch with peripatetic assessors and/or internal verifiers willing to work in your area.

We check that the peripatetic assessors and internal verifiers on our datafile have the appropriate assessor and internal verifier qualifications. However, it will be **your responsibility** to ensure that any peripatetic assessors and internal verifiers you employ have pensions experience appropriate for your schemes and to negotiate a contract with them. This will include working arrangements and payment. The PMI has no involvement in or responsibility for contracts negotiated between centres and peripatetic staff.

You do not have to recruit your peripatetic assessors and/or internal verifiers from our datafile. However, you must ensure that any you do employ are suitably qualified and occupationally competent.

You must let us know when you take on any peripatetic staff, in the same way that we would expect you to notify us of any additions or changes to your assessment and verification team.

We treat any peripatetic assessors and internal verifiers in the same way as any other members of a centre's assessment and verification team. The external verifier will monitor their qualifications and performance and they should be present when an external verification visit takes place.

You may choose to use peripatetic assessors and/or internal verifiers on a long-term basis or to cover short term gaps in your assessment and verification team.

Alternatively, centres may share suitably qualified and occupationally competent assessors and internal verifiers. If this course of action is followed, the PMI must be notified of the changes to the assessment team.

Potential centres intending to use peripatetic internal verifiers and/or assessors

If you are intending to use peripatetic internal verifiers and/or assessors you must provide a centre contact based at your centre to whom the PMI will send all information relating to CPA. If you are going to use peripatetic assessors and/or internal verifiers but have not yet appointed them, please state this on the centre approval form. Your centre approval will depend on the appointment of a suitable assessment and verification team and we will need details before the approval process can be completed.

If your centre employs peripatetic assessors and/or internal verifiers you must appoint a centre contact who is permanently based at the centre.

8 Replacement Certificates

Replacement Unit Certificates

If a certificate of unit credit is damaged in the post, PMI will issue a replacement. However, the original certificate must be returned to PMI before a replacement will be issued.

If a certificate of unit credit is lost, PMI will issue a replacement for a fee.

Replacement Final Certificates

If a candidate has completed CPA and has lost/damaged their full CPA certificate, PMI will issue a replacement certificate.

A request for a final certificate must usually be received within 3 years of the date of the original final certificate. However, in exceptional circumstances we will issue a replacement final certificate if the request is received after 3 years but no longer than 5 years after the date of the original certificate.

If a request is received more than 5 years after the date of the original certificate, PMI will issue a Statement of Confirmation of Achievement.

9 Special Assessment Arrangements

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

- If you have any candidates 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.

The work based units

We do not anticipate that special assessment arrangements will be required for the work based units. These all deal with competencies that the candidates would naturally demonstrate in the work place. Where natural evidence of competence is not available the units in the qualification specify where and to what extent simulation may be used. However if you have any candidates for whom special assessment arrangements seem to be required you must discuss this, in the first instance, with your External Verifier. In situations that need more extensive discussions the Head of Qualifications, generally via the External Verifier, although centres may, obviously, make contact directly, will become involved. In situations where extensive discussions are necessary this will include the centre, the External Verifier and/or the Chief External Verifier and the Head of Qualifications.

The units assessed by case study examinations

We will only authorise special arrangements for any candidate 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 candidates 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 candidate 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.

10 What happens if your centre has no candidates?

If your centre has no candidates, for example because existing candidates have left or completed, you must become an inactive centre unless you expect to have new candidates within the next 12 months.

If you decide later to become an approved centre again, you must re-apply for centre approval and demonstrate that you can meet the approved centre criteria.

Please contact the PMI for advice.

11 EXTERNAL VERIFICATION?

11.1 What is external verification?

External verification is an essential part of our quality assurance system. It involves an independent evaluation of your centre against specified criteria. These are the same criteria which we use for centre approval. The main purpose is to ensure that national standards are maintained for CPA and that the centre continues to meet the regulatory requirements for an approved centre offering QCF units.

11.2 Who can be an external verifier?

External verifiers have to be pensions professionals. Several also have practical experience as assessors or internal verifiers. Most are still working in the industry, a few are retired.

They have all been trained by the Pensions Management Institute, they attend update meetings and receive regular briefings. They all have to hold D35 or V2, or be working towards the Award in the External Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice Level 4 - the national standard for external verifiers.

An external verifier for a centre may not also act as an emergency assessor or an internal verifier for that centre but only if prior approval is given by PMI in exceptional circumstances.

11.3 What are the external verifier's role and responsibilities?

The external verifier's primary role is to ensure that national standards are maintained for CPA through the quality and consistency of the assessment decisions made within the centre. To achieve this the external verifier visits centres regularly and is responsible for

- verifying assessment practices and centre procedures
- providing information, advice and support to centres
- providing information to the PMI on how centres are operating
- identifying areas where the approved centre criteria are not being met and action plan centres to put the correct systems and procedures into place.

11.4 When is an external verifier allocated to your centre?

We allocate an external verifier to your centre as soon as possible after you have applied for centre approval. This is usually within one month of the receipt of your application. This external verifier usually carries out the approval visit but another external verifier may be asked to do this.

We aim to ensure that there is no conflict of commercial interest between the external verifier and the centre. Therefore your external verifier will work in a different sector. If possible your external verifier will be based close to your centre.

We ask external verifiers first if they are willing to take on a particular centre. We then pass on the details of the external verifier to the centre. You have the right to ask for a different external verifier if you think that the person we have allocated is not appropriate. You can refuse to accept an external verifier and we will allocate another.

11.5 When do external verifier's visits take place?

You share responsibility with your external verifier to ensure that visits are arranged when required. All active centres must have **at least one visit a year. Active centres with more than ten candidates may have two visits a year.** There may be occasions when additional visits are required, for example, as a result of the outcome of a previous visit, or if there have been major changes in your qualification team. We will tell you if you need an additional visit and remind you when your regular visits are due. Arrangements for extra (or fewer) visits to a centre will be determined and agreed with PMI.

If yours is a **multi site centre** all your sites will receive visits from an external verifier over a period of time but not necessarily in the same year. If your sites are widely scattered we may ask other external verifiers to visit some of them but they will liaise with your main external verifier.

The date of a visit is usually agreed in advance between you and your external verifier. However, PMI and the regulatory authority (Ofqual) reserve the right to carry out a visit at short notice or without prior notification in order to minimise the risk of unsubstantiated claims for certification.

11.6 How to prepare for your external verifier's visit

About two months before your regular visit is due we will ask you for an update on the progress of your candidates at your centre. We will send this information to your external verifier along with updated lists on your centre, who will then tell you who and what he or she wants to see during the visit. Your external verifier has a sampling strategy and over a period of time this must include:

- all candidates
- all assessors and mentors
- all internal verifiers and quality assurance co-ordinators
- all work based units
- all assessment methods.

However your external verifier reserves the right to select some of the sample without prior notice.

Check the action plan in your last report to see whether you have complied with the agreed action plan. This may be your last external verifier's report, or, if yours is a new centre, your approval report. Have evidence available to show that you have complied or what you are doing to comply.

You must provide access to premises, meetings, candidate records and records of achievement, documents and data, candidates and members of the qualification team for the purposes of external verification. Therefore, before the day of the visit you should make sure that you have the relevant documentation available, including centre records, evidence portfolios/location and records of assessment and verification/quality assurance and that the people whom the external verifier has asked to see are available on that day.

If you are using a peripatetic assessor and/or internal verifier one of them must be present for the external verifier visit and over time the external verifier should have seen all peripatetic assessors and internal verifiers used by the centre.

11.7 The external verification visit

The length of the visit will depend partly on the size of the centre and how active the candidates are but should take at least half a day. Your external verifier will be able to give you a clearer idea of the length of time required.

You must provide your external verifier with the opportunity to meet candidates and members of the qualification on their own if required.

Your external verifier will discuss the outcome of the visit with you on the day and draw up an action plan with time scales to help you meet any of the criteria that you do not meet at the time of the visit. The centre contact will be asked to sign the action plan to confirm the centre's agreement. Soon after the visit you will receive a formal report.

11.8 The external verifier's report

Your external verifier will complete a report on the visit and submit it to the PMI. We will copy this report to you. You should receive it within 4 weeks of the visit. Please contact us if you have not received your report within that time scale.

The report is a record of the visit and the issues that were discussed and will include the action plan agreed and signed during the visit. Your compliance with this plan will be monitored by your external verifier and by the PMI and will be reviewed during your next external verification visit. At the next visit your external verifier will want to see evidence that each action point was met by the due date.

If your candidates are taking work based units the report will state whether or not you may apply for certificates of unit credit. Where your external verifier recommends that certificates of unit credit may not be issued for all or some work based units, the action plan will include the steps you must take before certificates can be issued.

The PMI will not issue certificates of unit credit for work based units to a centre unless that centre has had a recent satisfactory external verifier's report recommending their issue. **Recent** - means within the previous 12 months for centres with 10 or fewer candidates or within the previous visit out of the 2 visits per year for centres with 11 or more candidates. Multi site centres are treated on an individual basis and we will advise you of the frequency of visits required to each site. Any centre where there has been a major change of centre staff since the last visit must have a further external verification visit before we will issue certificates of unit credit for the work based units.

You have a right of appeal against external verification decisions

12 WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE PENSIONS MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE?

12.1 Awarding Organisation

The PMI is the Awarding Organisation for CPA. We administer all aspects of the qualification and are responsible for its quality assurance.

12.2 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 time scales 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 about any aspect of CPA:

- telephone the Qualifications Department on 0207 2471 452
- write to us at Devonshire House, 60 Goswell Road, London,
- EC1M 7AD
- e-mail us on: [pmiqualifications@pensions-](mailto:pmiqualifications@pensions-pmi.org.uk)

pmi.org.uk

We aim to deal with enquiries within 5 working days.

Provision of support materials

We provide a range of support materials for candidates, assessors and internal verifiers which include:

- On-line learning
- Copies of past case study examination papers
- Examiners' Reports

You can obtain details of current materials and costs by contacting the PMI. Details are also included with the mailings to centres and on our website.

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. Their meetings are often of interest to those involved with our qualifications. For details of your nearest group, please contact us or look on the main PMI website.

PMI's website

Information about CPA can be found on the PMI's website www.pensions-pmi.org.uk 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. Our complete equal opportunities statement is in Appendix A.

12.3 What should you do if you have a complaint?

If you wish to register a formal complaint please write to the Head of Qualifications at PMI House. Receipt of all complaints will be acknowledged within 3 working days.

We have a formal appeals procedure covering certain specific issues (see section 12.4).

12.4 Appeals procedure

- Centres have a right of appeal against refusal of centre approval and external verification decisions.
- Candidates have a right of appeal against examination and assessment decisions.
- All appeals must be submitted in writing and include full details of the grounds for appeal.
- Appeals must be submitted by the centre contact to the Head of Qualifications at PMI House.
- Appeals must be received within one month of notification of a decision against which the appeal is being made.
- Charges:
 - Appeals against centre approval decisions and external verification decisions are free of charge.
 - Appeals against examination and assessment decisions are subject to an administration charge of half the current cost of a certificate of unit credit which will be refunded if the appeal is upheld.
- A written outcome of the appeal will be sent to the person who submitted the appeal within 1 month of the receipt of the appeal.
- If the appellant is dissatisfied with the outcome, a final appeal may be made to PMI Council. This must be submitted in writing to the Head of Vocational Qualifications within one month of receiving the written outcome of the appeal. It will normally be submitted to the next Council meeting, which take place approximately 9 times a year. The appellant will be notified of the date when the appeal will be heard.
- A written outcome of the final appeal will be sent to the person who submitted it no later than 5 working days after the Council meeting at which it was considered.

APPENDIX A – EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES STATEMENT

As a nationally recognised professional body and as an awarding organisation, the Institute is responsible for ensuring that its Members, staff, and those applying for Membership and its qualifications are treated fairly and that there is equality of opportunity regardless of the individual's gender, racial origin, religious persuasion, sexual orientation or disability.

The Institute will ensure avoidance of inequality:

in the selection, recruitment and training of all those working for or on behalf of the Institute;

through the monitoring of practices, procedures and data relating to the operation of the organisation, its courses and assessment materials;

in the format and content of all syllabuses, regulations and examinations;

in the preparation, production and distribution of all material;

by the relaxation of any conventional rules and regulations which serve to inhibit the performance of those candidates with special needs in relation to candidates not so disadvantaged, provided that such action does not have a deleterious effect on the standard, quality and integrity of assessments.

In operating its procedures, in formulating its assessment methods and in producing materials, the Institute will make every effort to provide a format, language or approach, which in relation to an individual's gender, racial origin, religious persuasion, sexual orientation or disability:

is not offensive to members of particular groups;

is capable of being readily understood by all;

has the same meaning for all;

implies no stereotyped or biased attitudes;

includes terms or concepts or forms of presentation which are not more familiar to some groups than others;

does not employ assessment techniques that are easier for some groups of candidates to use.

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

APPENDIX B - Confidentiality/Conflict of Interest Policy (Qualifications)

As part of PMI Governance arrangements, PMI Risk Committee asks that all individuals involved in examination and assessment related activities should be familiar with our policies on confidentiality and conflict of interest.

Furthermore, all such individuals should complete a conflict register and agree to abide by the data security and confidentiality protocols.

Therefore, each year and when a new member of the centre's assessment team comes on board everyone involved with qualifications will be asked to complete and return the PMI declarations as soon as possible and/or update them as required.

Recognition of Conflicts of Interest

It is the responsibility of each individual:

To recognise situations in which he or she has a conflict of interest, or might reasonably be seen by others to have a conflict;

- to disclose that conflict;
- to take such further steps as may be appropriate;
- to record in writing in the Conflicts Register and in the minutes of the meeting details of the conflict and of how it has been addressed.

If you have any queries on these policies please contact Neil Scott, Head of Professional Standards
nscott@pensions-pmi.org.uk.

APPENDIX C – REPORTING MALPRACTICE

PMI is required by the regulatory authority (Ofqual) to deal with malpractice on the part of candidates, centre staff or others involved in providing CPA in line with the Regulatory Arrangements for the Qualification and Credit Framework.

CPA centres must report any malpractice suspected after candidates have been registered as soon as possible to the PMI.

Where malpractice is suspected in a centre the PMI will immediately suspend the centre from making any claims for certification. This is to allow an investigation to be initiated and the PMI to be satisfied that adequate safeguards are in place to guarantee the validity of the certificates being claimed. Failure of a centre to co-operate with an investigation may also result in the suspension of registration of candidates at that centre.

Those responsible for managing and carrying out an investigation of a centre will be independent of the management of normal working relationships with that centre or the centre's external verifier.

The PMI will notify the regulatory authority when commencing an investigation and will provide an estimated timescale for its completion.

The PMI will prepare a final report of its investigation which will detail to the regulatory authorities:

- the origin of the complaint or mode of discovery of the alleged irregularity(ies);
- the investigations carried out;
- the evidence adduced;
- the conclusions drawn;
- the recommendations for action and resolution of the matter.

Exceptionally the regulatory authorities may need to take over an investigation and in such circumstances will provide a written instruction to the PMI informing us of this and the reasons for taking such action.

The PMI must inform the regulatory authorities whenever it finds evidence that certificates may be invalid and agree the appropriate action with the regulatory authorities. Certificates are in principle deemed invalid in the following circumstances:

- the evidence assessed is not the candidate's own work;
- the candidate is still working towards the qualification after the certificate has been claimed;
- the certificates have been claimed on the basis of falsified records;
- the PMI has issued certificates contrary to the Regulatory Arrangements for the Qualification and Credit Framework and the PMI's accreditation agreement.

If certificates are found to be invalid, the PMI will discuss individual cases with the regulatory authorities to decide what action to take.

Centres have a shared responsibility with the PMI to deal with problems caused for candidates when certificates have been wrongly claimed. When a decision is taken to invalidate certificates, the PMI will ensure that the following actions are taken:

- Follow the principle of seeking to protect the interests of candidates, in so far as is reasonable and possible in the circumstances;
- Contact the candidates involved and notify them of the status of their certificates and of any arrangements for re-assessment and/or certification;
- Ensure that the original certificates are cancelled on our database to ensure that duplicates cannot be issued;
- Inform the regulatory authorities of the details of the invalidated certificates and, where appropriate, make the information available to public funding bodies.

Contacts at PMI

If you have any queries or need further information please contact the Qualifications Department

Address Devonshire House, 60 Goswell Road, London, EC1M 7AD

Telephone +44 (0) 20 7247 1452

E-mail pmiqualifications@pensions-pmi.org.uk

Website www.pensions-pmi.org.uk