Defence Awarding Organisation



DAO Qualification Withdrawal Policy

Ver 8.0 Nov 26

Recognising Quality and Competence:

Supporting Defence with accreditation and specialist bespoke qualification opportunities

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Amendments

Version	Author / Owner	Amendment	Date
7.0	DAO Development Manager 2	Rewrite published to align to QMS process	28 Mar 25
8.0	DAO Development Manager 2	Policy review and CASS alignment	18 Nov 26

Definitions

Term	Definition
Adverse Effect	An Adverse Effect is an act, omission, event, incident or circumstance that prejudices Learners or potential Learners, or adversely affects the awarding organisation's ability to develop, deliver or award qualifications in compliance with its Conditions of Recognition, the standards of qualifications it offers or proposes to offer, or public confidence in qualifications.
Centre	An organisation undertaking the delivery of an assessment (and potentially other activities) to Learners on behalf of an awarding organisation. Centres are typically educational institutions, training providers, or employers.
Centre Assessment Standards Scrutiny (CASS)	Implemented by the regulator Ofqual the purpose of the CASS is to standardise the evaluation of assessment judgements of Awarding Organisations qualifications by Training Providers and Approved Centres
Compliance	The act of adhering to Ofqual regulatory requirements, legislation, policies, procedures and DAO standards relating to the development, delivery, quality assurance, review and withdrawal of qualifications.
Learner	A person who is registered to take a qualification and to be assessed as part of that qualification.
Operational End Date	The final date on which new learner registrations may be accepted for a qualification. After this date the qualification is no longer available for new registrations, although existing learners may continue to complete the qualification until the Certification End Date.
Qualification Management System (QMS)	The DAO web-based system used to manage qualifications throughout their lifecycle and record keeping, along with communications between the DAO and Awarding Centres. The QMS maintains records of both active and withdrawn qualifications and supports the management of associated documentation, actions and decisions.
Qualification Withdrawal	The formal process of discontinuing a qualification, including the management of learner registrations, certification arrangements, centre communications and Ofqual notifications, until the qualification is no longer available for registration, delivery and certification.
Qualification Withdrawal Plan	The documented plan used to manage the withdrawal of a qualification. It records the rationale for withdrawal, impact assessment, risks, learner protection arrangements, Ofqual response and actions required to implement the withdrawal in accordance with compliance and Ofqual regulations.

Overview

1. The Defence Awarding Organisation (DAO) will manage withdrawals in a manner that protects Learners and DAO Awarding Centres, and in compliance with the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) General Conditions of Recognition (GCoR)[1], Condition D6.

Purpose

2. This policy sets out the DAO arrangements for the withdrawal of regulated qualifications and units.

Scope

3. This policy covers the rationale for withdrawing DAO regulated qualifications, including direction on timescales, reasons for the withdrawal, consideration of how Learners may be affected, in line with Ofqual's GCoR. It applies to DAO personnel, DAO Awarding Centres and all stakeholders involved in development, approval, delivery, certification, review or withdrawal activities.

4. The DAO will prioritise the interests of Learners, assess impact, provide clear information, maintain reasonable completion opportunities and consider equality impacts before implementing withdrawal decisions.

5. The DAO withdraws a qualification at the point in time when an Awarding Centre:

   a. ceases to register Learners for a qualification.
   b. ceases to deliver or award that qualification to Learners.
   c. surrenders its recognition in respect of that qualification, or,
   d. has its recognition withdrawn by Ofqual in respect of that qualification.[2]

Governance and Responsibilities

6. The DAO Responsible Officer (RO) is accountable for regulatory compliance. The RO will approve qualification withdrawals. The DAO Compliance Manager provides regulatory oversight. The DAO Development Managers lead the withdrawal process. The DAO Awarding Centre supports learner transition and communications. All staff must maintain records and comply with this policy.[3]

Policy Review Arrangements

7. The DAO will review the policy and its associated procedures annually as part of the DAO self-evaluation arrangements. The DAO will also revise the policy in response to legal or regulatory change, adverse effect, control failure, audit finding, QMS change and post withdrawal lessons learned. Due regard will also be given to the outcome of any appeals or complaints process that may effect the policy.[4]

Withdrawal Assessment

8. An impact evaluation will be completed before the withdrawal process begins. This will establish if the reasoning for the qualification withdrawal has caused an adverse effect and if

[1] Ofqual General Conditions of Recognition (GCoR)
[2] This meets the requirement for Ofqual GCoR Condition D6.1
[3] This meets the requirement for Ofquals GCoR Condition A5.2
[4] This meets the requirement for Ofqual GCoR Condition I2.2

withdrawing the qualification will or is likely to cause any adverse effect. If any adverse effects are identified, they will be reported to Ofqual.[5] The impact evaluation will also consider learner numbers, certification implications, alternative provision, quality impacts, contractual obligations and regulatory risks. All reasonable steps will be taken to protect the interest of learners in relation to that qualification.[6]

Notification and Evidence

9. DAO will give Ofqual reasonable notice of its intention to withdraw a qualification prior to communicating its intention to Learners, Awarding Centres and other interested parties.[7] A Qualification Withdrawal Plan will be prepared to document rationale, consultation, risks, mitigation actions, learner protection arrangements, and approval decisions [8].

10. All relevant information (which qualification is being withdrawn, and why, how the withdrawal could affect learners, dates for final registrations of new learners, information about deadlines for completing particular actions, how the interests of learners will be protected, etc.) will be communicated in a timely manner to the Awarding Centre and Learners likely to be affected by the qualification withdrawal. The plan will be continually reviewed, comply with any requirements that Ofqual has communicated in writing[9], with changes recorded as necessary, up to the plan's closure.

Record keeping

11. All withdrawal records, forms and documents will be retained in accordance with DAO records management requirements and be available for regulatory review.[8]

Timescales

12. Withdrawal timescales will be risk based. Unless exceptional circumstances apply, the DAO will inform Ofqual and, subsequently, Awarding Centres and Learners of its intention, giving reasonable notice (usually 3 months) this will:

    a. allow Ofqual to communicate any requirements in writing to the DAO
    b. allow Awarding Centres to source alternative qualifications
    c. provide reasonable opportunity for Learners who are registered for the qualification to complete the qualification and achieve certification.

Process

13. If a Centre proposes to withdraw a qualification that they are currently using, the Centre Head will initiate the process by completing a Product Withdrawal Form on the Qualification Management System (QMS) and submit it to the DAO for consideration (this form will become the Qualification Withdrawal Plan if the DAO agrees with the proposal).

14. The DAO will consider the proposal submitted and may consult with the Awarding Centre, and stakeholders before making the decision to either proceed with the withdrawal, to

[5] This meets the requirement for Ofqual GCoR Condition B3.1
[6] This meets the requirement for Ofqual GCoR Condition D6.2
[7] This meets the requirement for Ofqual GCoR Condition D6.3
[8] This meets the requirement for Ofqual GCoR Condition D6.4
[9] This meets the requirement for Ofqual GCoR Condition D6.5
[8] This meets the requirement for Ofqual GCoR Condition A5.2

remove the qualification from that Awarding Centre's portfolio or for the qualification to remain active.

15. Where the DAO decides to proceed with the qualification withdrawal, it will inform Ofqual of this prior to informing learners and the Awarding Centre concerned.

16. If the DAO proposes to withdraw a qualification, the process will be initiated and led by a DAO Development Manager. A Product Withdrawal Form will be initiated on QMS (this form will become the Qualification Withdrawal Plan) and Ofqual will be informed. Subsequently the DAO will notify the Awarding Centre via the QMS and provide opportunity for consultation with the DAO regarding the withdrawal decisions.

17. The DAO will confirm that all eligible awards have been made with any related appeals resolved. The Operational End Date (date of last registrations) will be confirmed on the Product Withdrawal Form. When this date is reached, registrations for the qualification will be suspended on QMS to prevent new learners being registered. The Certification End Date will also be confirmed on the QMS Product Withdrawal Form. If certificates are still to be released, this date will allow sufficient time for:

    a. the learners to complete the qualification,
    b. the quality assurance process (internal and external) to be completed and
    c. certificates released.

18. When final certificates are released or the Certificate End Date is reached (whichever comes first), certificates will be suspended to prevent further certificates being released.

19. For internal process, details of the Withdrawal Process, whether initiated by the Awarding Centre or the DAO, can be found in the DAO WI-06 Qualification Withdrawal.

Centre Support

20. All policies for DAO are available on the DAO website and the DAO Qualification Management System (QMS).

21. The DAO will work with Awarding Centres to deliver a customer-focused and professional service to DAO Learners. Any queries about the contents of the policy, please contact the DAO Compliance Team via:

DAO website

https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/defence-awarding-organisation

Post

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Learning and Capability Development Group (LCaD)
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Annex A to DAO
Qualification Withdrawal Policy

RACI Roles and Responsibilities Matrix

This annex provides a RACI matrix that defines who is Responsible, Accountable, Consulted and Informed for each key activity. It clarifies the allocation of duties between the DAO and DAO Awarding Centres, and supports appropriate separation of responsibilities and provides a clear basis for oversight and escalation.

Activity	DAO Responsible Officer	DAO Compliance Manager	DAO Development Manager	DAO Business Coordinator	Awarding Centre / Centre Head
Approve qualification withdrawals	R	C	C	I	C
Lead the withdrawal process	I	C	R	I	C
Initiate a Centre-proposed withdrawal	I	I	I	I	R
Support learner transition and communications	A	R	R	I	R
Carry out an impact assessment review	A	C	R	I	C
Report identified adverse effects to Ofqual	A	R	C	R	I
Notify Ofqual of Withdrawal Proposal	A	I	R	R	I
Complete Withdrawal Plan	A	C	R	R	C
Record Keeping	A	I	R	R	R
Consider the Centre proposal to withdraw	R	C	R	I	I
Initiate and lead a DAO-proposed withdrawal	C	C	R	I	C
Confirm the Operational End Date and the Certifcation End Date	A	C	R	R	C
Confirm all eligible awards have been made	I	C	R	R	R
Suspend QMS certification	I	C	R	R	I

Key:

R = Responsible
A = Accountable
C = Consulted
I = Informed.

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