

## **New Standard:**

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## Contents

A Roles and responsibilities

B Frequently Asked Questions

C Eligibility

D Costs

E Accreditation guidance

F CoVE guidance

G LSC contacts

## A. Roles and responsibilities

### Roles

<b>Stakeholder</b>	<b>Overall role</b>
CFE	Managing assessment and accreditation operations
National LSC	Overall policy development and co-ordination; current owner of the Standard
QIA	Managing provider development support
Regional and Local LSC	Integrating NS into regional strategies and signposting providers as appropriate
SSCs	Endorsing Part Bs for their sectors, and providing application reviews to CFE

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## B Frequently Asked Questions about the New Standard

No.	Question	Answer	Revisions
<i>1 Questions about aims and purpose</i>			
1-1	What is the purpose of the Standard?	<p>The aims of the New Standard are to create an assessment framework and process through which the best organisations providing and delivering training and development solutions to employers can be recognised and marked out.</p> <p>To this end, the Standard assesses and, where appropriate, accredits organisations for their (1) responsiveness to employers, (2) excellence in delivering training, (3) commitment to continuous improvement, and (4) specialisation around industry sectors.</p> <p>The Learning and Skills Council has invested in the development of the New Standard to create a credible national mark which employers can follow to access responsive and relevant training and development provision. In doing so, it is expected that the New Standard will stimulate significant improvements in the quality of training and development provision, so that it delivers greater impact for employers, greater value for the taxpayer, and recognition for those delivering to a high standard.</p>	

No.	Question	Answer	Revisions
<b>1 Questions about aims and purpose</b>			
1-2	Where does the Standard come from?	<p>The mandate for the New Standard came from the 2006 FE Reform White Paper (paras 2.14 to 2.19). The White Paper set out a requirement for a single national standard to replace the planned Quality Mark for responsiveness and the work being undertaken to reassess the LSC's Centres of Vocational Excellence, as well as a range of regional and sectoral quality initiatives.</p> <p>From this mandate, the New Standard developed through a year-long process of research, development and testing, involving over 600 employers and over 200 providers. Research and development included focus group, survey and model-building work, as well as extensive stakeholder engagement. The first version of the Standard was tested with 67 providers of different size and type during the period November 2006 to March 2007. The development process was sealed by presenting the Standard back to a group of large company training executives in early June 2007, where it was received well.</p>	

No.	Question	Answer	Revisions
1-3	What impact will the Standard have?	<p>In concert with a range of other market-making policies the LSC is currently deploying, the New Standard has the potential to make an impact through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Increasing employer confidence in purchasing training.</b> 36% of employers don't buy external training provision. Of those that do, 34% find it "sometimes," "often" or "very" difficult to source a good quality training provider. In either case, the creation of a rigorously accredited, national badge has the potential to raise confidence – employers who train say that a successful Standard will encourage them to arrange more training overall (net +30%), and with external provision specifically (net +31%).</li> <li>• <b>Cut employers' cost of sourcing and taking delivery of training.</b> Employers spend an estimated £5.1bn in managing training activity. Creation of a rigorously accredited, national badge has the potential to reduce the cost involved in identifying a quality provider, and to eliminate confusion over respective roles. Employers say that a successful Standard would be highly likely to "save time and money in making decisions" (net +24%).</li> <li>• <b>Increasing the return-on-investment of buying training provision.</b> The longer term gain will be through increasing the quality of training providers' delivery. By recognising the best provision we have, and providing a framework that all providers can use to benchmark and develop against, the New Standard can transform quality on the supply-side.</li> </ul> <p>The Standard has been tested through survey research to ensure that the approach is recognised as valuable by employers. Once the concept has been explained, 92% of employers report that they would find it 'quite useful' or 'very useful' in helping them to source training provision.</p>	

No.	Question	Answer	Revisions
<b>2 Background questions</b>			
2-1	What is the Standard?	<p>The New Standard sets out to assess and, where appropriate, accredit organisations engaged in the provision and delivery of training and development for their responsiveness to employers' needs and their expertise in particular industry sectors. To do this, the Standard posits a framework of criteria and indicators which are designed to test providers on each critical point in their ability to deliver successfully to employers.</p> <p>This framework is non-prescriptive. What we mean by this is that while the Standard sets out <i>what</i> a responsive and expert provider has to do to demonstrate its capability, it leaves open the question of <i>how</i>. We know that every provider has its own story to tell – its own market, strategy, resources, way of doing things, and achievements – and what we want to do is offer the opportunity for them to tell it in a structured way, which an independent assessor can use to compare the provider with the best in the field. And that's what the Standard does.</p>	

No.	Question	Answer	Revisions
<b>2 Background questions</b>			
2-2	What does the Standard look at?	<p>The Standard's criteria and indicators represent a set of evolving competencies on the journey from strategy through continuous improvement to successful outcomes. We've designed these on the basis of in-depth research into how successful providers operate, as well as the latest industry practice. The Standard then links this evaluation of the provider's approach back to employers' needs by scoring the criteria, at indicator level, against a model constructed from extensive research into employer experiences in buying or accessing training and development support.</p> <p>The Standard emphasises two linked but ultimately very different competencies in the performance of delivering services to employers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• responding to their needs as an individual customer, and</li> <li>• offering expertise in particular sectors.</li> </ul> <p>To assess both of these competencies, the Standard has two parts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Part A focuses on responsiveness – how well a provider can deliver a high quality customer experience to an employer, assessed across the entire organisation as it appears to an employer.</li> <li>• Part B focuses on sector expertise – how well a provider delivers training relevant to local industry requirements, assessed within the section or department of the provider being assessed.</li> </ul> <p>The Standard has a total of 32 Indicators across 11 Criteria, with 22 Indicators over 6 Criteria in Part A and 10 Indicators over 4 Criteria in Part B. In each Part, 1 Criterion with 3 Indicators looks at Strategy; in Part A, 1 Criterion with 3 Indicators looks at Results, while in Part B there is 1 Criterion with 2 Indicators.</p>	

No.	Question	Answer	Revisions
<b>2 Background questions</b>			
2-3	What are the benefits of accreditation?	<p>Organisations applying for assessment for accreditation under the Standard benefit from the following elements of the process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An opportunity to investigate the approaches they deploy and the results they achieve as they deliver on their strategy against a rigorous but non-prescriptive framework.</li> <li>• An opportunity to compare an external, expert view of their performance against that framework, developed through a review of their application and a verification visit.</li> <li>• An in-depth feedback report which will summarise, and then detail for each Indicator, the Assessors' view of their strengths and areas for improvement, as well as the feedback from employer validation.</li> <li>• If successful, the opportunity to be recognised by employers and other stakeholders as among the very best organisations in the provision and delivery of training and development solutions.</li> </ul>	

No.	Question	Answer	Revisions
<b>3 Questions about applications</b>			
3-1	Who can apply?	<p>Any organisation providing and delivering training and development solutions can use the Standard as an assessment framework, regardless of its size, ownership, governance or funding arrangement. The Standard has been designed to be neutral with respect to these factors, and to be non-prescriptive as to delivery model.</p> <p>If you wish to submit an application for assessment for accreditation, then there are a number of declarations and eligibility criteria you will have to meet. These are set out in a note, <i>Applying for the New Standard</i> (NSP004).</p>	
3-2	How do I apply?	<p>If you are able to make the necessary declarations and meet the eligibility criteria, and wish to proceed with an application, you should start by ensuring you are aware of what the Standard involves, and then contact us to register your interest. After submitting your Registration, we will offer an Assessment Agreement with you, setting out the costs and our mutual responsibilities, and once this is agreed, you can develop an application and submit it to us for assessment.</p>	

No.	Question	Answer	Revisions
<b>3 Questions about applications</b>			
3-3	What does applying involve?	<p>An application is a written document which sets out, through evidence statements, a coherent narrative about your organisation's strategy, approaches and results, structured under the Standard's Indicators.</p> <p>Developing a strong application will normally take anything between 3 and 6 weeks, and should have the leadership and involvement of senior management within the organisation, as well as contributions from staff in all employer-related parts of your organisation. An application is limited to 50 pages in Part A, and 25 pages in Part B.</p> <p>As part of your Registration fee, your organisation will receive one free place at an Applicant Training Course to learn how to put together an application.</p>	
3-4	Can I apply for Part A without Part B?	<p>Yes.</p> <p>This might be appropriate if you have no particular specialism, or if you wish to achieve accreditation for general responsiveness before seeking assessment for any expertise you feel you might have.</p>	
3-5	Can I apply for Part B without Part A?	<p>No.</p> <p>Part B accreditations can only be given where an organisation is accredited for Part A. This can happen at the same time, or sequentially (see below), but not with Part B first.</p>	

No.	Question	Answer	Revisions
<b>3 Questions about applications</b>			
3-6	Can I apply for Part B after Part A?	<p>Yes.</p> <p>This might be appropriate if you want to space the assessment workload over a period, or if you wish to secure accreditation for general responsiveness before seeking assessment for any expertise you feel you might have.</p> <p>There are several points to note if you are planning to follow this approach. First, Part B applications can only be submitted for the first two years of a Part A accreditation. Second, where Part B applications are submitted more than six months after a Part A accreditation, they must be accompanied by updated submissions for A.0, A.5, and A.6, to allow the Lead Assessor to place the application in context. Third, submitting Part B applications outside of a Part A application carries a cost implication.</p>	
3-7	How many Part Bs can I apply for?	<p>As many as you have expertise for, and as many as there are sector areas we can recognise.</p> <p>If you are submitting a high number (more than three), it is likely that you assessment will take longer to plan and arrange, because of the assessment workload involved.</p>	
3-8	Where can I find out more?	<p>The New Standard website <a href="http://www.newstandard.co.uk">www.newstandard.co.uk</a> contains a range of background and introductory documents. If you wish to find out more, you should attend one of the Awareness Events we run. These last for a few hours and attendees each receive a copy of the full <i>Assessment Guide and Evidence Framework</i> used in assessing against the New Standard (NSP001), as well as the opportunity to ask questions of an assessor.</p>	

No.	Question	Answer	Revisions
<b>4 Questions about assessment</b>			
4-1	What does assessment involve?	<p>After you have put together your application(s), they should be submitted with any additional information required in the Assessment Agreement. For Part A applications, this will include contact lists for all employers for whom you have delivered training and development solutions in the past 12 months. With the application(s) submitted, the following steps will take place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Lead Assessor will be appointed to manage your case. They will make contact with you as they begin a review of your application, scoring it against the assessment framework and identifying issues they would like to check.</li> <li>• The Lead Assessor will arrange a day to be on site with you, to conduct a Verification Visit. They will be accompanied by at least one other Assessor, and they will need to be able to consult documents cited in or relevant to your application and to talk to a cross-section of your staff; in planning the visit, they will work with you to make sure that this can be arranged.</li> <li>• The Assessors will, after concluding the visit, agree a score and recommendation for your application. Unless the score is significantly below the hurdle necessary to pass, a Validation Survey will be conducted, telephoning a representative sample of your employer customers to see if a sufficient number will recommend your services to support the application.</li> </ul> <p>The outcomes of these steps will all go to the Accreditation Panel; the Panel makes all decisions with regard to accreditation under the Standard. Their decision will be forwarded to you once it is made, and followed up by a return visit from your Lead Assessor, to present a Feedback Report.</p>	

No.	Question	Answer	Revisions
<b>4 Questions about assessment</b>			
4-2	How much of my organisation will be assessed?	<p>For Part A, all of your organisation as it is presented to an employer will be in scope. To understand this, the ‘stationery test’ can be a good place to start – what marketing and brand identity do you present to employers, such that they might follow it up with an enquiry? Whatever the scope of organisation that they might contact with an enquiry from that brand identity is, needs to be covered in your Part A application, except for back-office or delivery functions which their enquiry obviously cannot reach.</p> <p>For Part B, the critical question is whether the part of the organisation you propose is (1) within the scope of that for which you are seeking assessment (or have been accredited) for Part A, and (2) represents a coherent delivery unit for the area of expertise for which you are applying.</p>	
4-3	How can I scope the assessment to fit the right parts of my organisation?	<p>This is primarily an issue for Part A assessments, as Part B assessments should be aligned with organisational structure.</p> <p>Your starting point for scoping your Part A assessment should be to include your entire organisation, or the entire part which can be contacted through the branding you use with employers or intend to associate with the accreditation mark you hope to gain from the New Standard.</p> <p>Any exclusion of public-facing parts of your organisation should be explained in terms of the employer’s experience – how are you sure that an employer will not approach this part of your organisation? Exclusions should be supported by evidence against this question.</p>	

No.	Question	Answer	Revisions
<b>4 Questions about assessment</b>			
4-4	How long does assessment take?	<p>Except for very large organisations, or those seeking assessment for a high number of Part B applications, we anticipate assessment will be concluded within 3 months in most cases.</p> <p>Timely conclusion of an assessment will be helped where an application is submitted for the deadline set in the Assessment Agreement, and will depend upon the collaboration you can offer to the Assessor team in arranging for the Verification Visit.</p>	
4-5	Who does assessment involve?	<p>The following parties will be involved in delivering an assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Lead Assessor provided by CFE will manage the case, and be responsible for the initial review of your application, arranging the Verification Visit, and making a Feedback Visit.</li> <li>• Other Assessors provided by CFE will support the Lead Assessor on the Verification Visit, and contribute their input to the Feedback Report.</li> <li>• The Accreditation Panel will review the Feedback Report and the Assessor's recommendation and decide upon the outcome.</li> </ul> <p>Within your organisation, we would normally expect to involve those co-ordinating the application and the senior management, as well as a sample of staff from different parts of your organisation; your Lead Assessor will inform you of their approach and requirements on this point.</p>	

No.	Question	Answer	Revisions
<b>4 Questions about assessment</b>			
4-6	How much will assessment cost?	<p>Costs will vary by size and shape of organisation – for example, a multi-sited organisation will typically require a larger assessment team. The standard basic costs, which will be relevant for most organisations, are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• £4,500 for Part A assessment, with an additional cost (typically £1,000 to £2,000) for the Validation Survey.</li> <li>• £3,000 for an ‘isolated’ Part B assessment (i.e., one outside of a Part A assessment).</li> <li>• £1,500 for an ‘additional’ Part B assessment, which can be additional either to a Part A assessment, or to an ‘isolated’ Part B assessment.</li> </ul> <p>All prices are subject to VAT at the standard rate. Criteria for identifying cases outside of the standard band are available in the <i>Assessment Price Guide</i> (NSP005).</p>	
4-7	How tough will assessment be?	<p>Tough.</p> <p>Accreditation can be recommended where an application is assessed at 550 points out of 1,000 (this applies to both Part A and Part B assessments), and with at least 25% of the available points on every Indicator. During the testing of the Standard, around one-third of the provider organisations involved were around or above this level of performance. You should not be complacent about meeting the required level of competence for accreditation under the Standard.</p>	

No.	Question	Answer	Revisions
<b>4 Questions about assessment</b>			
4-8	What is validation?	<p>The Validation Survey is undertaken to support any accreditation decision for Part A.</p> <p>Validation involves telephone interviews with a representative sample of your employer customers, focused around one substantive question (“on a scale of 0 to 10, how likely would you be to recommend the services of [Provider] to a friend or colleague?”). These questions will be used to formulate a Net Promoter Score (more details are presented in the Assessment Guide), performance on which will be used to validate any recommendation to accredit your organisation.</p>	
4-9	What support can I get?	<p>The following sources of support are available to help you with your application:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness Events, lasting for several hours, will allow you to obtain a copy of the full Assessment Guide and ask questions of an Assessor.</li> <li>• The Assessment Guide sets out detailed guidance on the Standard and what it looks for, and all of the steps involved in assessment.</li> <li>• Applicant Training Courses, lasting for two days, will allow one or more staff members to understand what an Assessor will look for in an application.</li> </ul> <p>In addition, if your organisation needs support in developing its capacity and capability to respond to employers (rather than prepare for assessment itself), and is in receipt of public funds, you might be able to access support through the <b>Quality Improvement Agency</b>.</p>	

No.	Question	Answer	Revisions
<b>5 Questions about accreditation</b>			
5-1	What happens after assessment?	<p>After assessment is complete, you will receive two things.</p> <p>First, you will receive notification of any decisions made by the Accreditation Panel.</p> <p>Second, you will receive a Feedback Report, setting out your headline scores, and strengths and areas for improvement against each Indicator against which you have been assessed. Your Lead Assessor will visit you to talk through the Feedback Report.</p>	
5-2	What do I need to do to achieve accreditation?	<p>For accreditation under Part A, you will typically need an assessment score of 550 points or more out of 1,000, with no one Indicator assessed at less than 25%, a recommendation by your Lead Assessor, and a satisfactory result from the Validation Survey.</p> <p>For accreditation under Part B, you will typically need an assessment score of 550 points or more out of 1,000, with no one Indicator assessed at less than 25%, and a recommendation by your Lead Assessor.</p> <p>The Accreditation Panel makes all decisions on accreditations, and uses the above achievements as inputs to its deliberations; but the Panel has exclusive authority to accredit, and its decision is final in any case.</p>	

No.	Question	Answer	Revisions
<b>5 Questions about accreditation</b>			
5-3	How can I use my accreditation?	<p>If you are notified that you have been accredited, you will be asked to sign an Accreditation Agreement. This will stipulate a number of terms and conditions for your use of the Accreditation in promotional activities, including linking use to the scope of assessment, to the fact of accreditation rather than the score achieved, and submission to a Code of Conduct. All of these obligations are used to defend the value of Accreditation, and so are in the interests of accredited providers.</p> <p>If you are accredited before 30 November 2007, you will have to wait before any use can be made of your accreditation. This is to allow for a co-ordinated publicity launch of accreditation with the first cohort of organisations, and we will want to work with you to make the most of this opportunity for you and for the New Standard in general.</p>	
5-4	How long does accreditation last?	<p>Accreditation typically lasts for 3 years, and will be specified in the Accreditation Agreement you sign.</p> <p>The 3 year period will be dated from your notification of accreditation except where you are accredited before 30 November 2007. In this case, to balance the delay before you are able to promote your accreditation (see 5-3 above), your accreditation period will start from this date.</p>	

No.	Question	Answer	Revisions
<b>5 Questions about accreditation</b>			
5-5	What is conditional accreditation?	<p>Conditional accreditation is a concession offered to allow organisations to achieve Part A where they have little or no evidence for the results they achieve (especially for satisfaction and impact of employer customers). In these cases, where a Lead Assessor recommends it, accreditation can be offered where an organisation is assessed at over 385 points out of the 700 not related to results evidence.</p> <p>If conditional accreditation is offered, an organisation will have to agree to submit to a further visit after 12 months to assess progress; if this is not sufficient, accreditation can be withdrawn. (For further information, see the Assessment Guide, NSP001.)</p>	
5-6	What if I don't get accredited?	<p>If your organisation is not offered accreditation, there are two possibilities. First, you will be informed that your application has not been successful, and you will be invited to reapply in the future. (After at least six months have elapsed.)</p> <p>Second, you will be informed that the Accreditation Panel has deferred a decision on accreditation and offered 3 months to resubmit your applications on specific points.</p>	

No.	Question	Answer	Revisions
<b>6 Other questions</b>			
6-1	Why does the Standard look at processes rather than outcomes?	<p>The New Standard looks at processes <i>and</i> outcomes, not simply processes. This is because it is a <i>quality</i> assessment, concerned with getting delivery right <i>every</i> time rather than a <i>performance</i> assessment, concerned with average performance.</p> <p>Outcomes performance is necessarily backward-looking. By looking also at how providers achieve those outcomes, the New Standard can take a view as to the sustainability of a current high performance and its potential for improvement. This is especially important given that the New Standard is designed to be an endorsement, it must look at <i>how</i> things are done as well as <i>what</i> is achieved.</p>	
6-2	Can the Assessor help us look for evidence when they visit?	<p>Some assessment approaches take a more collaborative approach, working with providers in a consultancy role to help them develop and aid the discovery of evidence to help their case. This approach has not been used with the New Standard for two primary reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The aim of the project is to build a trusted endorsement brand; there can be no question that assessors have conflicting interests in assessment.</li> <li>• The wider assessor role would have resource implications – rather than a one-day verification visit, there would be sustained contact, which would have to be financed by the provider.</li> </ul> <p>An additional reason is because of a concern over lack of ownership for employer strategy from senior management in some provider organisations. By having assessment as an objective external view, but with a developmental output (feedback report, the potential for benchmarking), the responsibility for improvement remains with the provider, not with a consultant working at the margins of the organisation.</p>	

No.	Question	Answer	Revisions
<b>6 Other questions</b>			
6-3	Can we appeal if we feel the accreditation decision is unfair?	<p>Yes, the Accreditation Panel can consider an appeal to its decision but only where the appeal concerns a claim over the process, not over the substance of the decision itself. Where the assessment and accreditation processes have not been followed, there is grounds for appeal; where the processes have been followed, appeals cannot be considered over the outcomes in terms of scores given or decisions made.</p> <p>For more on these issues, there is an <i>Accreditation Rulebook</i> setting out the processes and authorities in making accreditation decisions (NSP006).</p>	
6-4	Is the Standard bureaucratic?	<p>The key test for the New Standard is that a provider can tell a coherent story from its strategy, through the development and deployment of approaches, to the achievement of outcomes. It is not a compliance-driven model – instead, assessment focuses on verifying that the provider delivers on its strategy.</p> <p>As such, the emphasis in the assessment process is very much on ‘naturally occurring’ evidence. In preparing its application, a provider should be telling the true story of how it delivers, and the evidence it offers should be the information used in the everyday operation of its processes. Although documentary sources can be important, clear understanding between staff members is also an important part of the evidence.</p> <p>The New Standard will only be especially bureaucratic where a provider has to manufacture information because it does not naturally exist as part of its operations. In these cases, the problem lies with the provider’s operations rather than with the Standard, and given that assessment is a voluntary step, it presents no significant issues.</p>	

No.	Question	Answer	Revisions
<b>6 Other questions</b>			
6-5	Does assessment give credit for existing accreditations?	No. We want to ensure that assessment is fair and rigorous in every case; exempting some organisations from parts of the process because they have previously been accredited for other standards would compromise this principle.	

## Frequently Asked Questions about CoVE Transition

No.	Question	Answer	Revisions
<b>1 Questions about policy</b>			
1-1	When and how is CoVE Reassessment taking place?	CoVE Reassessment will not take place. The original CoVE programme is being allowed to fade out naturally as those organisations with CoVE status either attain accreditation under the New Standard or reach the end of their CoVE status period.	
1-2	Why is CoVE Reassessment not taking place?	The CoVE programme was a great achievement of the early LSC, identifying over 400 areas of expertise across the provider sector. After 9 rounds, the time had come to reconsider where policy should next direct provider development. Specifically, identification of CoVE had not given sufficient attention to employer engagement and responsiveness, and had also not been as successful as had been hoped in spreading good practice within institutions. For this reason, the 2006 FE Reform White Paper created a mandate to combine the work on CoVE Reassessment with the <i>Agenda for Change</i> Quality Mark for employer responsiveness, into a single, national “new higher standard” for accreditation. One advantage of the approach is to move away from the programme approach CoVE represented – with a target, and an emphasis on using CoVE status as a route to funding – with the creation of a robust standard and process wholly focused on quality issues. An additional benefit of this approach is that there is no ceiling on the number of providers the Standard can accredit in any region or sector.	

No.	Question	Answer	Revisions
<b>2 Questions about what happens next to existing CoVEs</b>			
2-1	What happens to CoVE status?	<p>Your CoVE status will continue until the end of its expiry period, with some additional adjustments made to account for the delays caused by the move from CoVE Reassessment to the New Standard. What this means is that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CoVEs awarded in the Pathfinder Round to Round 3 will have their status withdrawn at the end of July 2008.</li> <li>• CoVEs awarded in later Rounds will have their CoVE status withdrawn 12 months after the original expiry date, with Round 9 CoVE status withdrawn in December 2010.</li> </ul> <p>Providers wishing to maintain formal recognition for their centres of vocational excellence (or have new centres recognised) are now asked to seek accreditation under the New Standard. There is no obligation to wait until CoVE expiry, and providers planning to seek accreditation are invited to do so at a time of their choosing.</p> <p>Providers achieving accreditation for the New Standard will be required, on the condition of their use of the New Standard badge <i>and</i> receipt of outstanding CoVE funds, to withdraw their use of the CoVE badge or promotion to employers of their organisation as a CoVE. This is to avoid confusion among providers, and to ensure a smooth move from the CoVE regime to the creation of a new brand for the New Standard.</p>	

No.	Question	Answer	Revisions
<b>2 Questions about what happens next to existing CoVEs</b>			
2-2	What happens to CoVE funding?	<p>In funding terms, existing CoVE status is unchanged and will not be altered by a provider's achievement of the New Standard ahead of its expiry. All financial commitments will be honoured on existing terms, until the already scheduled timescale is complete.</p> <p>There will be no new funding for CoVEs along the lines of the former programme, whether for existing CoVE status or for New Standard accreditation.</p>	
2-3	Do existing CoVEs have to seek accreditation?	<p>No.</p> <p>The New Standard is a voluntary quality mark, and CoVEs are free to determine whether it is appropriate for them to seek accreditation. Given that the New Standard has been designed to be tougher than CoVE accreditation, existing CoVEs should also give some consideration to their readiness for assessment.</p>	
2-3	Do CoVEs seeking accreditation receive recognition for their existing status?	<p>No.</p> <p>CoVE status was primarily a mark of recognition by programme, rather than a strict quality assessment, and was in many cases some years ago. For these reasons, and because CoVE places were limited such that some providers were denied the opportunity, the New Standard is assessed as a wholly separate matter.</p>	

No.	Question	Answer	Revisions
<b>3 Questions about seeking accreditation for existing CoVEs</b>			
3-1	We currently have a number of CoVEs – how do we get them accredited under the New Standard?	<p>An organisation with one or more CoVEs can seek accreditation under the New Standard as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply for assessment for accreditation for Part A of the New Standard (accrediting for Employer Responsiveness), <i>and</i></li> <li>• Apply for assessment for accreditation for Part B of the New Standard (accrediting for Sector Expertise) for the appropriate sector areas.</li> </ul>	
3-2	We are a partner in a CoVE – how do we get the partnership accredited under the New Standard?	<p>The New Standard assesses organisations, not consortia of organisations.</p> <p>Consequently, where a consortium (such as a Partnership CoVE) wishes to carry New Standard accreditation, all of the member organisations must apply separately and achieve accreditation.</p> <p>An exception to this would be where the consortium delivers wholly through a common vehicle separate from the individual partners – for example, a jointly owned trading company, with its own brand. If the employer experiences this vehicle as a single organisation, and will not confuse its role with those of the partners, then it can be accredited as one body.</p>	
3-3	We are an employer with a CoVE – how do we get accredited under the New Standard?	<p>The New Standard has been designed to cover the case of a provider offering and delivering training and development solutions to employers, rather than an employer delivering to internal customers.</p> <p>We are though conscious of the need to ensure that employers' internal delivery can be accredited, and are working with a group of employer-providers from July 2007 to pilot the Standard and understand how it can be adapted to credibly accredit this different form of provision.</p>	

No.	Question	Answer	Revisions
<b>3 Questions about seeking accreditation for existing CoVEs</b>			
3-4	We are a provider with a number of CoVEs – what financial support can we access to get accredited under the New Standard?	<p>Assessment for accreditation under the New Standard is charged at full cost. We want to recognise the existing investment we have in CoVEs by supporting their transition to the New Standard, and are offering a scheme of financial support to reimburse most of the standard costs on a one-time-only basis.</p> <p>Financial support is offered to every provider able to hold the CoVE badge, whether as a lead, partner or single provider. Financial support consists of a reimbursement grant of up to £6,000 for Part A assessment and £1,500 for Part B assessment, with Part B reimbursements only for those sector areas related to the sector area of the existing CoVE badge.</p> <p>Access to reimbursement is time-limited by CoVE Round, with all financial support withdrawn at the end of March 2010. Full details, including how to claim, are available in a separate guidance note. See <a href="http://cove.lsc.gov.uk/">http://cove.lsc.gov.uk/</a></p>	
<b>4 Questions about stakeholder roles</b>			
4-1	What role does the LSC play in the New Standard?	<p>The LSC has driven and financed the development of the New Standard, and is investing its further development during its early years.</p> <p>At present, the LSC takes the role of owner, but has delegated the role of managing assessment operations to CFE. LSC staff take no role in handling applications for assessment, or in making decisions with a view to their accreditation.</p> <p>Accreditation decisions are made by a Panel convened and managed by CFE. Applications are confidential between CFE and the provider applying, with a role in Part B applications for input from by an SSC reviewer.</p>	

No.	Question	Answer	Revisions
<b>4 Questions about stakeholder roles</b>			
4-2	What role do SSCs play in the New Standard?	<p>Most SSCs have been involved in developing support guidance notes for providers applying for Part B in their associated sectors, and in providing their authority to back the sector accreditation.</p> <p>SSCs' role in the assessment process is to review applications to help assessors identify issues to check at the verification visit. The outcomes of the verification visit will be checked against these issues by the Panel; the SSC will have no role in making accreditation decisions.</p>	
4-3	What are future plans for ownership?	The New Standard is planned to be placed in ownership outside of the LSC, to best position it to build trust and credibility with employers and providers. Options on how best to achieve this goal are currently being considered.	
<b>5 Questions about the New Standard and policy linkages</b>			
5-1	How does the New Standard link with Framework for Excellence?	<p>The New Standard and Framework for Excellence are different instruments for different purposes, although there is no duplication of effort required.</p> <p>Framework for Excellence is a performance assessment system which will, under the Employer Responsiveness KPA, require providers to collect data for a number of performance measures. This data will be useful for providers applying for the New Standard, as it can provide to evidence to support the claims made in the application.</p>	

No.	Question	Answer	Revisions
<b>5 Questions about the New Standard and policy linkages</b>			
5-2	How does the New Standard link with the work of the Quality Improvement Agency?	<p>QIA have been involved throughout the development of the New Standard.</p> <p>At present, QIA are working to develop support interventions to help all publicly funded providers improve their responsiveness to employers and so to improve their readiness to seek accreditation under the Standard.</p>	
5-3	How does the New Standard link with procurement for Train to Gain?	<p>Accreditation under the New Standard is not a requirement, or scheduled to become a requirement, for the award of a contract for the delivery of Train to Gain. The New Standard is a voluntary quality mark, and not a requirement for funding in any case.</p> <p>We are at present considering whether and how New Standard accreditation might allow a provider to bypass elements of Train to Gain tendering. We also reserve the right to recognise the value of New Standard accreditation in making procurement decisions in the future, especially where the Standard establishes some recognition among employers.</p>	

## **C. Eligibility for application**

All organisations seeking assessment should be registered with the UK Register of Learning Providers (UKRLP); further information is available at their website [www.ukrlp.co.uk](http://www.ukrlp.co.uk)

All organisations must have been trading, and engaged in the provision and delivery of training and development solutions to employers, for at least 12 months at the point of registration.

There are no restrictions set in terms of the track record, or size and scope of business with employers. We would though advise those with a very limited scale and/or history of working with employers to think carefully before applying, as it is unlikely that they will have a sufficient evidence base to demonstrate performance against the Standard's requirements.

### **Eligibility for assessment and accreditation**

A number of eligibility conditions are set for organisations wishing to be assessed for, or eventually be recognised under, accreditation for the Standard. The conditions have been laid down to protect the Standard rather than to exclude providers.

#### **All organisations**

- All organisations must declare their financial condition to be stable and sustainable, and provide any supporting documentation as requested to demonstrate this.
- All organisations must declare if they have been served with an Improvement Notice or other instrument by the Health and Safety Executive within the last two years.
- All organisations must provide two specific named references for whom they have engaged in the provision and delivery of training and development solutions within the last two years.

#### **Special conditions for organisations in receipt of public funds**

- All organisations receiving funding which requires their involvement in the Ofsted (and formerly, ALI) grading and inspection regime will have to make available their latest inspection report.
- Where an organisation holds an organisational ('leadership and management') grade of 4 or 5 (pre-2007 inspection regime), this will preclude them from being accredited under Part A of the Standard.
- Where an organisation has a Learning and Skills Council Provider Financial Assurance rating, it is obliged to make this known in declaring its financial health.

- Where an organisation holds a broad sector subject area grade of 4 or 5 (pre-2007 inspection regime), this will preclude them from being accredited under Part B of the Standard for any linked sector.
- Where an organisation is currently under a 'minimum levels of performance notice to improve' from the Learning and Skills Council, this will preclude them from being accredited under Part B of the Standard for any linked sector.

From July 2010, LSC funded providers assessed under the new Framework for Excellence regime will need to be rated as Good or Outstanding in the Employer Responsiveness Key Performance Area to be eligible to seek or to hold accreditation under the Standard.

### **Conditions for holding accreditation**

- If an organisation wishes to hold and make known its accreditation under the Standard, then it agrees to be bound by the Code of Conduct published for accredited providers, as may be updated from time to time as the owners of the Standard determine.
- If an organisation wishes to use its accreditation by public display of the badge, then it must adhere to the terms for the use of that badge at all times and in all the ways that it might be used.
- If an organisation wishes to use its accreditation by public display of a badge or any other form of publicity, then it must only do so within the scope of organisation as was submitted for assessment.
- Where the owners of the Standard deem an accredited organisation to be in breach of the Code of Conduct, then an organisation must consent to any penalties, including removal of the badge, as the owners determine through their proper decision-making processes.

## D. Assessment costs

The following cost information is presented for an organisation of 'standard' size. The criteria at the end of this section are used to identify non-standard-sized providers; CFE will review their case to identify where additional assessment resource is required.

The standard costs are:

- £4,500 plus validation costs for Part A assessment. This includes 1 free place at an Applicant Training Course. Validation costs will be scaled to the size of the customer base, but will typically be between £1,000 and £2,000.
- £3,000 for a Part B assessment where it is not conducted alongside a Part A assessment.
- £1,500 for a Part B assessment where it is conducted alongside a Part A assessment, or where it is conducted alongside a Part B assessment charged at the above rate.

VAT is charged at standard rates. Assessment costs are payable at three milestones; Registration, Submission, and Post-visit. The following table can be used to scale costs for a standard-sized provider; it should be said that Part B assessments can only be undertaken alone where Part A accreditation has previously been undertaken.

	<b>no Part B</b>	<b>1 Part B</b>	<b>2 Part B</b>
<b>Part A</b>	4,500 + validation	6,000 + validation	7,500 + validation
<b>no Part A</b>	[n/a]	3,000	4,500

Non-standard-sized providers will meet any one of the following criteria:

- More than 250 full-time equivalent employees.
- More than £15m turnover.
- More than 500 employer customers.
- More than 3 self-identified areas of sector expertise.
- Multiple workplaces more than 3 miles apart.

## **E. Accreditation outcomes**

Once a provider has applied and has completed the assessment process, the following outcomes can occur:

- Accreditation is awarded: at this stage, the provider will be asked to sign an Accreditation Agreement, to regulate its use of the endorsement. Accreditation is for 3 years.
- Accreditation is awarded conditional upon improvements in performance measurement. In this case, accreditation will last for 1 year, which is renewable, dependent upon successful demonstration of progress in a return visit by an assessor at that point.
- Accreditation is deferred for 3 months, allowing the provider to make some changes to their applications, to be reassessed at the appropriate time.
- Accreditation is not granted.

In any event, a provider will receive (1) a formal notification of the Panel's accreditation decision and (2) a feedback report from their Assessor, delivered with a visit from them.

It should be noted that a Part B accreditation cannot be awarded where a Part A accreditation has not been achieved previously or simultaneously.

## F. Additional CoVE guidance

Reimbursements are offered by the LSC as subsidy against assessment costs for providers who have held CoVE status.

CoVE status is defined as being a named provider (lead, partner, or sole) in a non-suspended CoVE.

Reimbursements are offered up to maximum amounts, designed to cover the majority of the cost for a standard-sized provider. Costs beyond the amount offered are to be borne by the providers themselves. The maximum amounts are as follows:

- Reimbursement for Part A costs up to £6,000 in total.
- Reimbursement for Part B costs up to £1,500 in total.

CoVE providers are each entitled to one Part A reimbursement, and one Part B reimbursement against a Part B for an aligned area of sector expertise to that represented by their existing CoVE.

Reimbursement for Part B costs of up to £3,000 are payable where a Part B application has been submitted after Part A accreditation has been achieved, but only where more than one Part B is being submitted for assessment (this second Part B does not have to be CoVE-related).

Reimbursements are available to each organisation on a one-time-only basis – that is, if accreditation is not offered as a consequence of assessment, a second attempt will not be reimbursed a second time.

Reimbursements are available to all providers at the end of assessment, once all invoices for assessment services have been paid. Reimbursement can only be against invoices for assessment services (i.e., services provided by CFE) and not for other costs which might be incurred, e.g., in preparing an application.

Reimbursements are available within timed bounds according to the CoVE Round represented by a CoVE provider's badge, set out in the table below. These bounds represent the period from the originally scheduled expiry of their CoVE status to the end of that period, with the end limited to March 2010 for later CoVEs. If a CoVE provider has more than one badge across several CoVE Rounds, their Part A reimbursement is open from the earliest point in time.

Providers that hold CoVE status may apply for the New Standard before or after then if they wish but will not be entitled to any financial support from the LSC and this cannot be claimed retrospectively.

Reimbursement will be administered by CFE, and will be claimed at the end of the assessment process. During the assessment process, providers will be invoiced for assessment services, to amounts authorised in the Assessment Agreement. These invoiced amounts, once paid, will be the basis of any reimbursement claims.

CoVEs that are subject to 'suspension' will not be able to apply for the New Standard during their suspension. Where this suspension means that a CoVEs ability to apply for the New Standard now falls outside of their 12 months subsidy period then this will mean that have missed their opportunity to receive the assessment cost reimbursement.

**Please note that reimbursement will not be payable after March 2010 under any circumstances.**

<b>CoVE Round</b>	<b>Original status expiry</b>	<b>New status expiry</b>	<b>Reimbursement availability</b>
Pathfinder to round 3 inc.	Upto May 2007	End July 2008	June 2007 – end-July 2008
Round 4	September 2007	September 2008	September 2007 – end-Sept 2008
Round 5	April 2008	April 2009	April 2008 – end-April 2009
Round 6	September 2008	September 2009	September 2008 – end-Sept 2009
Round 7	March 2009	March 2010	March 2009- end-March 2010
Round 8	September 2009	* September 2010	* March 2009- end-March 2010
Round 9	December 2009	* December 2010	* March 2009- end-March 2010

\* Note no LSC subsidy for accreditation costs will be paid after March 2010, CoVEs from rounds 8 & 9 will have to make application before 31 March 2010 in order to claim their subsidies. Note there is no limit to the amount of applications that can be made but costs are iterative and the LSC CoVE subsidy is only offered once.

Providers will not be able to display CoVE insignia and branding as well as New Standard insignia; agreeing to this will be a condition of reimbursement. Thus providers who achieve New Standard accreditation will remove related CoVE insignia from their premises and communications. Application for the New Standard indicates acceptance of this condition, but will only take affect once achievement of the New Standard is attained.

## G Regional LSC leads

Region	New Standard regional leads
National	Michele Roberts, Richard Marsh
EE	Katrina Dougherty
EM	Sue Peake
WM	Stephen Lilley
Y&H	Clive Howarth
NE	Petrina Lynn
SW	Nick Wilson / Jacqui Vosper
LDN	Jon Thorn / Mel Webb
NW	Marilyn Fisk
SE	Jill Farrell. Mary Kibble