Internal Quality Assurance Policy — July 2018

CiLCA is the Certificate in Local Council Administration, the specific Level 3 qualification for officers of parish, town and community (or local) councils. The SLCC is responsible for the administration, delivery, assessment and quality assurance of CiLCA on behalf of the Improvement & Development Board (IDB) and the National Training Advisory Group (NTAG) for Wales. The IDB represents bodies responsible for the development of local councils including the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Local Government Association, the National Association of Local Councils and the SLCC.

The IDB, SLCC staff and all independent training organisations involved in the management, assessment and quality assurance of Ascentis' qualifications and all candidates should be fully aware of this policy. All individuals must ensure that the policies are implemented. This policy was adopted by the Ops Group representing both the IDB and NTAG in July 2018 and is to be reviewed by July 2020.

CiLCA is awarded by Ascentis and therefore the training and assessment leading to the qualification of CiLCA must be of the highest possible standard to protect the integrity of the qualification. The SLCC, on behalf of the IDB, must comply with all the requirements of Ascentis for the quality assurance of the qualification thereby ensuring that assessment is valid and reliable and that candidates who have shown they can meet the required standards receive certification. Quality assurance procedures must also ensure consistency of standards over time.

The quality assurance of CiLCA is based on the following principles:

- Quality assurance is understandable to stakeholders, effectively administered and cost effective to operate.
- CiLCA is accessible to all candidates who have the potential to achieve the qualification.
- CiLCA assessment is a centralised process where candidates build an e-portfolio of evidence for five units assessed unit by unit within a twelve month period. The portfolio is submitted and assessed online.
- The assessment criteria which define the performance required of candidates for achieving CiLCA are appropriate to the purpose, explicit and in the public domain.
- Each criterion is unique and necessary, and complies with the specifications for the qualification.
- Assessment is valid, reliable and practicable, and assessment results are in line with the criteria for the qualification.
- The SLCC has the resources and expertise to assess learners against CilCA's criteria.

- SLCC staff are qualified for assessing and for internal quality assuring candidates for certification.

Ascentis and the SLCC are responsible for:

- facilitating the approval of the SLCC as a centre for the delivery of CiLCA.
- ensuring that the SLCC has appropriate management procedures and resources in place for the implementation and assessment of CiLCA.
- ensuring that all relevant staff (including managers, assessors, the Internal Quality Assurance Verifier (IQAV) and independent trainers) have the necessary knowledge, understanding and skills required to deliver CiLCA.
- validating CiLCA as a Level 3 qualification and ensuring that the assessment plan is fit for purpose.
- ensuring that the SLCC internally verifies assessments for CiLCA so that all assessments are valid and consistent.
- facilitating the external process by which Ascentis ensures that internal assessment is in line with the specification set out in the Portfolio Guide.
- ensuring that training in preparation for CiLCA is fit for purpose.

Internal Quality Assurance covers
- assessment decisions made by all assessors and the IQAV ensuring that they meet the criteria specified in the assessment plan (see The Portfolio Guide)
- each candidate's work ensuring that it reflects the level of achievement and the validity of the certificate.

External Quality Assurance is carried out by a competent person appointed by Ascentis to ensure that the SLCC

- has appropriate levels of resources to support the delivery of the qualification, including both physical resources and staffing
- is using appropriate assessment methods and making appropriate assessment decisions according to Ascentis' requirements
- has appropriate internal quality assurance arrangements as outlined in the Portfolio Guide
- is using appropriate administrative arrangements to support the function of delivery and assessment.

An External Quality Assurance (EQA) visit takes place once or twice a year. Feedback to centres is given through the EQA report form which includes details on the criteria above and identifies any areas where further development is required.

Sanctions: Ascentis has a range of sanctions that can be applied if the SLCC's performance falls short. The nature of the sanction depends on the severity of the situation i.e. the level of risk posed to learners and the integrity of CiLCA. Ascentis aims to work with the SLCC via a risk management process to prevent situations where sanctions would be necessary.

Sanctions may include:

- Withdrawal of Direct Claim Status for CiLCA
- The suspension of registration and/or certification CiLCA
- The withdrawal of approval (recommendation made to Ascentis executive)
- The withdrawal of Centre Recognition (recommendation made to Ascentis executive).

Ascentis will work transparently with centres to ensure every opportunity is given to address the areas of non-compliance prior to the recommendation of qualification approval or centre recognition withdrawal.

Internal Quality Assurance Verifier (IQAV)
The IQAV is a qualified and experienced assessor and verifier who has also practised as a professional local council officer. It is the IQAV's responsibility to appoint, train and guide the assessors and to verify their work through the sampling of 20% of their assessments and covering all five units. A new assessor marks one practice portfolio and a second assessor overmarks at least the first five portfolios marked by a new assessor until the IQAV is satisfied that the assessor achieves the expected standard.

The IQAV keeps a record of all meetings and matters discussed with assessors. If a trainer or the IQAV is concerned that an appropriate standard of marking is not being maintained, this is raised with the SLCC which investigates the matter and acts on its findings.

CiLCA assessors
Assessors are selected for proven subject knowledge and assessment practice and are totally objective in their approach. They are supported through induction, mentoring and a probationary period and receive regular training. Assessors hold two meetings a year to share ideas, address concerns and participate in standardisation activities to ensure consistent assessment practice. Assessors are anonymous within the professional sector to protect them from being approached by candidates. Candidates are not trained by their assessors; the training process is completely independent. There are procedures in place to ensure that assessors have no conflict of interest.

Assessors review trends in assessment results in order to provide advice for trainers. If advice for trainers emerges from assessment, the IQAV issues a training briefing to be issued to training providers.

Assessment standards
Candidates must achieve *all* the assessment criteria to an *adequate* standard. Minor errors, misunderstandings and points for improvement are noted in feedback but do not require further work. Candidates are asked to do further work and re-submit sections of the portfolio where significant points are missed or errors show that the understanding of the law or accepted good practice is less than sufficient, especially where the council might be put at risk.

Candidates have one opportunity to improve their work for each unit free of charge. If the work is still not of an adequate standard, the unit is locked until all units have been attempted. On payment of a fee to cover the additional costs of assessment, the relevant units are unlocked and the candidate has a third opportunity to submit. If however, their

work is still not of an appropriate standard in more than three learning outcomes they are required to re-register, attend further training and begin assessment again.

Assessors may take up to three weeks to assess each unit. Candidates receive feedback within three to six weeks of submission depending on whether the marking is verified by the IQAV. In practice, feedback is normally received within two weeks.

Security of assessment
The contents of an e-portfolio are entirely secure with access permitted to the candidate, the assessor, the IQAV and the External QA verifier only. Trainers and other members of staff have no access to each individual portfolio. The CiLCA Administrator has access to registration and the e-portfolio supplier's position is set out in its agreement with the SLCC. Individuals cannot discuss the contents of a portfolio unless a candidate gives permission.

Training
The IDB and NTAG for the professional sector expect training for CiLCA to be provided by a training organisation in every county across England and in Wales. Most training is managed by the county's Association of Local Councils (CALCs) who offer training for local council officers and councillors as core business. In some instances, the CALC works in partnership with the SLCC to provide training and in others, the SLCC runs the training instead of the CALC.   As training providers, the CALCs and the SLCC are responsible for the quality assurance of their training.

Most candidates are employed as local council officers in England and Wales. This exacting role demands core skills relating to roles and responsibilities, law and procedures, finance, management and community engagement. Successful candidates must be able to advise their councils accordingly in an executive role. Candidates are permitted to acquire this professional knowledge in a variety of ways depending on their individual needs, previous experiences and geographical location. For example:

- They may study an online course called ILCA (Introduction to Local Council Administration).
- They may attend an introductory course for local council officers delivered by their local training organisation for all such officers and not just for those studying CiLCA.
- They may have had sufficient high quality professional and educational experience for CiLCA to be undertaken without additional training.
- They may work with an experienced and qualified mentor.
- They may undertake a course designed locally to help candidates improve their professional knowledge.

The IDB has not introduced a standard course in professional knowledge to accompany CiLCA because

- candidates need the flexibility to engage in training that best suits their diverse professional and educational backgrounds
- training organisations need the flexibility to provide training that suits their local market

Candidates undertaking CiLCA apply professional knowledge by building a portfolio therefore all candidates are required to attend a short course that introduces the portfolio as an assessment tool and identifies additional training needs before they register for CiLCA. They need to be clear how to address the assessment tasks set out in the Portfolio Guide by compiling a portfolio of evidence in written explanations and annotations of council documents. This introductory course includes a training needs analysis whereby the trainer ensures that each candidate has had or will have had sufficient training in professional knowledge to undertake the qualification. The content of this short course is designed by the SLCC and is delivered either by a recognised trainer or by a webinar led by an SLCC trainer. Webinars make training available to candidates wherever their location. Candidates are expected to register for CiLCA following this compulsory introduction. Trainers may then build on this foundation by working through the portfolio and developing professional knowledge where appropriate for candidates who need this support.

The SLCC's policy for the quality assurance of all CiLCA-related training delivered by independent training providers is to:

- ensure that independent training providers sign a Service Level Agreement setting out expectations that protect the integrity of the qualification and the quality of training
- ensure that all trainers have the knowledge, skills and resources required to train for CiLCA with evidence of specific professional qualifications or proven experience as local council advisers
- provide a compulsory induction training event for all trainers and organise an annual forum and online forum for sharing experiences and discussing training issues
- ensure that all training organisations provide appropriate facilities for training events
- remove approval for delivering CiLCA training from any training organisation that does not sign the Service Level Agreement
- facilitate a scheme by which independent trainers are observed by experienced and qualified peers during training activities to ensure the continuous development of appropriate training skills
- evaluate the quality of training using the survey sent to all candidates registering for CiLCA and analyse and communicate results to improve practice among training organisations

For further information, please contact the Head of Conferences, Training and Education at the SLCC.

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