



Direct Claims Status Policy & Procedure

Document Specification:	
Purpose:	To set out the policy and procedure to be followed by the staff, management, directors, contractors and other third parties engaged by Gatehouse Awards to ensure that the award, monitoring and withdrawal of any approved Centre's DSC status is undertaken compliantly.
Accountability:	Gatehouse Awards Governing Body
Responsibility:	Quality Assurance Manager
Version:	1.0
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Links to Ofqual GCR	H1, H2, H5, H6
Other relevant documents:	GA Compliance Policy GA Centre Handbook GA Quality Assurance Policy GA External Quality Assurance Handbook GA Malpractice and Maladministration Policy GA Sanctions Policy

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1. Purpose & Scope

The policy sets out Gatehouse Awards' approach to granting, monitoring and withdrawing Direct Claims Status (DCS) to eligible approved Centres.

2. Data Protection

Information provided will be processed in accordance with data protection principles as set out in the Data Protection Act 1998. Data will be processed only to ensure that all persons to whom this policy relates act in the best interests of the Learners, the Centres delivering the qualifications and Gatehouse Awards. Information provided will not be used for any other purpose.

3. Definition

Direct Claim Status (DCS) is a method widely used by awarding organisations, allowing eligible Centres to claim for learners' certificates when they are ready and are satisfied their learners have fully met the qualification criteria, without the need for External Quality Assurance.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 Centre Assessors:

- confirm that all learners requested for certification have fully met the assessment requirements for the units being claimed in accordance with the unit specification(s).

4.2 Centre Internal Quality Assurers (IQAs), also referred to as Internal Verifiers or Internal Moderators:

- ensure that consistent robust delivery, assessment and internal quality assurance systems and procedures are maintained.
- take the lead in ensuring that assessment and internal quality assurance is well planned and meets Gatehouse Awards' requirements.
- ensure the appointed assessor(s) have confirmed that all learners requested for certification have fully met the assessment requirements for the units being claimed in accordance with the unit specification(s).
- confirm that the learners being claimed have been subjected to appropriate internal quality assurance in accordance with Gatehouse Awards guidelines.
- confirm the claim for certification is correct.
- understand that claims made incorrectly or falsely will be investigated in accordance with Gatehouse Awards' Maladministration and Malpractice Policy.

4.3 Head of Centre:

- ensures Gatehouse Awards is promptly notified when a lead IQA leaves the Centre.
- ensures that where the removal of an IQA causes the Centre to be non-compliant, they nominate another suitably experienced IQA to ensure the Centre has a minimum of one IQA at all times, as detailed in the relevant Qualification Specification Handbook, QA Guidance and Gatehouse Awards' Centre Handbook.

4.4 Gatehouse Awards External Quality Assurers (EQAs):

- make recommendations for DCS to Gatehouse Awards' Quality Assurance Manager, in accordance with this policy.
- continue to monitor the ongoing compliance of the Centre to ensure that standards are being maintained.
- alert the Quality Assurance Manager to concerns with Centre activity which may lead to the suspension/withdrawal of DCS.

4.5 Gatehouse Awards' Quality Assurance Manager:

- considers DCS recommendations made by EQAs.
- confirms appropriate DCS to the Centre.
- takes action to suspend/withdraw DCS, where necessary.
- ensures that DCS is granted to/withdrawn from Gatehouse Awards' Approved Centres in accordance with this policy and the Gatehouse Awards Sanctions policy.

5. Direct Claims Status (DCS) General Principles

- DCS is based on quality criteria measured and reported on through external quality assurance, carried out by a Gatehouse Awards External Quality Assurer (EQA).
- A Centre with DCS is judged by Gatehouse Awards to have appropriate occupationally competent, skilled and knowledgeable internal quality assurer(s) and reliable, robust internal quality assurance systems in place. These aspects enable the Centre to make consistent, accurate decisions about certificates awarded to learners.
- DCS is built on demonstrated trust and confidence, based on the Centre ensuring it continues to operate to the consistent high standards identified as already in place.
- Based on evidence of consistent robust internal quality assurance systems, Gatehouse Awards' EQAs may recommend DCS. Confirmation of DCS, and the final decision, is at Gatehouse Awards' discretion.
- Where DCS has been awarded, Centres must continue to deliver the qualification to learners, assess the work and make sure it is internally quality assured. If a Centre is granted DCS status, the Centre's IQA will be able to approve the Centre's own

- certificate claims for that qualification without waiting for the need for final sign-off by a Gatehouse Awards EQA.
- DCS is awarded on an individual qualification-by-qualification basis, not across the Centre as a whole. A Centre may hold DCS for more than one qualification, as long as all the criteria are met in full for each qualification.
- Centres will continue to receive EQA scrutiny for qualifications they do not have DCS approval for.
- Centres will continue to receive at least one Gatehouse Awards EQA visit per year to ensure standards are being upheld.
- Whilst active Centres holding DCS are only required to have one EQA visit every 12 months, they may request additional visits if they wish (additional visits may be charged to the Centre, at the discretion of Gatehouse Awards).
- To retain DCS, Centres must keep all evidence and retain all associated records of assessment and internal quality assurance activity for the next EQA visit, for all qualifications/units for which DCS has been granted. This is so the EQA can review completed portfolios for a sample of learners who have been directly certificated since their previous activity, as part of the Centre's on-going compliance monitoring against Gatehouse Awards' Centre approval and Centre Agreement requirements. These checks ensure that standards are being consistently maintained, allowing Gatehouse Awards to take action if they are not.
- In the case of Gatehouse Awards' regulated qualifications, eligible Centres must have demonstrated consistency and quality in the delivery, assessment and internal quality assurance, achieved consistent good quality assurance reports and demonstrate 'low risk' status to qualify for DCS.

6. Award of DCS

DCS may be transferred from another Awarding Organisation for a qualification where the Centre had been awarded DCS from their other awarding organisation, at the discretion of the Quality Assurance Manager. The decision will be based upon evidence available at the time.

Where a Centre does not hold DCS elsewhere, or is undertaking the delivery of a Gatehouse Awards qualification in a new subject area or level, DCS must be earned.

There is no exact timescale to achieving DCS.

Centres may be granted DCS, based on the recommendation of an EQA, having demonstrated the following quality criteria (the list is not exhaustive and is intended for guidance only):

- the Centre has an experienced internal quality assurer
- the Centre has had two successful consecutive monitoring EQA events for the qualification DCS is being sought
- the Centre's internal quality assurance policy is being effectively implemented and covers all aspects of internal quality assurance
- the Centre's standardisation activity is satisfactory
- the Centre has no sanctions above Level 1 (please refer to the Gatehouse Awards Sanctions Policy) and no unaddressed action plans relating to both successful monitoring EQA events and the Centre Approval and Centre Agreement criteria
- the Centre has 'low risk' status as identified in the Gatehouse Awards Centre Risk Ratings

Gatehouse Awards will inform the Centre in writing when their DCS is confirmed, clearly stating for which qualification(s) the DCS has been approved and the terms and conditions of DCS. If there are any conditions attached to the DCS approval, those will also be stated at this time.

The Centre must advise Gatehouse Awards immediately of any changes that may affect the Centre's DCS approval, for example, changes to resources, particularly within the assessment and IQA team.

Continuation of Direct Claims Status will be dependent on the successful outcome of the annual EQA visit.

7. Making a Direct Claim

Direct claims are made via Gatehouse Awards' Online Learner Management System, The Ark, and must be verified by the Internal Quality Assurer (IQA). Certificates will then be printed, and dispatched by Gatehouse Awards.

All evidence and records must be retained for EQA purposes.

8. Direct Claims Status Withdrawal

To ensure the integrity of the delivery, assessment and quality assurance of a qualification, Gatehouse Awards will withdraw DCS where the Centre no longer meets the criteria for eligibility.

Gatehouse Awards adopts a risk-based approach, considered against on-going monitoring against Centre Approval and the Centre Agreement criteria.

DCS may be suspended or withdrawn upon the recommendation of the EQA if they report concerns about the quality of work being carried out during their EQA activities, in particular, about the internal quality assurance processes in place.

Centres that have DCS and incur actions at Sanction Level 1 will not necessarily have their DCS removed for that qualification, where all actions are satisfactorily completed within the set timescales specified by Gatehouse Awards within the EQA report.

Centres that have DCS and incur a sanction at Level 2 or above, will have their DCS promptly removed for those qualifications that are under threat.

Higher level sanctions imposed may affect the DCS of more than one qualification.

DCS will be withdrawn where the Centre stops delivering the qualification(s) or does not make direct certification claims for the qualification(s) for 12 months.

DCS will be automatically suspended where malpractice is alleged, where persistent maladministration occurs, or where the Centre is under compliance investigation, whilst Gatehouse Awards investigates the allegations.

9. Appeals

Centres who wish to appeal against a decision regarding withdrawal of DCS or against Sanctions imposed should do so using the Gatehouse Awards Appeals procedure.

10. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed by the Quality Assurance Manager on a regular basis as part of Gatehouse Awards' arrangements and revised as necessary in response to lessons learnt, customer feedback, changes in legislation and guidance from the Qualifications Regulator, Ofqual.

Our review of the policy will ensure that Gatehouse Awards' procedures continue to be consistent with regulatory criteria and are applied appropriately and equitably.