

Qualification Withdrawal Policy

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1. The Policy

1.1 Policy Introduction

English Speaking Board (International) Ltd. (ESB International) is an Awarding Organisation regulated by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) and CCEA Regulation. We are required by our regulators to have in place a document which outlines how we manage the withdrawal of qualifications.

Condition D6 - Management of the withdrawal of qualifications:

D6.1 For the purposes of this condition, an awarding organisation withdraws a qualification at the point in time when it first –

- (a) ceases to register Learners for the 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- (d) has its recognition withdrawn by Ofqual in respect of that qualification.

D6.2 Where an awarding organisation intends to withdraw, otherwise believes it to be likely that it will withdraw, or is obliged to withdraw, a qualification, it must take all reasonable steps to protect the interests of Learners in relation to that qualification.

D6.3 An awarding organisation must give to Ofqual reasonable notice of its anticipated withdrawal of a qualification, and must do so prior to the time at which it provides that information to any Learners, Centres, or purchasers of qualifications.

D6.4 Where an awarding organisation intends to withdraw, or is obliged to withdraw, a qualification, it must –

- (a) promptly prepare, maintain, and comply with a written withdrawal plan, which must specify how the interests of Learners in relation to that qualification will be protected, and
- (b) provide clear and accurate information about the withdrawal to Learners, Centres, and purchasers of qualifications who are likely to be affected by the withdrawal.

D6.5 An awarding organisation must ensure that any withdrawal plan which it prepares complies with any requirements which Ofqual has communicated to it in writing.

1.2 Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this document is to outline the procedure followed by ESB International and its registered centres in the event of a qualification being withdrawn. ESB International may consider the withdrawal of a qualification for any of the following reasons:

- lack of learner registrations
- lack of demand from a sector
- qualification subject matter is no longer valid
- qualification no longer meets regulatory requirements
- lack of progression to other qualifications
- it does not support the strategic direction of the awarding organisation
- policy changes.

1.3 Communication of the Policy

ESB International's Qualification Withdrawal Policy must be widely communicated, owned, understood and adhered to by ESB International staff, assessors and markers, qualification regulators, centre and satellite-centre staff, and learners who use ESB International's qualifications.

1.4 Review of the Policy

ESB International will review this policy in accordance with its published timescales, to ensure its procedures and practices continue to meet legislative and regulatory compliance. It reserves the right to make ongoing changes in line with customer and stakeholder feedback, changes in its practices, actions from the regulatory authorities or external agencies, or changes in legislation.

1.5 Other Documents

This policy can be used with the standard operating procedure ESB-SOP-03 Qualification Withdrawal Procedure v3.

2. Responsibilities

2.1 ESB International Responsibilities

ESB International recognises its responsibility to comply with all regulatory conditions and requirements. ESB International is responsible for identifying qualifications for withdrawal, formulating a withdrawal plan, notifying regulators, centres and customers of its intention to withdraw qualifications. ESB International will ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to protect the interests of learners in relation to qualifications which are to be withdrawn.

2.2 Centre Responsibilities

If a centre ceases to operate or withdraws from providing an ESB International qualification, it must notify ESB International according to the Centre Agreement section 5.13 and take all reasonable steps to protect the interests of its learners. ESB International requires a term's notice or 12 weeks (whichever is the longer) should a centre wish to voluntarily withdraw from its role in delivering ESB International qualifications. Notice of withdrawal should be sent to business@esbuk.org. Registered centres must ensure that learners are not disadvantaged and are allowed the opportunity to claim any qualification certification to which they may be entitled.

Centres are required to comply with any written notifications issued by ESB International with regards to the withdrawal of its qualifications. It is the responsibility of the centre to ensure that ESB International's Qualification Withdrawal Policy is widely communicated, owned, understood and adhered to by centre staff and associates.

3. Qualification Withdrawal Procedure

The withdrawal procedure follows a three-stage process:

3.1 Review of the qualification

All current ESB International's qualifications (as listed on the regulators' registers) are subject to an annual qualification review led by the Product Development team (PD). The review considers:

- learner registrations
- revenue and expenditure
- certifications and attainment levels
- qualification validity
- regulatory or policy change
- market need
- optional pathway – part of a larger suite of qualifications
- whether it meets the needs of a specialist sector
- whether it relates to a statutory requirement – i.e. licence to practise.

3.2 Decision to withdraw

The PD team provides a report to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) outlining the findings of the review, recommending whether the qualification should be retained or withdrawn. If the recommendation is to withdraw one or more qualifications, the recommendation is accompanied with a withdrawal plan.

Withdrawal recommendations may also stem from strategic reviews or changes to the business model.

The SLT, led by the Chief Executive and Responsible Officer, approves or declines the recommendations and signs off the withdrawal plan.

A written withdrawal plan includes:

- regulatory requirements
- how the interests of learners in relation to the qualification will be protected
- how the withdrawal will be communicated to the regulatory authorities, centres and learners
- detail of all deadlines including the last date for accepting registration and certification
- a rationale for the withdrawal
- possible alternative qualifications
- any other relevant information.

3.3 Management of the withdrawal process

The decision to withdraw a qualification is communicated to regulators in the first instance. If requested, ESB International will inform them of provision made to support learners, centres and purchasers throughout the withdrawal period and will supply them with a copy of its transition arrangements.

Once the regulators have been notified, ESB International will:

- circulate a notice of intention to withdraw the qualification to all current active centres which includes the following:
 - a full rationale for the withdrawal of the qualification
 - the last date for learner registrations
 - the last date for certification
 - contact details for further guidance
 - reassurance to all current active centres that any registered learners will be allowed to complete their programmes using normal established precedents
 - advice to centres and learners on alternative qualifications
- amend publications i.e. website and fees list
- notify all internal staff, assessors and markers.

ESB International will place a Qualification Withdrawal Notice on its website

- at the start of the academic year

ESB International will issue a reminder communication to all centres:

- three months before the end of registrations for the qualification
- three months before the end of certification for the qualification.

ESB International will issue reminder communications via its website and ESB News publications:

- at timely intervals throughout the academic year.

| Revision No | Change to previous release | Reason for change |
|-------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| 6 | ESB to ESB International, references to units removed, SMT to SLT | Updated terminology |
| | 3.2 Decision to withdraw updated | In line with current practice |
| | Contractors changed to assessors and markers | More specific definition |
| | Text amended and updated | To reflect current practice |
| | Policy definitions removed | Defined within the document |
| 7 | Section 3 visual removed | 3-stage process explained in document |
| | Section 1.5 and Appendix 1 and 2 added | To reflect current practice |
| 8 | Appendix 1: Comms to EE | Updated team name |
| 9 | 1.1 Reference to Qualifications Wales removed 1.5 SOP Version number updated | Reflect regulatory changes Updates |

Appendix 1 Sample Qualification Withdrawal Plan

Qualification Withdrawal Plan Year

Qualifications for withdrawal:

1. Qualification name and number

Action plan:

| Step | Action | By Whom | By when |
|------|---|-----------|---------|
| 1 | Product Development Team to amend the Operational End Date of the above qualifications on the Ofqual Register of Regulated Qualifications to DATE with the Certificate End Date of DATE | PD | |
| 2 | Notification to be placed on website | EE | |
| 3 | Centres to be informed by email | PD and EE | |
| 4 | Product development to inform all internal staff and assessors | SPD | |
| 5 | End dates amended in database | PD/IT | |
| 6 | Post reminder notice on website | PD/EE | |
| 7 | Removed quals from fees list on website | EE | |
| 8 | Confirm all bookings for withdrawn qualifications fulfilled | CX | |
| 9 | Disable withdrawn qualification in database | IT | |
| 10 | Check qualification has been disabled | PD | |
| 11 | Remove specifications from website | EE/PD | |
| 12 | Confirm qualification withdrawal is complete | PD | |

Personnel/Teams:

Customer Experience (CX)

External Engagement (EE)

IT

Product Development (PD)

Senior Product Developer (SPD)

Appendix 2 Sample Qualification Withdrawal Notice for Centres

Qualification Withdrawal Notice for Centres - Date

Dear Centres,

Further to a review of our product portfolio, the following qualifications will be **withdrawn** on DATE.

- Qualification title and number

These qualifications have been **replaced** with

- Qualification title and number

OR

The following qualifications will be **withdrawn** on DATE due to low enrolments:

- Qualification title and number

If you wish to register your learners for an assessment this academic year, you must register before the **DATE**. This is the Operational End Date. Your learners can take their assessment after DATE if they have been registered, but the last date for certificates to be issued is **DATE**. If you have any questions, or would like advice on other qualifications that we offer, please email product@esbuk.org