

RHS Qualifications



Approved Centre Guidance
Guidance on how to become an RHS Approved Centre

Introduction

Welcome to RHS Qualifications. We are a leading awarding organisation working within the Horticultural sector, and have been offering and awarding qualifications since 1893. As an awarding body we work closely with LANTRA, the Sector Skills Council for the land-based and environmental sector, to ensure that our qualifications are relevant for industry requirements.

RHS Qualifications is recognised and regulated by The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual), CEA in Northern Ireland and Qualifications Wales in Wales. We offer a range of theory and practical qualifications from level 1 through to level 3.

Our qualifications and assessments are developed by a team of experienced horticulturists drawn from industry and from horticultural education. They are able to draw on the extensive expertise for which the Royal Horticultural Society is noted.

RHS qualifications are designed for part-time study and have a unit-based structure, which offers centres greater flexibility in how the qualifications are delivered. The qualifications appeal to those working within the industry, those seeking to make a career change and to enter the industry, as well as keen leisure gardeners seeking recognition for their knowledge and expertise from a trusted brand.

RHS Qualifications are delivered through RHS Approved Centres located throughout the UK and Ireland. For the theory-based qualifications the Approved Centre provides the tuition and hosts the examination. For practical skills qualifications, the Approved Centre undertakes the assessment in accordance with the RHS assessment requirements. Only RHS Approved Centres are permitted to host examinations or conduct any part of the assessment process.

What are the benefits of being an to RHS Approved Centres

From the moment you first contact RHS Qualifications you will work with an experienced and helpful support team able to answer any queries or resolve any problems. Following application, centres are assigned a Centre Verifier who is able to offer advice and provide on-going guidance. We are a small awarding organisation, but take pride in providing a high level of service.

Once approved, the centre's details and RHS qualifications they've been approved to deliver will be added onto our website and listed as an RHS Approved Centre. This directory is used by potential students.



Approved Centres are able to use an 'RHS Qualifications Approved Centre' logo on their websites and literature.

Approved centres will be sent an RHS Approved Centre wall plaque; these plaques can be used by the centre to help promote their Approved Centre status.

RHS Qualifications produce qualifications leaflets that can be used by the Approved Centre for promotional activities.

Approved Centres have access to the RHS Qualifications web portal. This allows centres to register candidates, receive results and access a wide range of information.

We actively promote our qualifications and our Approved Centres through the RHS website and through a range of advertisements and other marketing activities.

Approved centres are invited to attend consultation events where they will have the opportunity to learn about future developments, give feedback and meet the staff from RHS Qualifications.

This guidance document will give you information on:

1. RHS Qualifications
2. How to become an RHS Approved Centre
3. Roles and Responsibilities of an RHS Approved Centre
4. Frequently Asked Questions
5. How to Contact us

1. RHS Qualifications

1.1 Regulated qualifications

The RHS Awarding Organisation is recognised by Ofqual, CEA and Qualifications Wales. As such, our qualifications are accredited in England, Northern Ireland and Wales, but can be offered outside of these nations.

As a recognised awarding body we offer regulated qualifications. Centres, students and employers can have confidence that our qualifications are being delivered by an organisation whose integrity, resources and competence have been independently checked.

By being recognised:

- Our qualifications are listed on the Register of Regulated Qualifications which is a key resource for those looking to take qualifications
- It informs centres, students and employers, that our qualifications are monitored and are of the standard and level that they claim to be
- When we develop qualifications, it gives an assurance that the qualification has appropriate industry support

1.2 Assessment

RHS Qualifications have been designed to offer a flexible way of learning, and are developed for part-time study, and each unit is individually assessed. The theory unit examinations are offered twice a year in February and June. The practical unit assessments are completed as continual assessment within the Approved Centre throughout the course.

1.3 Candidate Certification

Once candidates have met the requirements for the qualification, a qualification certificate will be issued. All certificates are sent to the Approved Centre in order that they can give them to their students.

1.4 Units and Qualifications that we offer

Below is a list of units and qualifications that we offer

Level 1

<p>RHS Level 1 Award in Practical Horticulture</p> <p>This qualification comprises of the RHS Level 1 Introductory Award in Practical Horticulture plus the following two units</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of common garden plants, weeds, pests and diseases • Soil Testing
<p>RHS Level 1 Introductory Award in Practical Horticulture</p> <p>This qualification comprises of the following four mandatory units</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessing and preparing soil for sowing and planting • Assist with the propagation of plants for seed • Assist with vegetative propagation of plants • Assist with planting and establishing plants

Level 2

<p>RHS Level 2 Diploma in the Principles and Practices of Horticulture</p> <p>This qualification comprises of the RHS Level 2 Certificate in the Principles of Horticulture and the RHS Level 2 Certificate in Practical Horticulture</p>		
<p>RHS Level 2 Certificate in the Principles of Horticulture</p> <p>This qualification comprises of the two qualifications listed below</p>		
<p>RHS Level 2 Certificate in the Principles of Plant Growth, Propagation and Development</p> <p>This qualification comprises of the following four mandatory units</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plant classification, structure and function • Plant nutrition and the root environment • Maintaining plant health • Understanding plant propagation 	<p>RHS Level 2 Certificate in the Principles of Garden Planning, Establishment and Maintenance</p> <p>This qualification comprises of the following four mandatory units</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding garden features, plant selection and planning • Understanding the choice, establishment and maintenance of garden plants and lawns • Understanding the production of outdoor vegetable and fruit • Understanding protected environments and their use in plant cultivation 	<p>RHS Level 2 Certificate in Practical Horticulture</p> <p>This qualification comprises of the six mandatory units and one optional unit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soil testing • Sowing seeds and vegetative propagation techniques • Practical skills in ground preparation for seeding and planting • Practical skills in establishing seeds and plants in soil • Care and pruning of plants • Identification of a range of common garden plants, weeds, pests, diseases and disorders and beneficial organisms • Sustainable garden practice (optional) • Safe operation of powered garden machinery (optional) • Establishing, repairing and maintaining a lawn (optional) • Practical skills in vegetable growing (optional) • Practical skills in the maintenance of established soft fruit (optional) • Practical skills in the maintenance of established top fruit (optional)

Level 3

RHS Level 3 Diploma in the Principles and Practices of Horticulture This qualification comprises of the three qualifications listed below		
RHS Level 3 Certificate in the Principles of Plant Growth, Health and Applied Propagation This qualification comprises of the following four mandatory units	RHS Level 3 Certificate in the Principles of Garden Planning, Construction and Planting This qualification comprises of the following four mandatory units	RHS Level 3 Certificate in Practical Horticulture This qualification comprises of the four mandatory units and one optional unit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plant taxonomy, structure and function • The root environment, plant nutrition and growing systems • The management of plant health • Understanding applied plant propagation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding garden survey techniques and design principles • Understanding the section and use of landscaping elements in the garden • Understanding the setting out and construction of landscaping elements in the garden • Understanding a range of specialist elements in the establishment of garden and urban plantings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collecting and testing soil samples and specifying adjustments for horticulture • Collecting, preparing and propagating from seed • Establishing and maintaining a range of plant types and forms • Identification of a range of common garden plants, weeds, pests, diseases and disorders • Planning, collecting, preparing and establishing propagation material (optional) • Management of green spaces, landscaped areas and ornamental gardens (optional)

2. How to become an Approved Centre

2.1 Becoming an Approved Centre

Many different types of organisations can become RHS Approved Centres, including land-based and further education colleges, adult education centres, schools, plant nurseries, prisons, private horticultural training companies and gardens open to the public. The centre may include a number of training and assessment sites, organisations or partnerships.

In order to become an RHS Approved Centre you will need to complete a Centre Application form (this can be obtained from our website or by emailing qualifications@rhs.org.uk).

When RHS Qualifications receive the completed Centre Approval Application Form, we will review the information and allocate a centre verifier to undertake a centre approval visit. RHS Qualifications will arrange a mutually convenient date for the approval visit to take place. The visit is to confirm the suitability of the intended programme delivery, the facilities and resources available, and confirmation of the policies detailed in the application. The centre verifier can also offer advice and guidance on offering the various RHS Qualifications.

In approving a centre, RHS Qualifications must ensure that the centre meets the following criteria:

- The centre has the staff, resources and systems necessary to support the delivery of the qualification, and that it undertakes to use staff and/or associates who have the necessary competence in the subject matter and assessment procedures
- That there is a single named point of accountability for the quality assurance and management for the assessment of units and qualifications.
- The centre can securely store and manage assessment materials.
- The centre has administrative systems in place to track the progress of learners.
- The centre undertakes to use the RHS web portal to register their candidates.
- The centre undertakes to enter into a written Approved Centre Agreement with RHS Qualifications.
- The centre undertakes to use facilities for assessment purposes that provide access for all candidates, in accordance with relevant legislation.

Where a centre is applying to offer the practical qualifications, there is an additional requirement that the centre will need to meet. This is specified in the Guidance on Physical Resources and Staff Required to Deliver RHS Qualifications in Practical Horticulture.

In particular, the centre must confirm that their verifiers are horticultural professionals experienced in horticultural education.

Following the visit, the centre verifier will make a recommendation to RHS Qualifications on the centre's suitability to offer the qualification(s), and if appropriate will provide advice and an action plan to remedy any shortcomings. Until formal centre approval status has been confirmed by RHS Qualifications, the centre must not promote, deliver or assess RHS Qualifications.

Centres that have been approved will be given secure login access to the RHS Qualifications web portal. Approved centres are able to download practical assessment material and guidance, as well as register candidates for the examinations and assessments.

2.2 Fees

Centres applying to offer RHS Qualifications will be required to pay a one-off centre approval fee of £450 to cover the costs of the approval process. This fee will be payable after the approval visit has been conducted. Thereafter an annual fee of £150 will be charged on the anniversary of the approval date.

After the approval visit, centres who have been approved to offer our practical qualifications for the first time will receive a free advisory visit to help assist with delivery and completion of RHS documentation.

Centres will be charged an assessment fee for each unit for which they register a candidate. Centres normally pass this cost onto their learners either by including this in the tuition fee or as a separate assessment fee.

The above fees are the only fees charged by RHS Qualifications and there is no minimum annual spend by centres required.

Centres are responsible for providing course material covering the full syllabus and tuition to their learners, and set their own tuition fees.

3. Roles and Responsibilities of an Approved Centre

3.1 Registration of Candidates

Approved Centres are able to complete the following processes using the RHS web portal:

- Register Candidates
- Apply for access arrangements
- View Candidates' history (registrations and units/awards achieved)
- View practical assessment and guidance documents
- View a variety of reports for the centre

On approval, RHS Qualifications will create a new account for the examinations officer; additional user logins can be set up for the centre. User handbooks will be sent to the examinations officer with their login details, the handbooks are also available on the RHS web portal.

Registration of candidates should be completed using the RHS web portal. Upon registration each candidate will be given a candidate number. This number will record the complete journey from qualification registration through to certification. The candidate number will stay with the candidate for the lifetime of the qualifications.

3.2 Access Arrangements

Access Arrangements allow candidates with special educational needs, disabilities or temporary injuries to access the assessment without changing the demands of the assessment. For example adjustments could include larger fonts, extra time, readers and/or scribes. In this way Awarding Bodies will comply with the duty of the Equality Act 2010 to make 'reasonable adjustments'.

A reasonable adjustment for a particular person may be unique to that individual and may not be included in the list of available Access Arrangements.

How reasonable the adjustment is will depend on a number of factors including the needs of the candidate. An adjustment may not be considered reasonable if it involves unreasonable costs, timeframes or affects the security or integrity of the assessment.

There is no duty on the Awarding Body to make any adjustment to the assessment criteria being tested in an assessment.

Approved centres must apply to the RHS for any access arrangements required by their learners.

3.3 Tutors, Assessors, Internal Verifier and RHS External Verifiers

Tutors

Tutors employed by the centre will be responsible for instructing, supporting and coaching learners for qualifications for which the tutors have the relevant expertise and/or qualifications.

Assessors

All assessments leading to RHS qualifications in practical horticulture are held at the centre or conducted by the centre in an approved location. The centre is responsible for putting together and timetabling the assessment tasks outlined by RHS Qualifications. The three different RHS practical levels can be described as:

Level 1: To successfully complete specified well defined tasks.

Level 2: To successfully complete the task at a competent level.

Level 3: To be proficient at the task within an acceptable timescale for the operation.

Practical assessments should only take place at a time when the candidate is considered ready to undertake the assessment task(s).

Centres must have adequate systems and resources in place to support the delivery of all the practical assessment(s) tasks. This includes ensuring teaching staff and assessors have the appropriate qualifications or equivalent experience necessary to deliver these qualifications. Centres should refer to the '**RHS Guidance on Physical Resources and Staff Required to Deliver RHS Qualifications in Practical Horticulture**'.

Comprehensive risk assessments must be carried out for all practical assessments, activities and tasks leading to the qualifications. There must not be any circumstances when the health and safety of a candidate is compromised.

Internal Verifiers

The purpose of internal verification is to ensure that all candidates at the centre have been judged by assessors to the same standards. The centre must be able to provide evidence to show that assessors employed are working to the same standards.

Centres must also ensure that all internal verifiers have the appropriate qualifications or equivalent experience necessary to carry out their roles. Please see '**RHS Guidance on Physical Resources and Staff Required to Deliver RHS Qualifications in Practical Horticulture**' for further details.

The internal verifier must provide evidence that they are experienced and/or qualified in the process of internal verification (recorded on a CV that will be reviewed by the external verifier).

RHS External Verifiers

The purpose of an external verification visit is for the RHS external verifier to observe assessments taking place and discuss with the internal verifier the policies and procedures the centre has in place to run RHS practical assessments.

The external verifier may wish to speak with the teaching staff and will need to speak with the assessor, internal verifier and a selection of candidates involved in the practical assessment.

3.4 Complaints, Appeals, Equal Opportunities Policy and Malpractice and Maladministration

Centres should have in place their own Complaints, Appeals, and Equal Opportunities Policies. The centre must ensure that all candidates are aware of these policies. These policies will be reviewed by the centre verifier during the approval visit. RHS Qualifications have their own policies which can be found on the RHS website, rhs.org.uk/qualifications.

RHS Qualifications takes all allegations of malpractice or maladministration by centres and learners seriously. Centres are required to have arrangements in place to prevent, investigate and deal with malpractice.

4.0 Frequently asked Questions

Is it only colleges that you approve to offer the qualifications?

Any appropriate organisation can apply to become an approved centre providing that they meet and maintain the specified centre approval criteria.

As well as land-based and further education colleges, we currently have approved centres in adult education centres, plant nurseries, private horticultural training companies and gardens open to the public.

How long does it take for the approval process?

Once we have received and reviewed your application, we allocate a Centre Verifier and contact you to arrange a convenient date for the visit. The role of the Centre Verifier is to offer advice and guidance as well as review systems, staffing arrangements and resources to ensure you meet the centre approval criteria.

The time for the process depends upon how quickly a visit can be scheduled, and whether any actions need to be completed in order to meet the centre approval requirements.

What happens after the approval visit?

Once we have received the centre approval visit report from the verifier who conducted the approval visit, RHS will review and consider if approved status should be granted based on the verifier's recommendation. All centres will receive an email from RHS Qualifications outlining the conclusion of the visit.

If a centre is approved, we will send an email giving full details of their approval along with any conditions. It's at this point that the formal centre agreement comes into force.

A formal letter, signed agreement, certificate and approved centre plaque will be sent in the post.

If Centre Approval status is initially withheld subject to the completion of actions, can we start to teach the qualification whilst completing the necessary actions?

No. Where the centre doesn't satisfactorily meet the approvals criteria, they will need to comply with certain actions stipulated by RHS Qualifications. To ensure robust systems are in place and protect the integrity of the qualification and learners, no delivery or assessment of RHS qualifications can take place until RHS confirms the all actions are satisfactorily complete and the centre receives a formal email confirming approval status has been granted.

Are there alternative ways for me to offer RHS Qualifications?

No. To offer RHS qualifications you must undertake the approval process and be formally awarded RHS Approved Centre Status. This also includes those organisations planning to offer RHS theory qualifications by distance learning.

Where can I find the criteria to become an approved RHS distance learning provider?

The Distance Learning Provider guidance document is available to download from the website. If you have any difficulty finding the document please email qualifications@rhs.org.uk and we will be happy to assist.

Can I offer just the theory qualifications or do I need to offer all the qualifications in order that I can be an approved centre?

It is not necessary to offer the full suite of RHS Qualifications in order to become an approved centre. Centres can choose which qualifications they want to offer based upon their capability and capacity. A Centre can only advertise and offer those qualifications they have been approved to deliver.

Do I have to enter students for the February and June examinations?

There is no requirement to enter candidates for both examination sessions or for all unit examinations to be sat at the same time. Centres may choose which examination sessions and units they register candidates for.

If I am an approved centre, do I have to accept external candidates for examinations?

There is no requirement for a centre to accept external candidates for examinations, but we encourage centres to do so if they are able to.

Are there a minimum number of students that I have to enter for the exams or for practical assessments?

We do not set minimum numbers of students for examination enrolments or practical assessments. We welcome all centres large and small, and realise that centres sometimes need to start in a small way and build up their courses and student numbers. However, to ensure students are not disadvantaged, we would expect centres to work with a manageable number of students based upon the centres capacity and capability.

How much is the approval fee?

Centres applying to offer RHS Qualifications will be required to pay a one-off centre approval fee of £450 to cover the costs of the approval. The centre will be invoiced once the approval visit has taken place.

Is there an annual fee?

An annual fee of £150 will be charged on the anniversary of the approval date.

Can I use the RHS logo on any marketing material once I have been approved?

RHS approved centres are entitled to use the 'RHS Qualifications Approved Centre' logo on their printed literature, signage or on their website. This logo must be used in accordance with the RHS guidelines. Approved centres are not allowed to use any other RHS logo.

Do you provide any other marketing support to approved centres?

All promotional activities for RHS qualifications direct potential students to the Approved Centre finder on the RHS website. This includes contact details and links to the approved centre's website. Approved centres are able to request supplies of leaflets on RHS qualifications for use with their own promotional activities.

How much will it cost to register learners on RHS qualifications?

The latest fees can be found on the RHS website (rhs.org.uk/qualifications)

Where can I find copies of RHS policies and procedures?

RHS has a number of documents available to download from the website. If you have any difficulty finding the document you are looking for please email qualifications@rhs.org.uk and we will be happy to assist.

5.0 How to contact us

Qualifications Department
RHS Garden Wisley
Woking
Surrey
GU23 6QB

01483 226500

Email: qualifications@rhs.org.uk

rhs.org.uk/qualifications