

## Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Badge Frequently Asked Questions

From January to March 2009, GEM ran a DCSF-funded training series on the LOtC Quality Badge for organisations in the heritage, built environment and sacred space sectors.

These events and independent enquiries to GEM gave rise to a significant number of practical queries regarding the Quality Badge Scheme.

GEM has worked with the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom and 4Children to clarify as many as possible of the issues raised.

We very much hope that these Frequently Asked Questions will go some way towards improving your understanding of the Quality Badge Scheme and enabling you to feel more confident about making an application.

We would recommend that you read this document in conjunction with the Quality Badge website ([www.lotcqualitybadge.org.uk](http://www.lotcqualitybadge.org.uk)) and with particular reference to the FAQ section therein.

GEM is committed to advancing learning through heritage. If you wish to find out more about the work that we do or become a member, please visit [www.gem.org.uk](http://www.gem.org.uk).

If you have any specific queries regarding the Quality Badge, please email [fenellahunt@gem.org.uk](mailto:fenellahunt@gem.org.uk).

### **1) What sort of evidence will I be asked to provide for an assessment visit? Can I submit visual and oral evidence?**

As with the Self Evaluation Form, the assessment visits are designed to assess the *processes* in place at an organisation rather than the *experience* had by the user. It is likely that in 99% of cases, processes will be best reviewed through tangible (probably, written) evidence. But, depending on the organisation and their provision, assessors are happy to be flexible and accept evidence that is fit for purpose.

### **2) Under QI 3b, if an organisation is submitting *learning resources* as evidence when being assessed, does it also have to provide evidence that these resources are up-to-date and in good working order?**

*Learning resources*, as with equipment and other materials used to deliver learning, should be accessible and relevant to the user. As well as the resource itself, the provider should also be able to show that the resource has been checked, maintained, updated and/or replaced in order to ensure its continuing suitability

### **3) Which members of staff and volunteers at my organisation should be CRB-checked?**

Eligibility for CRB checking depends on the degree and frequency of access that individuals have to children and/or vulnerable adults. The degree and frequency of access that individuals have to children and/or vulnerable adults will vary significantly from position to position within an organisation and from one

organisation to another. It is for this reason that the Quality Badge cannot specify exactly which members of staff and which volunteers at an organisation should be CRB-checked. However, if your organisation employs individuals or volunteers to work regularly or primarily with children, you should investigate CRB-checking. It is important to note that if it is decided that an individual should be CRB-checked, it is their employer who is responsible for carrying out the check. This includes volunteers, permanent and temporary staff and those employed on a freelance, contractual basis.

#### **4) Do I have to have a CRB check as well as register with the Independent Safeguarding Authority?**

In 2010 the ISA will replace the CRB as the organisation that museums, historic houses etc approach to register those employees/volunteers working with vulnerable adults and children. To be registered with the ISA will incorporate an enhanced CRB check. Employees will pay to be registered. Volunteers will not. However, the ISA will not come into full operation until July 2010. In the meantime, you should continue to approach the CRB who have now amended their forms to include ISA registration, so that when the handover takes place, you will automatically become ISA registered. For more information visit [www.isa.gov.org.uk](http://www.isa.gov.org.uk)

#### **5) My organisation offers a range of activities, some of which might classify as Route 2. Which route do I apply through to get the Quality Badge?**

Whether through a contractual arrangement with an external provider or organised internally, if an organisation offers a Route 2 activity, then it will have to apply for the badge through the relevant Route 2 awarding body. In order to identify whether or not an activity offered classifies as Route 2, visit the LOtC Quality Badge website - <http://www.lotcqualitybadge.org.uk/howtoapply/route2awardingbodies>  
*Farms* – If there is a farm on your site or a visit to a farm is included in the activities that you offer, this does not necessarily mean you will need to apply through Route 2. Again, it is the type of activity that takes place on the farm that will determine the application route. If “livestock, soil or horticultural inputs, products or equipment are handled” as part of a learning activity the organisation will need to apply through Route 2. If you are in any doubt about whether or not farm activities on your site qualify you for Route 1 or Route 2, you should contact ATF via the Quality Badge website.

#### **6) Can a single provider get separate badges for separate aspects of its provision or separate sites?**

Regardless of the range of provision, if an organisation has one site it can only receive one Quality Badge. Depending on what activities are offered, the badge may be awarded through Route 1 or Route 2. If an organisation has high risk activities taking place on site, but these do not form part of the educational programme offered, these do not have to be considered when applying for the Quality Badge; although it must be made completely clear in any publicity material to users that those high risk activities are not covered by the Quality Badge.

*If an organisation (single legal entity) has between one and nine sites, it is **not classified** as a multiple site provider for the purposes of the Quality Badge. This means that the organisation must make a separate application for each of its sites and the cost for each application will be £100.*

*If an organisation (legal entity) has 10 or more sites it **is classified** as a multiple site provider for the purposes of the Quality Badge. This means that the head office of the organisation can make a single application to cover all of the sites (minimum of 10) it wishes to be badged. The cost per site will be £75 and the organisation will have one listing on the searchable Quality Badge database. For example, Southam County Council*

makes a single application for 11 of its 12 sites to be badged. The cost of the application is £825 and there is one listing on the database.

However, if a multiple site provider wishes to make a single application to cover all sites (minimum of 10) but wishes each site to have a separate listing on the searchable Quality Badge database, then the following applies:

- The head office of the organisation can make a single application for all of the sites (minimum of 10) that it wishes to be badged and pay the lump sum. They will then be given a reference code.
- Then each separate site covered by that single application must submit its own Self Evaluation Form, citing the organisation's reference code at the payment stage to indicate that the badge has already been paid for.

If a multiple site provider makes a single application for 10 or more sites and one of those sites is selected for an assessment visit and subsequently fails to meet Quality Badge requirements, all sites included in that application will also lose the Quality Badge.

**7) How far is “your learning programmes are a valued and integral part of the planning and development of your organisation” assessed when the learning element is a relatively small element of a large organisation? i.e. cathedral**

A key function of the Quality Badge is to support the development of learning provision in a range of provider organisations. In order that the learning provision offered by an organisation can achieve its maximum potential, the learning programme offered needs to draw on the available resources and expertise of the whole organisation. This requires cross-departmental working and recognition of learning provision as a function of the organisation. Regardless of the scale of the learning provision, an organisation will need to demonstrate that these activities are not delivered as an add-on, but as a planned extension of the organisation's strategy.

**8) Will the Quality Badge scheme be reviewed and evaluated? And will its impact on LOtC be measured?**

The Quality Badge scheme will be reviewed by the Quality Badge Committee of the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom in September 2009. Any major issues regarding the implementation and functioning of the scheme will be addressed at this point, to give the scheme time to get going. It is also a priority for the Council to accumulate data on LOtC activity in schools in order to measure the impact of the Quality Badge on LOtC activity.

**9) What does “sustainability” mean in the context of the Quality Indicators?**

Quality Indicator 5c) reads “shows an understanding of sustainability issues and the impact of activities and shares this with users”. Sustainability in this context refers to environmental sustainability. The Guidance Notes accompanying the Self Evaluation Form provide more information on this indicator. Please visit the LOtC Quality Badge website.

**10) How will teachers and other school audiences (governors, local authorities, parents etc) be made aware of the award?**

The Council for Learning Outside the Classroom is keen that the Quality Badge develops gradually and effectively so that it has long term sustainability. Currently the communications focus is on promoting the Quality Badge to providers in order to reach a critical mass. This will then mean that schools will be able to identify a number of Quality Badge holders in any given category when they come to use the searchable

database. At some point in the next 9-12 months, when that critical mass has been reached, the Council will launch a major promotional campaign to schools regarding the Quality Badge. They will work in partnership with networks of governors, parent teacher associations, local authorities, teachers unions, subject associations and others to better inform teachers of this new quality “standard” for learning outside the classroom. In the meantime those organisations already awarded the Quality Badge are benefiting considerably from local and sector publicity on the back of their achievement.

**11) Will there be any standard forms or templates or lists of recommended policies to guide organisations in developing and checking their practice in order to meet the Quality Indicators?**

Exemplar materials and good practice case studies are being prepared by the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom to support organisations applying for the Quality Badge. These will be made available online as soon as possible.

**12) What is meant by “appropriate/agreed public liability insurance cover”?**

A wide range of organisations apply for the Quality Badge. Each organisation will have or need to have a different degree of public liability insurance cover depending on the type of business they operate and the extent to which they are exposed to claims from the public. It is for this reason that the Quality Badge cannot explicitly state the exact amount of cover required by any single organisation: the organisation itself must make this decision. The Quality Badge simply requires that you sign a declaration form confirming that your organisation has what you consider to be appropriate public liability insurance cover. However, any organisation applying for the badge should think serious about having public liability insurance cover due to the fact that “members of the **public** or **customers** come to (the) premises or the organisation goes to theirs (including if you work from home)”

If you require more information on public liability insurance, a useful website is: [www.businesslink.gov.uk](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk)

**13) What is the relationship between the Quality Badge and the Sandford Award?**

The Sandford Award recognises quality and excellence in the educational services and facilities at a site. **Heritage properties**, where special provision has been made for educational visits by children of statutory school age, are nominated or invited to apply for award. The Quality Badge recognises organisations offering high quality teaching and learning experience and managing risk effectively. It is for **all organisations and venues** that provide learning outside the classroom experiences for children and young people aged 0-19.

The schemes operate entirely independently and qualification for one does not result in qualification for the other.

**14) Is it possible to receive advice on your SEF before submitting it?**

The first port of call for all queries regarding the Quality Badge is 4Children. Their contact details are available on the Quality Badge website. It can also be beneficial to talk to colleagues in similar organisations; for example you could use the Quality Badge database to search for organisations who have already achieved the Quality Badge. Their experience might help to clarify issues or resolve problems.

**15) Is the 10% of organisations to be assessed chosen randomly or upon review of submitted SEFs?**

The 10% of organisations selected for assessment are chosen randomly. However, all SEFs are checked on submission and if there are any doubts or concerns raised by an application, the Council will go back to the organisation and request further clarification or more information. If there is sufficient doubt, the organisation will not receive the Quality Badge. If, having received an award, doubts are raised about the quality of provision at an organisation, it will be considered for assessment.

**16) Are schools being trained in the planning and organising of LOfC experiences?**

A major part of the LOfC initiative was the production of comprehensive guidance for schools and other groups on planning and organising learning outside the classroom. This guidance is called the “How To” guidance and is hosted on the main LOfC website – [www.lotc.org.uk](http://www.lotc.org.uk). This guidance is useful reading for organisations providing learning experiences as it will provide an insight into how schools are being encouraged to engage with LOfC.

Furthermore, the Teaching Outside the Classroom initiative is also well underway, supporting the development of placements for trainee teachers in settings other than schools to increase their understanding of the benefits of LOfC and how to incorporate it fully into their teaching practice. For more information visit – [www.teachingoutsidetheclassroom.com](http://www.teachingoutsidetheclassroom.com)

**17) What methods of payment are acceptable when paying for the Quality Badge application?**

Secure online payment is the preferred method in order to keep the cost of the badge as low as possible for providers, but organisations and individuals can also pay by cheque, where this is the only method of payment available to them.

**18) Is there a ‘big badge’ available that might be displayed in a reception or on the side of a building?**

At present there are no plans to produce a “big badge”. However, the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom is open to suggestions for ways to improve the effectiveness of the Quality Badge for providers. If it appears that there is sufficient demand, the Council will certainly look into the possibility of producing a “big badge”; although there would be a cost implication for providers if this additional resource was introduced. There is of course currently nothing to stop an organisation displaying their Quality Badge as they see fit, as long as it refers only to the aspect of provision for which the organisation is badged.

**19) Is the Quality Badge scheme statutory?**

The Quality Badge scheme is not statutory and the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom does not insist that schools only use Quality Badge sites. However, as the scheme beds in, it is likely that schools will begin to favour Quality Badge sites as it will cut red tape and make LOfC experiences easier to organise.

However, the Council recognises that there will always be organisations which schools enjoy visiting, but which do not consider themselves educational establishments, do not offer planned learning experiences and would not qualify for the Quality Badge. The Council encourages these more informal learning relationships and considers them a crucial aspect of learning outside the classroom. Whilst the organisations involved might not currently be in a position to apply for the Quality Badge, it is hoped that the framework for developing practice provided by the Quality Badge, might be an incentive for these important organisations to begin to develop more formal learning activities and consequently engage with more young people.