

RHS QUALIFICATIONS

GUIDANCE FOR CENTRES OFFERING RHS QUALIFICATIONS IN PRACTICAL HORTICULTURE

Verification Year Starting September 2018

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Anyone who has an interest in plants or gardening, whether at a professional level or wishing to acquire new skills, can study the following practical qualifications offered by RHS Qualifications:
- RHS Level 1 Introductory Award in Practical Horticulture
 - RHS Level 1 Award in Practical Horticulture
 - RHS Level 2 Certificate in Practical Horticulture
 - RHS Level 3 Certificate in Practical Horticulture
- 1.2 All our practical qualifications are made up of units which contain learning outcomes and assessment criteria. In order for a learner to successfully pass a unit or qualification they must meet all the tasks for the assessment criteria and learning outcomes for that unit or qualification. Learners build up their units over time and put them towards the full qualification. Learners will gain a certificate for all units and qualifications successfully achieved.
- 1.3 All practical assessments take place within the centre or approved location. In order to run RHS practical assessments, centres must have an internal verification process in place. All centres must be externally verified by RHS Qualifications. Further information about assessments, internal verification and external verification can be found within this document.

Purpose

- 1.4 The purpose of this document is to provide information for RHS approved centres on the assessment, internal verification and external verification processes and procedures required. All centres must contact RHS Qualifications before commencing courses and inform us about those courses running, and at which sites, even if they are already an approved centre.
- 1.5 The following roles of awarding organisation staff (RHS Qualifications) and centre staff will be used throughout this document:
- **Candidate/ learner** – person registered to study the qualification or unit(s) and to be assessed as part of that qualification or units(s).
 - **Teacher** - person appointed by the centre to teach the practical qualifications within the centre.
 - **Assessor** – person appointed by the centre to administer practical assessments within the centre. They will make judgements about whether a candidate(s) have met the requirements of the practical assessment(s).
 - **Internal Verifier** – person appointed by the centre to ensure assessor(s) are making reliable and consistent judgements about all practical assessments that take place within the centre.
 - **External Verifier** – person assigned by RHS Qualifications to a centre to ensure processes and procedures required to run RHS qualifications in practical horticulture, within a centre, meets with RHS Qualification's requirements

- **Senior External Verifier** – the person appointed by RHS Qualifications to provide leadership, direction and support for the team of RHS external verifiers and to provide guidance to centres as necessary.
 - **Centre** – the RHS approved centre, approved satellite site or approved location.
- 1.6 Centres should also refer to the following documents in conjunction with the guidance set out here. Guidance documents are available from the RHS Qualifications web pages on the RHS website. Approved centres gain access to the assessment materials for the qualifications they are approved to offer via the RHS web portal. Both assessment and guidance documents are posted on the RHS web portal. Documents which outline or accompany assessment activities are only available to approved centres via the RHS web portal.
- 1.7 The privacy, and security of personal data is extremely important to us. Personal information centres provide is used for the purposes of furthering our legal obligations as an awarding body of creating qualifications and issuing of certificates. For further information and a detailed explanation, please refer to our Privacy Policy on the RHS website (rhs.org.uk/privacy).

Qualification Documentation

Getting Started:

- RHS Centre Approval application and guidance. Contact RHS qualifications (qualifications@rhs.org.uk)
- RHS Qualifications policy documents
- RHS Qualification Specifications:
 - Level 1 Introductory Award in Practical Horticulture
 - Level 1 Award in Practical Horticulture
 - Level 2 Certificate in Practical Horticulture
 - Level 3 Certificate in Practical Horticulture

Practical Qualifications Guidance Materials:

- This document
- RHS Guidance on Physical Resources and Staff Required to Deliver RHS Qualifications in Practical Horticulture
- Plants, Seeds, Pests, Diseases, Disorders and Beneficial Animals, Birds and Insects List (for all levels for the relevant external verification year)

Practical Qualifications Assessment Documents:

1) Assessor Information and Candidate Assessment Pro-Formas

The following documents contain instructions about the conduct of assessments and the assessment tasks required to meet the Learning Outcomes and

Assessment Criteria. The 'Candidate Assessment Pro-Formas' are templates for candidates to complete the written assessments. For Level 3 only, the Assessment Front Sheets are templates for the candidates to complete a declaration that the work submitted is the candidate's own work:

- RHS Assessor Information and Candidate Assessment Pro-Formas:
 - Level 1 Introductory Award
 - Level 1 Award
 - Level 2 Certificate
 - Level 3 Certificate (*with Assessment Front Sheets*)

The following Candidate Assessment Pro-Formas are contained in the documents above, but they are also available as single documents:

L1 Plant Identification Candidate Pro-Forma
L2 Plant Identification Candidate Pro-Forma
L2 Centre Pro-Forma R2129
L3 Plant Identification Candidate Pro-Forma
L3 Disease Identification Candidate Pro-Forma
L3 Disease Identification Candidate Pro-forma
L3 Pest Identification Candidate Pro-Forma
L3 Risk Assessment Sheet Candidate Pro-Forma
L3 Weed Identification Candidate Pro-Forma
L3 Assessment Front Sheet

2) Assessment Results Sheets

The following documents are for centres to record all assessment outcomes AND as part of the reporting of results process to RHS Qualifications.

- RHS Assessment Results Sheet:
 - Level 1 Introductory Award
 - Level 1 Award
 - Level 2 Certificate
 - Level 3 Certificate

Please note a centres IV tracking sheets is also required as part of the reporting of results process to RHS Qualifications. See section 7.0 for further details.

3) Other Supporting Assessment Materials

- For use with **Level 1 and Level 2 ONLY** RHS Approved Specimen List for Level 1 and Level 2 Plant Identification Assessments.
Assessment Guidance for candidates during the specified assessment tasks.
- The Duties of an Invigilator for Written Candidate Assessment Pro-Formas.
Information for invigilators and/ or assessors about the conduct of assessments for candidate written tasks.
- RHS 'Command Words' and Descriptions for Candidate Assessment Pro-Formas.
Assessors to use this to guide the level of detail required for candidates written tasks using Candidate Assessment Pro-Formas (for all levels).

- Assessments in Candidates Own Time
Information for centres about the conduct of specified assessments at L3. Candidates are permitted to complete the tasks in their own time or at the approved centre.

Other Documents for Practical Qualifications

- RHS Planned Provision Form
Centres must outline the courses they plan to offer at the start of the verification year.
- RHS Quality and Performance form
Completed by external verifiers on external verification visits to document the visit. A blank reference copy will be sent to the centre when an external verifier is appointed by RHS Qualifications.

2.0 Centre approval

Background

- 2.1 All centres **MUST** gain centre approval from RHS Qualifications before they can offer RHS qualifications in Practical Horticulture. This includes meeting any actions set as part of the centre approval process. Assessments that take place in unapproved locations are not valid. **Candidates must be registered before assessments take place.**
- 2.2 Centre approval involves completing an application form followed by a centre visit from an RHS centre approver. As soon as the completed application is received, arrangements for a centre visit will be made. Centres approval is renewed on a yearly basis. Should a centre be in the process of renewing their approval, external verification activities can continue but Q&P reports will be withheld until the renewal process is completed. This means RHS Qualification will not process any reported results until the centre has renewed. More information about the centre approval process can be found on the RHS Qualifications web pages on the RHS Website. To obtain an application form please email qualifications@rhs.org.uk.
- 2.3 Centres should refer to this document **and** the 'RHS Guidance on Physical Resources and Staff Required to Deliver RHS Qualifications in Practical Horticulture' when considering whether to offer RHS qualifications in practical horticulture.
- 2.3 Centres will be notified in writing when they are approved to run the RHS practical qualifications. The centre (including sites) will receive a list of qualifications they are approved to offer.
- 2.4 Once approved, centres will be given access to the RHS web portal. All guidance and assessment materials for the RHS qualifications in practical horticulture are held on the RHS web portal. Centres will only be given access to the documentation for the qualifications that they are approved for. Should a centre wish to be approved for additional qualifications or sites they should contact RHS Qualifications. Guidance materials are also available on the RHS Website.

Centre Support Visit

- 2.5 As part of the centre approval process, new centres must have a support visit. Centre Support Visits take place when a centre is ready to start delivering courses in practical horticulture but may need some further support before doing so. The support visit provides clarification and guidance to enable centres to follow the processes and procedures required to deliver RHS qualifications in practical horticulture. This is an opportunity for the centre to air any questions that they may have.
- 2.6 Although one of our external verifiers will be deployed to carry out a Centre Support Visit, such visits are completely separate from the external verification process. Centres will receive a summary account of any advice given. This will include any recommendations from the external verifier to help in the centre's delivery of the qualification(s).

Updating RHS Qualifications about changes

2.7 Following centre approval, if a centre:

- undertakes major changes to their facilities; and/or
- makes significant changes to their staffing arrangements for these qualifications (Exams Officer or Person Responsible for RHS Qualifications in Practical Horticulture /Head of Horticulture/ assessment team)

Centres MUST inform RHS Qualifications of that change.

2.8 Staff roles such as assessor(s) or the internal verifier required to deliver the qualifications do not have to be full time members of staff. However, it is the responsibility of the centre to make sure these roles are in place and people are suitably qualified and experienced to fulfil the requirements of these roles. These roles can be bought in.

2.9 Centres must seek approval to add locations of where assessments take place (e.g. a satellite site or location where an assessment takes place that is not the main site or satellite site). Approval must be in place at all sites before assessments begin. Assessments that take place in unapproved locations are not valid. Candidates must be registered before assessments take place. If centres are permitted to use approved locations (these could be where only 1 assessment takes place) it is the duty of the centre to ensure that the health and safety of candidates and centre staff are managed effectively. Evidence of this management should be observed with a non-generic risk assessment produced before any visits take place. In addition there must be adequate insurance, health and safety coverage and security of tenure.

2.10 Any approved locations used for assessment away from the RHS approved centre/satellite centre must, as a minimum:

- Have adequate horticultural resources and facilities to support the assessment activity.
- Provide sufficient facilities for the well-being of the learner and teaching/assessing staff, such as access to toilets and washing areas.
- Have on site a first-aid kit appropriate for the practical activities planned at all times.

2.11 The centre approval process and external verification process is designed to ensure that centres offering practical assessments enable RHS Qualifications to meet the regulatory requirements set out by the regulators (Ofqual and Qualifications Wales).

3.0 Registering Candidates

- 3.1 At the start of each verification year (01 September) RHS Qualifications will require all approved centres to outline their 'Planned Provision' for qualifications in practical horticulture for the verification year. Centres will outline the levels of qualifications, sites, cohorts, assessment staff and timings for courses they plan to offer. This information enables RHS Qualifications to program the external verification activities required.
- 3.2 The privacy, and security of personal data is extremely important to us. Personal information centres provide is used for the purposes of furthering our legal obligations as an awarding body of creating qualifications and issuing of certificates. For further information and a detailed explanation, please refer to our Privacy Policy on the RHS website (rhs.org.uk/privacy).
- 3.3 Once RHS Qualifications has received the planned provision further instructions will be provided about registering candidates on the RHS web portal. RHS Qualifications creates cohorts on the RHS web portal for centres to populate with their candidate information. The action of the centre indicating their planned cohorts and then inputting registrations for these cohorts triggers the allocation of a RHS external verifier. Should a centre be in the process of renewing their approval, although external verification activities can continue centres will not be able to register any new candidates.
- 3.4 Assessments **must** not take place until candidates have been registered for the qualification or unit(s). Centres must register the candidates for the units and qualifications that they will complete in the verification year (this includes optional units at Level 2 and Level 3). To note, there is not a requirement for a minimum number of candidates to be registered for a centre to run a course, nor a requirement for a minimum spend.
- 3.5 **All centres MUST register their candidates WITHIN 4 WEEKS of a course commencing.** This will ensure that there is adequate time for **all** the planned RHS external verification activities to take place within the verification year (01 September – 31 August). External verifiers during external verifier visits will seek evidence that candidates have been registered for the RHS units and/or qualifications before assessments have commenced.
- 3.6 It is the responsibility of centres to complete the planned provision form and register their candidates in good time, to allow all external verification activities to be programed and take place.
- 3.7 Centres will be invoiced for registrations at the point of registration. Please refer to the RHS invoicing policy and fees notice for further details.

Registering Candidates for the right combination of units

- 3.8 When registering candidates it is important that the right combination of units are selected for the qualification. This is especially important at Levels 2 and 3 where there are optional units. Centres can also register candidates for individual units. Please see below the combination of units that correspond to each of the RHS qualifications in practical horticulture.

Level 1

| RHS Level Introductory 1 Award in Practical Horticulture (601/0613/X) | | |
|--|--|--------------------------------|
| Ref | Unit Title | Accreditation unit code |
| | <i>Mandatory Units</i> | |
| R1102 | Preparing soil for sowing and planting | J/601/2633 |
| R1103 | Assist with the propagation of plants for seed | D/502/4017 |
| R1104 | Assist with the vegetative propagation of plants | M/502/4121 |
| R1105 | Assist with planting and establishing plants | F/502/4088 |

| RHS Level 1 Award in Practical Horticulture (500/9128/1) | | |
|---|--|--------------------------------|
| Ref | Unit Title | Accreditation unit code |
| | <i>Mandatory Units</i> | |
| R1102 | Preparing soil for sowing and planting | J/601/2633 |
| R2100 | Soil Testing | K/601/7503 |
| R1103 | Assist with the propagation of plants for seed | D/502/4017 |
| R1104 | Assist with the vegetative propagation of plants | M/502/4121 |
| R1105 | Assist with planting and establishing plants | F/502/4088 |
| R1101 | Identification of a range of common garden plants, weeds, pests and diseases | H/601/2624 |

Level 2

| RHS Level 2 Certificate in Practical Horticulture (501/0207/2) | | |
|---|---|--------------------------------|
| Ref | Unit Title | Accreditation unit code |
| | <i>Mandatory Units</i> | |
| R2100 | Soil Testing | K/601/7503 |
| R2121 | Sowing seeds and vegetative propagation techniques | A/601/7666 |
| R2122 | Practical skills in ground preparation for seeding and planting | F/601/7667 |
| R2123 | Practical skills in establishing seeds and plants in soil | L/601/7669 |
| R2124 | Care and pruning of plants | J/601/7671 |
| R2125 | Identification of a range of common garden plants, weeds, pests, diseases, disorders and beneficial organisms | K/601/7680 |
| | <i>Optional Units – Choose one from the following units</i> | |
| R2126 | Sustainable garden practice | M/601/9155 |
| R2127 | Safe operation of powered garden machinery (Age 16+ only) | T/601/7682 |
| R2128 | Establishing, repairing and maintaining a lawn | R/506/6410 |
| R2129 | Practical skills in vegetable growing | J/506/6410 |
| R2130 | Practical skills in the maintenance of established soft fruit | A/506/9112 |
| R2131 | Practical skills in the maintenance of established top fruit | F/506/9113 |

Level 3

| RHS Level 3 Certificate in Practical Horticulture (500/9782/9) | | |
|---|--|--|
| | | |

| Ref | Unit Title | Accreditation unit code |
|-------|---|-------------------------|
| | Mandatory Units | |
| R3121 | Collecting and testing of soil samples and specifying adjustments for horticulture | A/601/7683 |
| R3122 | Collecting, preparing and propagating from seed | F/601/7684 |
| R3123 | Establishing and maintaining a range of plant types and forms | Y/601/7688 |
| R3124 | Identification of a range of common garden plants, weeds, pests, diseases and disorders | R/601/7690 |
| | Optional Units - Choose one from the following units | |
| R3125 | Planning, collecting, preparing and establishing propagation material | Y/601/7691 |
| R3126 | Management of green spaces, landscaped areas and ornamental gardens | K/601/7694 |

4.0 Assessment in Approved Centres

Background

- 4.1 All assessments leading to RHS qualifications in practical horticulture are held at the approved centre or conducted by the centre in an approved location. If centres are permitted to use approved locations the centre must ensure that those sites have adequate insurance, health and safety coverage and security of tenure. Should a centre be in the process of renewing their approval, external verification activities can continue but Q&P reports will be withheld until the renewal process is completed. This means RHS Qualification will not process any reported results or new registrations.
- 4.2 Candidates **must** be registered before assessments take place. The centre is responsible for putting together and timetabling the assessment tasks outlined by RHS Qualifications.
- 4.3 The three different RHS practical levels are 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.
- 4.4 Practical assessments should only take place at a time when the candidate is considered ready to undertake the assessment task(s).
- 4.5 A centre may begin teaching and assessing RHS qualifications in practical horticulture before the centre is externally verified. Therefore, the RHS appointed external verifier may visit the centre after the first practical assessment has taken place. Even so, the first EV visit should take place near the start of timetabled courses.
- 4.6 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 (e.g. continuing professional development). Centres should refer to the 'RHS Guidance on Physical Resources and Staff Required to Deliver RHS Qualifications in practical Horticulture'. Centres should also refer to RHS Qualifications' policies published on the RHS web portal.
- 4.7 Comprehensive risk assessments **must** be carried out for all practical assessments, activities and tasks leading to RHS qualifications in practical horticulture (all levels). There must not be any circumstances when the health and safety of a candidate is compromised.
- 4.8 Candidates should wear the appropriate protective footwear and clothing for the task. It is responsibility of the centre to ensure that if the risk assessment requires steel toe-capped boots, (which certainly would be a requirement if using machinery) the operator must comply and use steel toe-capped boots.

Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria

- 4.9 RHS qualifications in practical horticulture (all levels) are made up of units which contain learning outcomes and assessment criteria. Candidates must meet **all** the learning outcomes and **all** the assessment criteria in order to pass a unit. RHS Qualifications set the assessment tasks, centres then timetable those assessment tasks. Centres may assess candidates on individual learning outcomes, or a selection of learning outcomes at any one time. In order to pass the qualification **all** units within that qualification must be successfully completed.
- 4.10 Candidates will not be issued with unit or qualification certificate(s), until the centre has met all RHS external verification requirements, which includes external verification visits and providing a sample of completed assessment materials.

The role of the assessor

- 4.11 Assessment materials are only available to download from the RHS web portal. Centres only have access to the qualification documentation for the qualifications that they are approved to deliver.
- 4.12 The assessor will use their professional judgement about whether a candidate has met the required learning outcome and assessment criteria to the level of demand for that level. Assessment tasks are outlined in the 'Assessor Information and Candidate Assessment Pro-Formas' document. Although the assessor may provide supportive and constructive feedback to the candidate, during the assessment(s) the assessor must not in any way influence the assessment outcome of the individual candidate(s) being assessed. The assessor must not influence the actions of the candidate(s) – unless an activity is stopped on grounds of safety.
- 4.13 Centres may produce additional assessment guidance to outline the RHS assessment task(s) they have timetabled for the candidate(s). Equally the assessor may outline orally the RHS assessment task(s). Any supporting documentation produced which relates to the RHS assessment task(s) should be kept. The external verifier may request to see any supporting material produced as part of any assessment task(s) on their visit (the external verification process is outlined further on in this document).

Recording assessment decisions

- 4.14 When recording assessment decisions, assessors must take all necessary steps to ensure that judgements are based on the candidate's own work. The internal verifier can override assessment decisions. All assessment decisions are subject to verification.
- 4.15 To ensure judgements made by assessors in all centres are fair, consistent and meet the requirements of the qualification; RHS Qualifications provides the document **ASSESSOR INFORMATION AND CANDIDATE ASSESSMENT PRO-FORMAS** (by level). In more detail:
- **'Assessor Information and Candidate Assessment Pro-Formas'**.
 - The **'Assessor Information'** contains additional instructions for each unit about the conduct of the assessment. It also outlines the RHS

assessment tasks to meet the assessment criteria and the Learning Outcomes.

- The '**Candidate Assessment Pro-Formas**' are templates for candidates to complete written assessment tasks to meet specified assessment criteria. Unless specified (at level 3 only) these **must be completed under controlled examination conditions** either within the centre or at an approved location. The assessor must sign off all completed Candidate Assessment Pro-Formas. **The internal verifier and RHS external verifier MUST initial and date any candidate work which is part of their sample.**

Also provided is the **ASSESSMENT RESULTS SHEET** to record those results. In more detail:

- '**Assessment Results Sheet**'. This allows assessors to record all assessment decisions for all candidates (for each unit and each level of qualification). **It is important to distinguish between the date of the assessment and the date of when written work is marked/ internally verified.** The assessor will need to initial and date the 'Assessment Results Sheet' where indicated. Where sampled, the internal verifier will also be required to initial and date the 'Assessment Results Sheet'. This document will also be used by centres to evidence reported results to RHS Qualifications.

These two documents are only available to download from the **RHS web portal** by approved centres.

- 4.16 Appendix 5 provides an example of how assessment decisions could be recorded during an assessment before populating the Assessment Results Sheet. Equally, the centre may wish to print of sections of the Assessment Results Sheet that correspond with the particular assessment task(s).
- 4.17 It is the responsibility of both the assessor and the internal verifier for the correct assessment documentation to be used during an assessment.
- 4.18 Pass marks recorded for individual assessment criteria or learning outcomes, have a shelf life which is limited to the period which that candidate is registered at that centre. A candidate can move centres to complete their qualification but they can only transfer reported results for completed units (i.e. the candidate has been issued with a unit certificate(s) by RHS Qualifications).

Access arrangements

- 4.19 If access arrangements are required for a candidate, the centre **MUST** gain approval from RHS Qualifications in advance of that assessment. Please consult the RHS policy on Reasonable Adjustments. The policy, application form and guidance are available to download from the RHS web portal.

During the assessment

- 4.20 As standard procedure, a maximum of 6 candidates per assessor can be assessed at any one time. However, it is possible for this number to be increased to 8, if the assessor can clearly observe **all** candidates carrying out **all** stages of tasks for that assessment, and it is safe to do so.

- 4.21 Any proposed adjustments by the centre to the size of plot must be discussed with the RHS external verifier before the commencement of any RHS practical programme. The RHS external verifier will only approve adjustments to the plot size if he/ she is fully satisfied that the learning outcomes can be successfully achieved with the proposed adjustments.
- 4.22 For assessments where candidates are completing **written** CANDIDATE ASSESSMENT PRO-FORMAS, candidates must be invigilated for these written assessment tasks. Candidates must be spaced sufficiently apart so there are no opportunities for candidates to communicate to other candidates or observe another candidate's work. Unless specified (at level 3 only) these **must be completed under controlled examination conditions** either within the centre or at an approved location. Where provided, candidates **MUST** record answers on the Candidate Assessment Pro-Formas. It is the responsibility of the centre to ensure the submission of evidence for the candidate, is the candidates own work. Please refer to the document 'The Duties of an Invigilator for Written Candidate Assessment Pro-Formas' for further information.

Assessment tasks: Specific arrangements

- 4.23 For the assessment of the Level 1 Award in Practical Horticulture unit 'Identification of a range of common garden plants, weeds, pests and diseases' only, Learning Outcome 2. The candidate can respond either with a written response or orally. The choice of response taken does not require the centre to contact RHS Qualifications for authorisation. Where a candidate provides an oral response the assessor must record the candidate's response in writing. Oral assessment must be carried out on a one to one basis (candidate and assessor) to ensure candidates have no opportunity for communicating or observing/overhearing another candidate's work. The scribe must be someone other than the Assessor/IV. Access arrangements for all other assessment criteria at Level 1 must be applied for in advance of the assessment.
- 4.24 During the assessment of the following two units **only**, additional assessment support material is also available to candidates:
- Level 1 unit 'Identification of a range of common garden plants, weeds, pests and diseases'; and
 - Level 2 unit 'Identification of a range of common garden plants, weeds, pests, diseases, disorders and beneficial organisms'.

The additional assessment support material '*Approved Specimen List for Level 1 and Level 2 Plant Identification Assessments*' comprises of an A to Z list of the plant specimens listed, in the 'Plants, Seeds, Pests, Diseases, Disorders and Beneficial Animals, Birds and Insects List'. Candidates should use the assessment support material during assessments to ensure the correct spelling of the plant specimens identified. However, *The Plants, Seeds, Pests, Diseases, Disorders and Beneficial Animals, Birds and Insects List* **must not** be used during an assessment by the candidate.

- At all levels, plant identification assessments **must** be completed using live specimens. The use of high quality images can only be used to support the live specimens. For example, to show plant features not available on the date of assessment. Photographs are not acceptable as the sole means of identifying plants. Where plants are listed under 2 or more headings, for the number of live specimens identified overall, the plant can only be counted once.

- 4.25 For the identification of beneficial animals, birds and insects including biological control agents the use of high quality images is permitted.
- 4.26 For assessment tasks in the L2 Optional unit R2128 Establishing, Maintaining and Repairing a Lawn centres must ensure that they have suitable areas of turf for all assessment activities. This includes assessment criteria 6.1 where candidates are required to identify lawn problems in situ. Photographs and digital images should only be used for uncommon lawn problems that are difficult to source.
- 4.27 For the duration of the course and assessments in the L2 optional unit R2129 Practical Skills in Vegetable Growing, each candidate must be allocated a plot 4m x 3m. Centres will need to ensure that they have long term planting plots as plants need to establish so that candidates can carry out the next assessment tasks. Centres will need to ensure that plots are ready for cultivation and that they are distinct planting plots.

For assessment criteria 2.2 centres are required to provide the cultivar choices for the vegetable crops. A separate template for centres to provide this information is available for centres to download on the RHS web portal. Dependent on the vegetable crops chosen, candidates may need to carry out the operations more than once, for example re-sowing of seeds if germination fails.

- 4.28 At level 3 there are written assessment tasks where candidates are permitted to complete specified assessment tasks in their own time or at the centre. The **Assessment Front Sheet** is a declaration that the work submitted is that of the candidate. This document covers all specified tasks and must be completed by the candidate and the centre. A separate template of the L3 Assessment Front Sheet is also available for centres to download from the RHS web portal.

Other level 3 written assessment tasks will have Candidate Assessment Pro-Formas provided, and other research topics will not.

Irrespective of the type of written assessment it is the responsibility of the centre to ensure that all candidate work submitted is the work of the candidate. Where text from a published source is used, candidates must clearly reference their source. Please refer to the *Assessment in Candidate's Own Time* document for further details.

- 4.29 Details about the conduct of individual assessment tasks are provided in the Assessor Information and Candidate Assessment Pro-Formas documentation for each level.

Retakes

- 4.30 It is permissible for a candidate to retake any practical assessment. There are no restrictions on the number of retakes allowed per candidate. The timing of retakes will depend on the assessment policy of each individual centre. However, it is not expected that candidates will retake assessments until further guidance and support has been provided by the centre. Therefore it is anticipated that retakes will not take place on the same day as the original assessment. Centres should consider the following:

- Is the candidate aware of why they did not meet the assessment criteria?
- Has sufficient support been provided by the centre to the candidate before a retake attempt?
- Has sufficient time been allocated for the candidate to prepare for the assessment?

4.31 Centres must ensure that they have an internal appeals procedure. Centres must have appropriate information and support for their candidates when handling a dispute.

Keeping records

4.32 Centres **must** ensure the security and confidentiality of **all** assessment materials and records before, during and after the assessment has taken place. The '*Assessment Results Sheet*' and '*Assessor Information and Candidate Assessment Pro-Forms*' **MUST** be held in a secure place and be retained by the centre. **Candidate Assessment Pro-Forms which MUST be completed under controlled conditions must not at any point be given to candidates to take home.**

Only specified *Candidate Assessment Pro-Forms* at L3 are permitted to be completed in a candidate's own time or at the centre. Even so, the completed assessment materials must be held in a secure place by the centre.

Any breach in security must immediately be reported to RHS Qualifications.

4.33 The retention of assessment evidence and copies of '*Candidate Assessment Pro-Forms*' and '*Assessment Results Sheets*' should be kept:

- RHS Level 1 Introductory Award in Practical Horticulture (500/9128/1): 3 years.
- RHS Level 1 Award in Practical Horticulture (500/9128/1): 3 years.
- RHS Level 2 Certificate in Practical Horticulture (501/0207/2): 3 years.
- RHS Level 3 Cert in Practical Horticulture (500/9782/9): 3 years.

4.34 All communication between the assessor and the internal verifier relating to practical assessments should also be documented and held in a secure location. The external verifier assigned to the centre will need access to any documented communication held between the assessor and the internal verifier relating to each assessment(s).

5.0 Internal verification in Approved Centres

Background

- 5.1 The role of the internal verifier (IV) is pivotal in ensuring all candidates at the centre have been judged by assessors to the same standards. The centre must be able to provide evidence to show assessors employed are working to the same standard. Candidates **must** be registered before assessments take place. From registration to certification, the internal verifier must be fully involved in the delivery of all assessments for these qualifications.
- 5.2 Therefore the internal verifier must lead the process, as they are responsible for ensuring the standard of the qualifications. Internal verifiers provide guidance and support in:
- the development of assessment plans for each cohort
 - ensuring RHS requirements for assessments are followed
 - correctly carrying out practical assessments
 - marking candidate written work, and
 - recording and reporting assessment decisions.

The IV will be required to answer any external verifier's questions about how assessments in the centre are timetabled and delivered, and how standards are maintained.

- 5.3 Centres **must** ensure all internal verifiers have the appropriate qualifications or equivalent experience necessary to carry out their roles (including continuing professional development). Please see 'RHS Guidance on Physical Resources and Staff Required to Deliver RHS Qualifications in Practical Horticulture' for further details.
- 5.4 The centre must ensure internal verifiers are experienced and/or qualified in the process of internal verification; and have the experience and/or qualifications in horticulture (recorded on a CV that will be reviewed by the external verifier).
- 5.5 Centres **must** have an internal verification plan (IV tracking sheets) in place to outline the assessors, units and candidates to be sampled. This IV plan will need to be updated to show when these activities were planned and when they actually took place. Appendix 3 provides some examples of Internal Verification Tracking Sheets which could be used by an internal verifier within a centre. Information about when IV activities actually took place, the units and candidates sampled must be transferred onto the Assessment Results Sheets (these documents are also required as part of the reporting of results stage).

The role of the internal verifier

- 5.6 The internal verifier must not influence the actions of any candidate(s), for particular tasks during an assessment – unless an activity is stopped on grounds of health and safety.
- 5.7 During a sampled practical assessment, the internal verifier checks to make sure each assessor's judgement about whether a candidate has met the required learning outcome and assessment criteria, is correct. The internal verifier **can** override assessor's assessment decisions. All assessment

decisions are subject to verification. In addition the internal verifier must ensure, following the assessment(s), assessors provide supportive and constructive feedback to candidates.

- 5.8 The assessor must sign off all completed Candidate Assessment Pro-Formas. It must be made clear on the assessment results sheet when assessments took place as this may be different to the dates work is marked or the IV has completed their sampling. The internal verifier will review assessment decisions for the candidates sampled. Therefore a review of the Candidate Assessment Pro-formas and the Assessment Results Sheet must be conducted. The internal verifier should initial and date any Candidate Assessment Pro-Formas sampled and clearly mark on the Assessment Results Sheets the candidates and activities they have sampled for each unit. The RHS external verifier on the external verification visit will also initial and date any candidate work which is part of their sample.
- 5.9 It is for both the internal verifier and the assessor to ensure that the correct assessment documentation is available during any assessment.
- 5.10 Training for new internal verifiers is expected to take place within the centre, however, new internal verifiers must receive peer support. The support must include supervision of internal verification activities. New internal verifiers for the first verification year should have their work countersigned by an experienced internal verifier. In this case, the experienced internal verifier may not be a qualified horticulturist as it is the process which is being reviewed. The RHS internal verifier **must** be a qualified horticulturist, to at least one level above the level being delivered.

Scope of internal verification of RHS qualifications in practical horticulture

- 5.11 **All** units need to be internally verified. And, **all** assessors who are involved in each level of the qualification must be sampled during a verification year (verification year runs 1st September to 31st August).
- 5.12 Each assessor, for each level of qualification, should be internally verified **twice** (as a minimum) each verification year. Each time, different assessment criteria/learning outcomes should be selected from the units. Different candidates should also be sampled.

For every RHS practical unit at **each** level:

- A minimum of **two** candidates must be selected **and observed**, carrying out a practical assessment activity, by the internal verifier, and
- A minimum of two candidates' written assessments must be reviewed (completed Candidate Assessment Pro-Formas, where appropriate, alongside the Assessment Results sheet).

Although the conduct of a written assessment should be internally verified once, this need only take place once for the qualification as a whole.

However, if a unit does not contain Candidate Assessment Pro-Formas (such as at L1) candidates should be selected and observed

carrying out a second practical activity. In each case the Assessment Results Sheet should be reviewed.

Documenting evidence of internal verification activities

- 5.13 All communication between the internal verifier and the assessor relating to practical assessments must be documented and held in a secure location. The external verifier assigned to the centre will request access to documented communications held between the assessor and the internal verifier relating to each assessment.
- 5.14 Appendix 4 provides an example of a checklist of activities that an Internal Verifier should be following during Internal Verification of RHS practical assessments. When the RHS external verifier requests access to evidence of communication between the assessor and the internal verifier, this is an example of the information they require.

6.0 External Verification in Approved Centres

Introduction

- 6.1 The purpose of an External Verification visit is for the RHS external verifier to observe a sample of assessments taking place. As part of this, the external verifier will need to discuss with the internal verifier the policies and procedures the centre has in place to run RHS practical assessments. It is therefore vital that **the practical assessment is internally verified on the day of an external verification visit.**
- 6.2 The external verifier may wish to speak with the teaching staff or person(s) responsible for quality assurance. The external verifier **must** speak with the assessor, internal verifier and a selection of candidates involved in the practical assessment. When speaking with candidates, the centre's staff will be present or will be clearly within visual contact.
- 6.3 The external verifier will complete a Quality and Performance Form to document evidence collected on each external verification visit. This document may include actions and recommendations for the centre to complete. The purpose of the form is to enable the external verifier to make a judgement, based on the evidence collected, on the centres ability to run RHS practical assessments. This is culminated in an overall Quality and Performance Grade 1 to 4 (Q&P Grade). Should a centre be in the process of renewing their approval, external verification activities can continue but Q&P reports will be withheld until the process is completed. This means RHS Qualification will not process any reported results.
- 6.4 The team of RHS external verifiers is led by the senior external verifier to maintain quality standards so that centres, learners and employers are certain that all RHS practical assessments are fair, consistent and meet the requirements of the qualification. The team of RHS external verifiers also provide advice and share best practice and ideas. Our senior external verifier provides leadership, direction and support to the team to enable them to guide centres to deliver RHS practical assessments.
- 6.5 If a centre cancels an external verification visit at late notice then the centre may be charged for all costs incurred.

Rationale for the number of External Verification visits required

- 6.6 The number of assessment activities being observed as part of the RHS External Verification process will vary between centres. This is because different centres will have differing numbers of sites, offer different levels, have different numbers of assessment teams and will have offered levels for differing amounts of time. The number of activities to be observed by the External Verifier will be outlined by RHS Qualifications based on the following:
 - to observe an assessment for each level of qualification offered by a centre.
 - to observe each assessment team in action.
 - to observe each site where assessments are offered.
 - In addition, over time to see assessments from different units from the qualification offered (a balance of skills based tasks and written tasks).

More than one activity may be observed on the same external verification visit. However, there must be sufficient time for the External Verifier to obtain evidence to

fully complete the Quality and Performance Form, and make informed judgements about those assessments and the associated process and procedures that the centre has in place for the different levels.

- 6.7 The number of visits may increase/decrease depending upon:
- The Quality and Performance Grade (Q&P grade) allocated in a previous External Verification visit or year. For example, if a Q&P grade of 2, 3 or 4 has been allocated, the centre will require additional site visits to those planned, to ensure all actions are implemented.
 - If the same assessment team is involved in more than one level, and/or more than one site then the overall number of External Activities observed could be reduced.
 - The period of time a centre has offered a qualification:
 - In the first year that a centre offers a level of qualification, an assessment on two different occasions must be observed. One near the start of the course and a second part way through the course. The second to ensure the centre continues to work within the requirements set for that level, or that any actions stipulated have been implemented.
 - In the second or subsequent year of offering a qualification the centre maybe eligible for office-based External Verification for certain activities. This could be carried out during other site visits.
- 6.8 If a centre is deemed to be a Q&P Grade 2, 3 or 4 on an external verifier visit, it is anticipated that there will be additional site visits to observe certain activities again. This is to ensure that the centre has implemented any action points outlined in the Quality and Performance form. RHS Qualifications may charge the centre for any additional external verification visits or any additional costs incurred.
- 6.9 External Verifiers will initial and date any materials they have sampled on the External Verification visit. They should initial and date the Candidate Assessment Pro-Formas using a different coloured pen to the centre. The initials are for the EV to indicate that they have observed work, this is not an indication that the work has been approved.

The process in the first year of external verification

- 6.10 Once RHS Qualifications has received the centres 'Planned Provision Form' and then uploaded intended registrations to the RHS web portal, an external verifier will be assigned to the centre. The centre will receive confirmation of the name of the external verifier, and the supporting documentation about the external verification visit(s). If the centre does not receive confirmation within two weeks of uploading their intended registrations, they should contact RHS Qualifications directly. Centres will also be provided with a blank copy of the *Quality and Performance Form* which the external verifier completes to document their visit.
- 6.11 Once assigned the external verifier will contact the centre directly to arrange visits for the activities that the EV must observe. EVs will work directly with the centre to make those arrangements to ensure coverage of all the activities required. Once dates have been agreed, the external verifier will confirm the dates in writing. The centre should send the EV a copy of their planned IV activities and confirm to the external verifier the units from which the learning outcomes/assessment criteria are being assessed on the day of their visits. It is also important that the centre informs the person within the centre who is responsible for quality assurance that an external verification visit is taking place.

The Quality and Performance Form

- 6.12 In order to gather evidence for the *Quality and Performance Form*, during each visit the external verifier will be looking at (includes):
- records of assessments
 - centre policies and procedures
 - an assessment taking place, and
 - the centres assessment and internal verification process in operation.

Paragraph 6.14 lists the information that should be made available to the external verifier during the visit – at all approved locations.

Information the approved centre needs to provide to the external verifier

- 6.13 Pre External verification visit:
- Confirm the site/location of where the assessments will take place on the visit.
 - Confirm the units from which the learning outcomes/assessment criteria, that the external verifier will observe on the external verification visit (assessment(s) observed).
 - Confirm the intended length of this course and any other cohorts of candidates (start and end dates of courses).
 - Internal verification tracking sheet outlining planned and completed internal verification activities.
 - Confirm the assessment teams at all sites.
- 6.14 During the external verification visit:
- Documents outlining the experience and qualifications of teaching staff, assessors, and internal verifiers, i.e. CVs.
 - The centre's examinations and practical assessments policy.
 - Records of supporting evidence, and applications for reasonable adjustments (if applicable).
 - Risk management policy and procedures for practical assessments, activities and tasks which must relate to the activities for the qualification.
 - Risk assessment(s) carried out for practical assessments, activities and tasks.
 - Any centre devised assessment task sheets
 - Completed Candidate Assessment Pro-Formas and the Assessment Results Sheet for any previous assessment activities.
 - Records of the internal verification process at the centre (i.e. IV tracking sheets/ communication with the assessor(s)).
- 6.15 Within four days of the external verification visit the external verifier will upload the draft copy of the *Quality and Performance Form* to the RHS web portal. RHS Qualifications will make this visible to the centre and notify them that it is available. The centre will have one week to provide feedback on the content of the form. If the centre does not provide any feedback within this timeframe, unless previously agreed, it will be assumed that the centre has accepted the content of the draft form.
- 6.16 The Q&P grade is worked out based on the number of '**NO**' responses allocated to sections of the form. However, If a '**NO**' box has been ticked and the issue raised alone is judged by the SEV, EV and RHS Qualifications to pose a significant risk to the integrity of the award/qualification, the Q&P grade may be changed to reflect the severity of the issue raised. The consequences of not involving the SEV and RHS Qualifications in devising an action plan would only warrant this intervention. Likewise, if evidence is then provided which lessens the risk, the Q&P grade may also be changed to reflect this.

- 6.17 If the centre agrees with the content of the quality and performance form then no further action is necessary. However, if the centre wishes to suggest amendments or provide further information which was not available on the day of the external verification visit, they may do so. The external verifier, with the guidance of the senior external verifier, will work with the centre to resolve any issues.
- 6.18 The external verifier will return telephone calls/e-mail communications within two working days of receiving them. The final version of the quality and performance form will then be available on the RHS web portal. The senior external verifier has the authority to sign off the final version of the quality and performance form should an issue or issues arise.

If a quality and performance grade of 1 is issued

If a centre is judged by the external verifier and issued with a Q&P grade 1 status (with the senior external verifier's agreement), then no further action by the centre/ external verifier/ senior external verifier or RHS Qualifications is required. If issued on the final external verification activity for that level, following reported results and verification checks, candidates can be issued with notification of results, qualification certificate(s) or unit(s) certificate(s).

If a quality and performance grade of 2 is issued

If issued, the centre with the external verifier **must** produce an action plan.

Within one month of the external verification visit the centre **must** be seen to be addressing any issues (action points) raised. Issues may be resolved through email and dialogue exchanges or by an additional visit from external verifier within one month (any visit here may be at an additional cost to the centre). The centre should secure the help and advice of the external verifier and the senior external verifier to complete any actions for a quality and performance grade 1.

If issued on the final external verification activity for that level all practical assessment results and internal verification records will need to be approved by the external verifier before reported results are processed. Candidates will only be issued with a notification of results, qualification certificate(s) or unit(s) certificate(s), following verification checks if the external verifier can confirm that all action points have been sufficiently met. RHS Qualifications will gain the authorisation of the external verifier before processing the centres reported results.

After a period of time (that is deemed reasonable by the senior external verifier) if the centre has not worked towards implementing the actions or recommendation(s) in the action plan, RHS Qualifications will take any necessary action. RHS Qualifications may charge the centre for any additional costs incurred.

If a quality and performance grade of 3 is issued

If issued, the centre with the external verifier **must** produce an action plan.

Within one month of the first external verification visit the centre **must** be seen to be addressing any issues (action points) raised. There will be an additional visit from external verifier to observe how the action plan is being implemented. A visit by the senior external verifier may also be necessary (any additional visit here will be at an additional cost to the centre). The centre should secure the help and advice of the external verifier and the senior external verifier to complete any actions for a quality and performance grade 1.

If issued on the final external verification activity for that level all practical assessment results and internal verification records will need to be approved by the senior external verifier and the external verifier before reported results are processed. Candidates will only be issued with a notification of results, qualification certificate(s) or unit(s) certificate(s) once verification checks are complete AND the senior external verifier and the external verifier can confirm that all action points have been sufficiently met. RHS Qualifications will gain the authorisation of the senior external verifier and the external verifier before processing the centres results.

After a period of time (that is deemed reasonable by the senior external verifier) if the centre has not met the actions or recommendation(s) in their action plan, RHS Qualifications will take any necessary action. This may require moving candidates to another RHS centre. RHS Qualifications will charge the centre for any additional costs incurred.

If a quality and performance grade of 4 is issued

If issued, the centre, with the senior external verifier and the external verifier, **must** produce an action plan within one month of the external verification visit addressing the issues raised in the quality and performance form. It will be the responsibility of the external verifier and the senior external verifier to advise the centre on how they can reach the quality and performance grade 1. Extensive dialogue to resolve issues must be held between the centre, external verifier and the senior external verifier. There will be a visit from the senior external verifier and the external verifier to observe how the action plan is being implemented. RHS Qualifications will charge the centre for any additional visits that take place by the senior external verifier and the external verifier.

If issued on the final external verification activity for that level all practical assessment results and internal verification records will need to be approved by the senior external verifier before reported results are processed. Candidates will only be issued with a notification of results, qualification certificate(s) or unit(s) certificate(s) once verification checks are complete and the senior external verifier can confirm that all action points have been sufficiently met. RHS Qualifications will gain the authorisation of the senior external verifier before processing the centres results.

After a period of time (that is deemed reasonable by the senior external verifier) if the centre has not met the actions or recommendation(s) in their action plan, RHS Qualifications will take any necessary action. Arrangements will be made to ensure any candidates registered at the centre have the opportunity to complete their award. This may require moving candidates to another RHS approved centre. RHS Qualifications will charge the centre for any additional costs incurred.

The process in the second or subsequent years of external verification (Office-Based)

- 6.19 Centres in their second or subsequent years of offering a level of qualification may be eligible for some activities to be externally verified through a 'paper' based exercise. However, each centre will receive at least one planned external verification visit. This visit will take place early in the course (i.e. near the start of the verification year/ the start of the assessments).
- 6.20 Even if eligible, a centre can opt for an external verifier visit instead of the 'Office Based' external verification activity. A centre is eligible for office based external verification if:

- The centre achieved a grade 1 in all the planned external verification activities of the previous verification year **and** for the first external verification visit of the current verification year.
- The levels of qualifications offered and reviewed by the external verifier at the centre has remained the same from the previous verification year to the current verification year. (No new levels have been introduced by the centre).
- There are no significant changes to the physical resources at the centre from the previous verification year to the current verification year.
- There are no significant changes to the staff resources at the centre from the previous verification year to the current verification year.

6.21 An 'Office-Based Quality and Performance Report' will involve:

- The external verifier requesting the following information:
 - a written update to any recommendations or outstanding action points/ recommendations recorded in previous Quality and Performance Forms.
 - confirmation that the staffing (Teacher/ Assessor/ Internal Verifier) is the same as that documented in the 'Quality and Performance Form' from a previous visit. If any staff changes have taken place a completed CV for any new staff must be sent to the External Verifier.
- The external verifier requesting the following documentation to be uploaded to RHS web portal. These documents can be uploaded under the 'Documents' section. The centre needs to classify the type of document as 'Office-based EV samples' further guidance about uploading documents to the RHS web portal is available from RHS Qualifications:
 - **THREE** candidates' completed Candidate Assessment Pro-Formas – completed so far (hard copies should be scanned and uploaded to the RHS web portal). EV to specify candidate sample.
 - the Assessment Results Sheet for **THREE** units. It is accepted that the units may not be fully completed, but the document must show that a significant number of assessments have taken place. EV to specify candidate sample.
 - a completed risk assessment for a practical horticultural activity which relates to an Assessment Results Sheet being sent.
 - a copy of an internal verification activity which has taken place for the units that the Candidate Assessment Pro-Formas requested relate to. This should be a copy of the Internal Verifiers report on one assessment.
 - a copy of the centre's internal verification tracking sheet.

6.22 The external verifier will then arrange a telephone interview with the centre. The centre will be asked to provide information about how the centre is continuing to run RHS qualifications in practical horticulture. Follow up correspondence may be required.

7.0 Reporting Results

- 7.1 The privacy, and security of personal data is extremely important to us. Personal information centres provide is used for the purposes of furthering our legal obligations as an awarding body of creating qualifications and issuing of certificates. For further information and a detailed explanation, please refer to our Privacy Policy on the RHS website (rhs.org.uk/privacy).
- 7.2 For each cohort, centres report completed results for units or qualifications via the RHS web portal. Please refer to the document 'RHS Approved Centre Guidance – Reporting Results Practical Qualifications' for instructions. Centres report results using the 'Results Submission Form' (Matrix Sheet). Stating a 'Pass', a 'Fail' or leave the cell blank if the learner has 'withdrawn' or may complete the unit at a later date. Centres download the 'Results Submission Form' from the 'EResults Submissions' section of the RHS web portal. After completing the part-populated matrix with results, they submit their results via the 'EResults Submissions' section of the RHS web portal.
- 7.3 Where candidates within the cohort are completing units at a later date to those that have results to report, the centre must defer those candidates for the units they are registered for. For practical qualifications only, as centres timetable the assessments, candidates can be deferred for an unspecified amount of time (just the lifespan of the qualification).
- 7.4 Accompanying results documentation (Assessment Results Sheets and IV tracking sheets) are also submitted via the 'RHS Web Portal'. Please refer to the document 'RHS Approved Centre Guidance – Reporting Results Practical Qualifications' for instructions. Internal verification activities should also be recorded on the Assessment Results Sheet.
- 7.5 Following receipt of the 'Results Submission Form' the 'Assessment Results Sheets', and the 'IV Tracking sheets, centres will be required to dispatch to the allocated external verifier a sample of completed 'Candidates Assessment Pro-formas' (by tracked delivery). Centres will be informed by RHS Qualifications which sample materials to dispatch. Notification of samples will be via email and the RHS web portal. **Sample (Original) Candidate Assessment Pro-Formas MUST be dispatched to the allocated external verifier in a good order.** Centres should keep a copy of any sample candidate work sent. If any documentation that is part of the reporting of results is not in good order this may be returned to the centre and not processed. Centres **must** ensure that their reported results are correct and in good order. This is a formal submission of candidate achievement for a unit(s)/ and or qualification in practical horticulture.
- 7.6 Centres **MUST** complete their **dispatch task** on the RHS web portal.
- 7.7 External verifier checks on sample Candidate Assessment Pro-formas include:
- Ensuring all written assessment tasks for the unit are present and complete
 - Submitted work of the candidate is the work of the candidate
 - Samples have been correctly marked by the centre (i.e. marked by the assessor and where applicable verified by the internal verifier); and,
 - Candidate responses meet the requirements of the assessment criteria for the level.

If any sample materials sent are incomplete, RHS Qualifications may request a larger sample of materials to be dispatched to the allocated external verifier. Other materials which relate to the qualification may also be requested.

7.8 Once a centre has:

- a) Completed all the external verification visits for the level
- b) Reported results by uploading the 'Results Submission Form' to the RHS web portal
- c) Uploaded 'Assessment Results Sheets' to the RHS web portal
- d) Provided RHS Qualifications with a record of IV activities, and
- e) Dispatched the completed sample of candidate work (Candidate Assessment Pro-Formas) to the external verifier.

Once RHS Qualifications has:

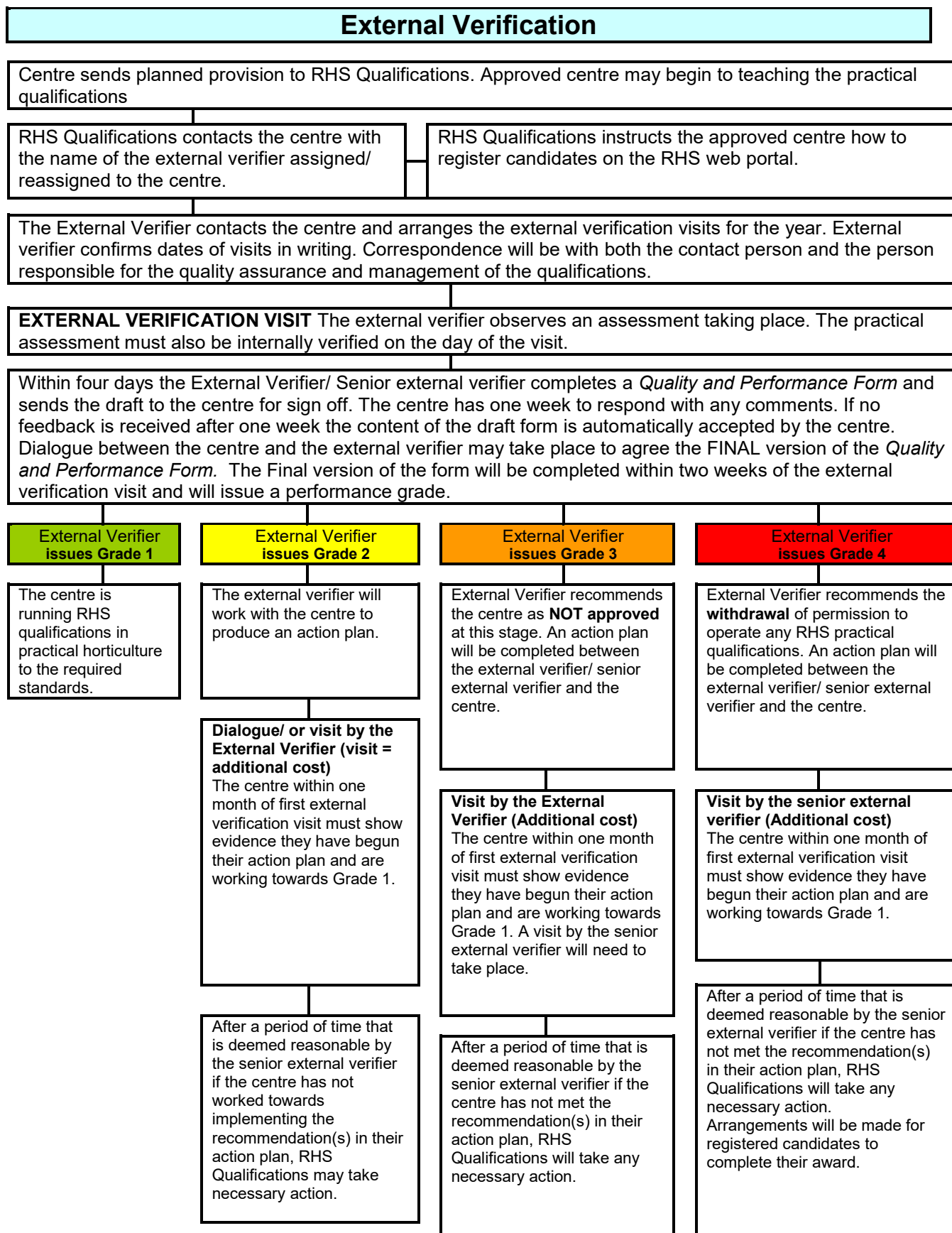
- a) Received reported results and accompanying assessment materials
- b) Received confirmation from the external verifier that samples of candidate work are satisfactory, and
- c) Completed verification checks

The centres will then be issued with a confirmation of their candidate's results. This will be via the RHS webportal. Centres will also need to respond via the RHS Webportal their response. Details will be supplied at the time.

7.9 Where there are centres who have been working with RHS Qualifications for a number of years who have courses starting early in the verification year and finishing early in the next calendar year (i.e. Jan/Feb). RHS may use the previous verification years' last Q&P report towards the two Q&P activities necessary to trigger the processing of results (only if the assessment teams, facilities, standards etc. remain the same as the previous verification year). This is to ensure candidates do not have to wait an unnecessary amount of time for confirmation of results and certificates. However, centres will need at least 1 EV visit and therefore 1 Q&P report within the current verification year.

7.10 Unit and qualification certificates for qualifications in practical horticulture will be sent to the approved centre. Certificates will be issued once all RHS verification processes are complete. Certificates dates are dates when certificates have been awarded.

Appendix 1 – External Verification Process



Appendix 2 – Quality and Performance Grades

| Grade | Status <i>Action to be taken by the RHS Qualifications/ approved centre/ external verifier/ senior external verifier.</i> |
|-------|--|
| 1 | No Action required. The centre is awarded Qualification Approval Status for the RHS qualifications reported on the current <i>Quality and Performance Report Form</i> . If gained after the last external verification activity for the level, RHS Qualifications will process results. |
| 2 | The approved centre with the external verifier/senior external verifier must produce an action plan within one month of the External Verification Visit. Issues may be resolved through email and dialogue exchanges or by a visit from external verifier within one month. The approved centre must provide evidence that they are working towards addressing the requirements of the action plan within a given timescale. If gained after the final external verification activity for the level, RHS Qualifications will only process results once the external verifier has confirmed all action points have been addressed. The centre may be invoiced for any additional visits by the external verifier until a quality and performance grade of 1 has been awarded. |
| 3 | Withdrawal of the RHS Qualification Approval Status for RHS practical qualifications. The approved centre with the external verifier/senior external verifier must produce an action plan within one month of the external verification visit. The external verifier to visit the approved centre no later than one month following the previous external verification visit. The senior external verifier will also visit the approved centre. The approved centre must provide evidence that they are working towards addressing the requirements of the action plan within a given timescale. If gained after the final external verification activity for the level, RHS Qualifications will only process results once the external verifier and senior external verifier has confirmed that all action points have been addressed. The centre will be invoiced for any additional visits by the senior external verifier and/or external verifier until a quality and performance grade of 1 has been awarded. |
| 4 | Total withdrawal of permission to operate any RHS practical qualifications. The approved centre with the external verifier/senior external verifier must produce an action plan within one month of the external verification visit. The senior external verifier to visit the centre within one month of the external verification visit in order to support the centre and candidates. Arrangements may need to be made in order to ensure any candidates registered at this centre have opportunities to complete their award. This may require moving candidates to another RHS approved centre. If gained after the final external verification activity for the level, RHS Qualifications will only process results once the senior external verifier has confirmed all action points have been addressed. The centre will be invoiced for the additional external verification visits until a quality and performance grade of 1 has been awarded. RHS Qualifications will charge the centre for any additional costs incurred. |

RHS Quality and Performance Grades

The issue of the quality and performance grades (1- 4) is dependent on the number of ‘**NO**’ boxes the external verifier marks in the quality and performance form. A ‘**NO**’ box will be marked if it is judged there is a potentially serious situation in the approved centres ability to run/ deliver RHS qualifications in practical horticulture. This means the approved centre will need to work with the external verifier to draw up and implement an action plan before they are able to report candidate results without the approval of the external verifier.

If an external verifier marks an ‘**Evidence of working towards**’ box in the quality and performance form this means that either a recommendation or an action has been made by the external verifier. Any action(s) must be met.

| The number of ‘ NO ’ boxes completed on the quality and performance report form | The quality and performance grade |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| NIL | 1 |
| 1 - 4 | 2 |
| 5 - 6 | 3 |
| 7+ | 4 |

This table provides a guide on the number of ‘**NO**’ boxes marked which equates to the quality and performance grade issued to the approved centre by the external verifier. If a ‘**NO**’ box has been ticked and the issue raised alone is judged by the SEV, EV and RHS Qualifications to pose a significant risk to the integrity of the award/qualification, the Q&P grade may be changed to reflect the severity of the issue raised. The consequences of not involving the SEV and RHS Qualifications in devising an action plan would only warrant this intervention. Likewise, if evidence is then provided which lessens the risk, the Q&P grade may also be changed to reflect this.

The approved centre will have an opportunity to feed back on the draft version of the *Quality and Performance Form*, if they wish, before the quality and performance grade is finalised (See section 6.0 of the ‘Guidance for Centres Offering RHS Qualifications in Practical Horticulture’).

If an approved centre is issued a grade 3 or grade 4 by the external verifier in the *Quality and Performance Form*, this is clearly a potentially serious situation which has implications for the approved centre, candidates and RHS Qualifications. It is very important to note the following points:

- If the external verifier has concerns about an approved centres ability to run/ deliver RHS qualification(s) in practical horticulture, the concerns should be discussed fully with the approved centre representatives during the external verification visit. It is clearly not acceptable for an approved centre to be issued with a grade 3 or 4 without detailed discussion during the external verification visit. The Quality and Performance form should not contain any new information that has not been discussed verbally at the approved centre.
- If an external verifier suspects the approved centre will be issued a grade 3 or 4 they will immediately alert the senior external verifier by telephone.
- The external verifier should have been able to **fully** complete **all** sections of the *Quality and Performance Form* based on the evidence available at the approved centre during the external verification visit, or from information supplied by the approved centre within 5 days of the visit.
- A quality and performance grade of 3 must be approved by the external verifier and the senior external verifier before this grade can be recorded and issued. A quality and performance grade of 4 requires the approval of the external verifier, senior external verifier and RHS Qualifications before this grade can be recorded and issued.

Appendix 3 – Example 1 of a Qualification in Practical Horticulture Internal Verification Tracking Sheet

**RHS Level X Award/Certificate in Practical Horticulture
Internal Verification Tracking Sheet**

Academic Year:
Course:
Level:

Assessor/s:
Internal Verifier/s:
Centre:

| Candidate | RHS Registration Number | Assessor(s) | Unit Number and Details | Unit Number and Details |
|-----------|-------------------------|-------------|---|---|
| | | | Date: | Date: |
| | | | Practical Observation with Unit: | Practical Observation with Unit: |
| | | | Monitoring of RHS Candidate Assessment Pro-Formas for Unit: | Monitoring of RHS Candidate Assessment Pro-Formas for Unit: |

| Candidate | RHS Registration Number | Assessor(s) | Unit Number and Details | Unit Number and Details |
|-----------|-------------------------|-------------|---|---|
| | | | Date: | Date: |
| | | | Practical Observation with Unit: | Practical Observation with Unit: |
| | | | Monitoring of RHS Candidate Assessment Pro-Formas for unit: | Monitoring of RHS Candidate Assessment Pro-Formas for Unit: |

Example 2 of a Qualification in Practical Horticulture Internal Verification Tracking Sheet (using the RHS Level 2 Practical qualification)

The following codes are used:

AO: Assessor task observation.

WO: Written work observation (Candidate Assessment Pro-Formas).

| CANDIDATE ↓ | SOIL TESTING | | SOWING SEEDS AND VEGETATIVE PROPAGATION TECHNIQUES | | PRACTICAL SKILLS IN GROUND PREPARATION FOR SEEDING AND PLANTING | | PRACTICAL SKILLS IN ESTABLISHING SEED AND PLANTS IN SOIL | | CARE AND PRUNING OF PLANTS | | THE IDENTIFICATION UNIT | | OPTION UNIT: | |
|----------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|--|----------------------------|---|----------------------------|--|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| | AO | WO | AO | WO | AO | WO | AO | WO | AO | WO | AO | WO | AO | WO |
| | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: |
| | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: |
| | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: |
| | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: |
| | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: |
| | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: | RECORD DATE OF PLANNED IV: |
| | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: | RECORD DATE OF ACTUAL IV: |

Appendix 4 – Examples of Internal Verification Checklist of Activities

Internal Verification: Observation of a Practical Activity

Date of Assessment:

Internal Verifier:

Venue of Assessment:

Candidates (minimum of 2):

Assessor:

RHS Practical Qualification Level:

Assessment observed:

| Observations | Yes | No | Action to be completed by the Internal Verifier following this observation |
|--|-----|----|--|
| Has Health and Safety of the assessor and candidate been considered? | | | |
| Is the venue suitable for the assessment process? | | | |
| Other facilities (tools, equipment and machinery) are suitable for the assessment process? | | | |
| Did the assessor provide guidance to the candidate about the assessment task? | | | |
| Was the assessor using the correct RHS assessment materials (e.g. 'Candidate Assessment Pro-Formas)? | | | |
| Did the assessor keep at a reasonable distance from the candidate during the assessment? | | | |
| Did the assessor use non-leading questions which were appropriate? It is important to avoid a yes or no response from the candidate. | | | |
| Did the assessor intervene with the assessment if a health and safety issue occurred? | | | |
| Was the assessment completed securely without other candidates observing the process? It is permissible to assess a group of candidates in one operation, but questioning must be on a one-to-one basis. | | | |
| Did the assessor inform the candidate if they had passed the assessment or were referred, subject to verification? And do you agree with the decision? | | | |
| Did the assessor provide feedback and guidance to the candidate on areas of good practice and areas for improvement? | | | |
| Did the assessor complete the RHS assessment paperwork efficiently (e.g. the Assessment Results Sheet' to record the result)? | | | |

Any actions from this form must be fully documented in the RHS course file and to be made available for the RHS External Verifier.

Signatures and Dates:

Assessor:

Internal Verifier:

EV Initials (if sampled):

Assessor Comments:

Internal Verifier Comments:

Example of Internal Verification Checklist of Activities

Internal Verification: Observation of Written Tasks

Date of Assessment:
Internal Verifier:
Venue of Assessment:
Candidates (minimum of 2):

Assessor:
RHS Practical Qualification Level:
Assessment observed:

| Observations | Yes | No | Action to be completed by the Internal Verifier following this observation |
|---|-----|----|--|
| Was the site set up, suitable for written assessments (if assessment was sat at the approved centre)? | | | |
| Did the assessor provide guidance to the candidate about the assessment task? Were they clear about the information to record? | | | |
| Did the assessor use the correct RHS assessment materials ('Candidate Assessment Pro-Formas, 'Front Sheets' where applicable, plus any guidance available)? | | | |
| Was the learner work clearly marked? | | | |
| Did the candidate answer reflect the breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding for the assessment decision made? | | | |
| Was the assessment completed securely without other candidates observing the process (if assessment was sat at the approved centre)? It is permissible to assess a group of candidates in one operation, but questioning must be on a one-to-one basis. | | | |
| Do you agree with the decision? | | | |
| Did the assessor record the result using the Assessment Results Sheet? (Distinguished between date of assessment & date work is marked) | | | |
| Has the internal verification activity been recorded? Is this also on the Assessment Results Sheet? | | | |

Any actions from this form must be fully documented in the RHS course file and to be made available for the RHS External Verifier.

Signatures and Dates:

Assessor:

Internal Verifier:

EV Initials (if sampled):

| |
|---|
| <p>Assessor Comments:</p> <p>Internal Verifier Comments:</p> |
|---|

Appendix 6 – Qualifications from the RHS

Each qualification has a size and a level. The size represents how long it takes the average learner to complete that qualification. The level represents the level of difficulty. There are three sizes of qualification at each level:

- Award
- Certificate
- Diploma

The RHS suite of qualifications is shown in the diagrams below. For more information about these qualifications please refer to the RHS Qualifications qualification specifications. Although there are no formal entry requirements for the following qualifications, centres may specify entry requirements for their courses. It is strongly recommended that students who undertake the Level 3 qualification have obtained the RHS Level 2 Certificate in Practical Horticulture or equivalent before they commence the course.

Figure 1: Level 1 Qualification

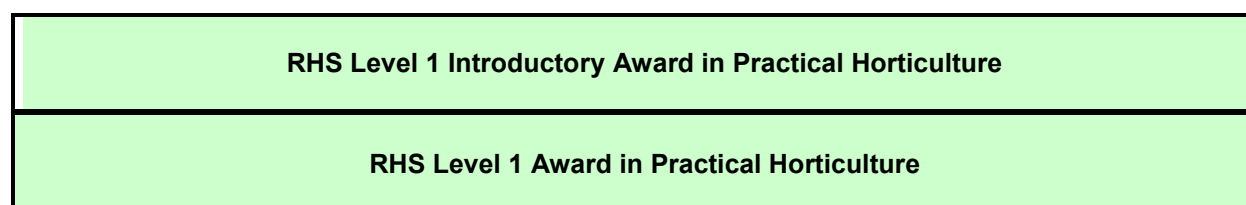
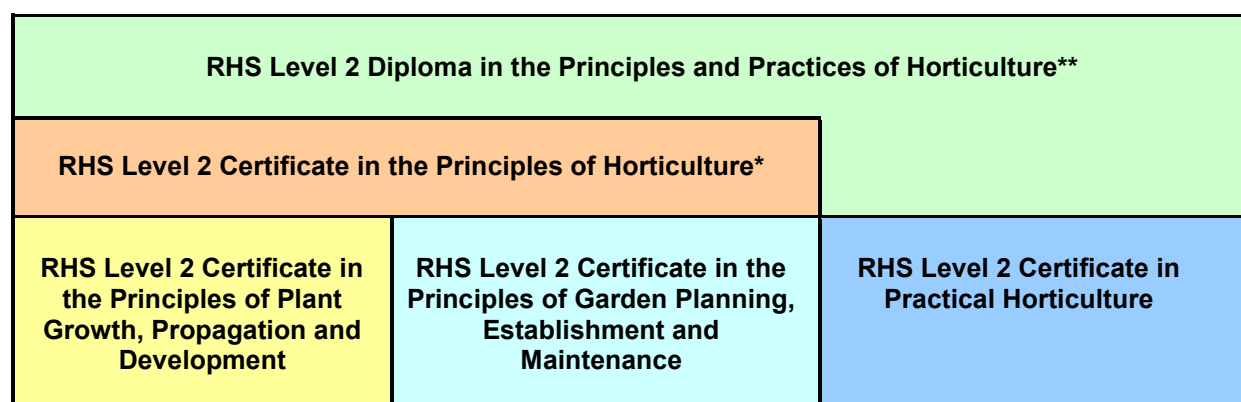


Figure 2: Level 2 Qualifications



* Learners who successfully complete all the necessary units for the RHS Level 2 Certificate in the Principles of Plant Growth, Propagation and Development; and the RHS Level 2 Certificate in the Principles of Garden Planning, Establishment and Maintenance, will have gained all the required units for the RHS Level 2 Certificate in the Principles of Horticulture.

** Learners who successfully complete all the necessary units for the RHS Level 2 Certificate in the Principles of Horticulture; and the RHS Level 2 Certificate in Practical Horticulture, will have gained all the required units for the RHS Level 2 Diploma in the Principles and Practices of Horticulture.

Figure 3: Level 3 Qualifications

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| RHS Level 3 Diploma in the Principles and Practices of Horticulture*** | | |
| RHS Level 3 Certificate in the Principles of Plant Growth, Health and Applied Propagation | RHS Level 3 Certificate in the Principles of Garden Planning, Construction and Planting | RHS Level 3 Certificate in Practical Horticulture |

*** Learners who successfully complete all the necessary units for the RHS Level 3 Certificate in the Principles of Plant Growth, Health and Applied Propagation; RHS Level 3 Certificate in the Principles of Garden Planning, Construction and Planting; and the RHS Level 3 Certificate in Practical Horticulture, will have gained all the required units for the RHS Level 3 Diploma in the Principles and Practices of Horticulture.

The RHS suite of qualifications are classified into theory and practical qualifications. Please see below for the groupings:

RHS Theory Qualifications

- RHS Level 2 Certificate in the Principles of Plant Growth, Propagation and Development.
- RHS Level 2 Certificate in the Principles of Garden Planning, Establishment and Maintenance.
- RHS Level 2 Certificate in the Principles of Horticulture.
- RHS Level 3 Certificate in the Principles of Plant Growth, Health and Applied Propagation.
- RHS Level 3 Certificate in the Principles of Garden Planning, Construction and Planting.

RHS Qualifications in Practical Horticulture

- RHS Level 1 Introductory Award in Practical Horticulture.
- RHS Level 1 Award in Practical Horticulture.
- RHS Level 2 Certificate in Practical Horticulture.
- RHS Level 3 Certificate in Practical Horticulture.

RHS Theory plus Practical Qualifications – *Only available to centres who are approved to offer RHS practical qualifications*

- RHS Level 2 Diploma in the Principles and Practice of Horticulture.
- RHS Level 3 Diploma in the Principles and Practice of Horticulture.