

# Higher Education Vocational Endorsement Guide



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## Introduction

Thank you for your interest in adding vocational units to your higher education degree programme(s) and submitting them to PD:Approval (PDA) for endorsement to give entry to the Sports Therapy Association (STA).

This document sets out the endorsement submission process for Higher Education Institutions (HEI).

The main outcome of HEI endorsement is to enable your undergraduates to gain entry to the STA as a member in the Student Membership category and progress through to the new Graduate Membership category once they have completed their degree. The STA offers undergraduates support all the way, as well as employment opportunities.

HEIs wishing to become endorsed are required to embed the Skills for Health National Occupational Standards (NOS) into their degree programme(s) to ensure that learners have covered all of the STA requirements which underpin the framework of the association's categories.

The vocational assessment must also meet STA requirements and this document will guide you through embedding, applying and assessing.

The ultimate aim is to put employability skills at the heart of your degree programme(s).

Endorsement is available across multiple disciplines e.g. Sports Massage, Sports Therapy, Sports Rehabilitation etc. which might already be covered in your degree programme(s) so it will be more a case of pulling evidence together. PD:Approval has created learning resources at Level 3 which are charged per learner, as well as an assessment pack for a one-off fee.

If you are in the early stages of developing your degree programme then the NOS are a great way to provide the initial structure and guidance. Essentially, the flexibility is there to ensure that you as an HEI can meet not only the requirements for validation but also provide employability opportunities at the start of the degree through to graduation. Endorsement can be achieved by submitting the entire degree programme or particular modules.

This endorsement scheme is comparable to the requirements set out by Awarding Organisations who are governed by Ofqual. Your degree programme will not gain recognition as a Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) qualification and will not be eligible for funding through the Skills Funding Agency (SFA). However it will be a recognised industry award and will grant your students entry to the STA on production of PD:Approval's official certificate of achievement.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us at [sta.endorsement@pdapproval.com](mailto:sta.endorsement@pdapproval.com). We look forward to working with you.

**The Professional Development Team**  
**PD:Approval**

## Section 1: Background Information

### 1.1 Introduction to the Sports Therapy Association and PD:Approval

The **Sports Therapy Association (STA)** has worked passionately to develop a truly independent and ethical association that is committed to raising standards across the industry and progressing opportunities for their valued members.



#### **'Promoting excellence in Sports Therapy'**

The STA is a public association with a system of self-regulation which aims to ensure that all exercise professionals are suitably knowledgeable and industry qualified to safeguard and promote the health of those who use their services.

Employers look for kitemarks of quality and the STA supports all employers looking for guidance when recruiting the right staff who will best fit their organisation.

As practicing Sports Therapists, working in an increasingly challenging political climate, the STA identified the need for a new, dynamic, forward thinking and proactive professional association - a body that could voice the opinions of practitioners and lobby for positive change, crucially without the bias associated with direct links to HEIs and training providers.

The STA is proud of what it represents and continues to work tirelessly on behalf of its members and to fulfil its commitment to promote excellence in the field of Sports Therapy.

**PD:Approval (PDA)** is an independent quality assurance service working with new and established membership organisations in numerous sectors. We have an uncompromising approach to quality and unbiased objective quality checks to ensure that the learner benefits from the best learning experience and can take advantage of employability skills that are also identifiably transferable.

PDA's expertise lies in embedding robust processes and structures to drive up excellence, increasing employability and career advancement for members within the UK and internationally. The approval process is administered by PDA, licensed by the STA.

PD:Approval  
Endorsed

## 1.2 STA registration categories

The table below demonstrates the different levels of membership available to those wishing to join the association.

### Categories of STA registration

	Level 3	Level 4 / HNC	Level 5 / HND	FdSc / BSc Hons / MSc
Student Membership	Affiliate Membership	Full Membership	Full Membership	Graduate Membership
Student	Sports Massage Therapist ( <i>non pathological tissue</i> )	Sports Massage Therapist	Sports Remedial Massage	Sports Therapist
		Sports Therapist	Sports Massage Therapist	Sports Rehabilitator
			Sports Therapist	Sports Physiotherapist
			Sports Rehabilitator	

NB: undergraduates enrolled on any of the training above that is endorsed by PDA through your HE programme are eligible for registration under the Student Membership category. HEIs looking to bulk purchase membership for their students can do so by contacting the STA on 01522 888077 or at [admin@thesta.co.uk](mailto:admin@thesta.co.uk).

## 1.3 Sports Therapy framework

The Sports Therapy Framework has been structured specifically so that it provides a career pathway for students who want to work their way through university. For example, the degree might be Sports Therapy, Sports Science, Sports Rehabilitation etc. However, by embedding Level 3 vocational modules like Level 3 Sports Massage Practitioner in their first year and Sports Remedial Massage in the second year, learners are given a head start and that competitive edge.

## Section 2: Degree+ Endorsement

Endorsement lasts for one year and is for one degree pathway and at least one vocational award.

### 2.1 Additional pathways

HEIs wanting to endorse more than one degree pathway in their initial submission can do so as long as:

- all the degree pathways included in the submission share the same modules mapped to the relevant national occupational standards as specified in the mapping toolkit,
- all the degree pathways use the same approved tutor/assessors, and
- all the degree pathways use the same approved assessments.

Costs apply if adding an additional pathway or discipline post endorsement – see our [price list](#) for more details.

Additional pathways or disciplines submitted outside of the original submission will need to be referred to the PDA team for information on how best to proceed.

Please note that if degree pathways do not share the same units, assessments or tutors/assessors then a full submission will be required for that pathway. If a different department in your HEI wishes to map STA standards to their degree programme and not use your endorsed modules they must make their own full submission.

**All those responsible for the creation as well as the delivery of any training programme submitted for Degree+ endorsement must be suitably qualified and, where the practical element is delivered or assessed by a practising therapist, they must also be a member of a professional membership body ie STA. Authors, tutors, assessors and the internal quality assurers must hold relevant qualifications or acceptable alternatives.**

### 2.2 Using PD:Approval's teaching, learning and assessment resources

You can choose to use PDA's fully mapped L3 and L4 manuals and assessments (fees apply) if you don't already have your own; if using our manual, you will also be provided with a set of Plans of Delivery (PODs) to use.

PDA's manuals are provided via StudyHub, our online learner management system powered by Moodle, which is accessible to registered learners using unique login details.

Learner Assessment Packs for L3 and L4 and password protected Anatomy & Physiology MCQs can also be provided (fees apply).

**Please note:** All PDA learner materials (manuals, learner assessment packs, multiple choice questions (MCQs)) are the intellectual property of PDA and, apart from the PODs and the MCQs, cannot be altered in any way either by editing or manipulation of the pages. Any changes to the PODs or the MCQs must be approved by PDA before they are put in place, or be at risk of sanction.

### 2.3 Certificate of Achievement

All learners undertaking the endorsed vocational award must be registered on the PDA endorsement [website](#) and their status updated when they complete their vocational assessment.

A fee will be charged for registration which includes the cost of the Certificate of Achievement which PDA will issue to all those who successfully pass their assessment. For more information on registration, go to [7.1 Registering your Learners](#).

The certificate is recognised by STA for entry to the register and will contain a QR Code, a unique certificate number, the award they have achieved, your provider name and the date the learner passed their final assessment. Certificates can be verified for authenticity by employers either by scanning the QR Code and clicking on the link, or by visiting our verification website and inputting the Learner Number and Certificate Number on the certificate.

If you provide your own certificate, please be aware that it will not be recognised by STA. Go to [7.2 Certification](#) for more details.

## 2.4 Terminology

It is important that providers understand the terminology used in Degree+ endorsement so that their marketing and social media is correct when describing their endorsed programme or the relationship with the STA. Below is a list of the terms used in Degree+ endorsement.

Term	Explanation
<b>Endorsed/Endorsement</b>	All training that successfully completes the Degree+ submission process is 'endorsed' by PD:Approval and is referred to as an 'endorsement'.
<b>Approved/Approval</b>	Training providers need to gain 'approval' for their submission in order to become endorsed.
<b>Recognised</b>	An endorsed programme is 'recognised' by the STA (not endorsed, approved or accredited).
<b>Awarded</b>	CPD points are 'awarded' to endorsed programmes and successful students can claim them when they join the STA.
<b>Award</b>	Industry Awards are STA recognised but not termed as qualifications and will <b>not</b> appear on the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF). Therefore your endorsed programme should be referred to as an award.
<b>Beware!</b>	Beware of the word 'accredited' – it cannot be used to describe any type of endorsement and is used in the educational world only in the context of qualifications.



## Section 3: The Endorsement Process

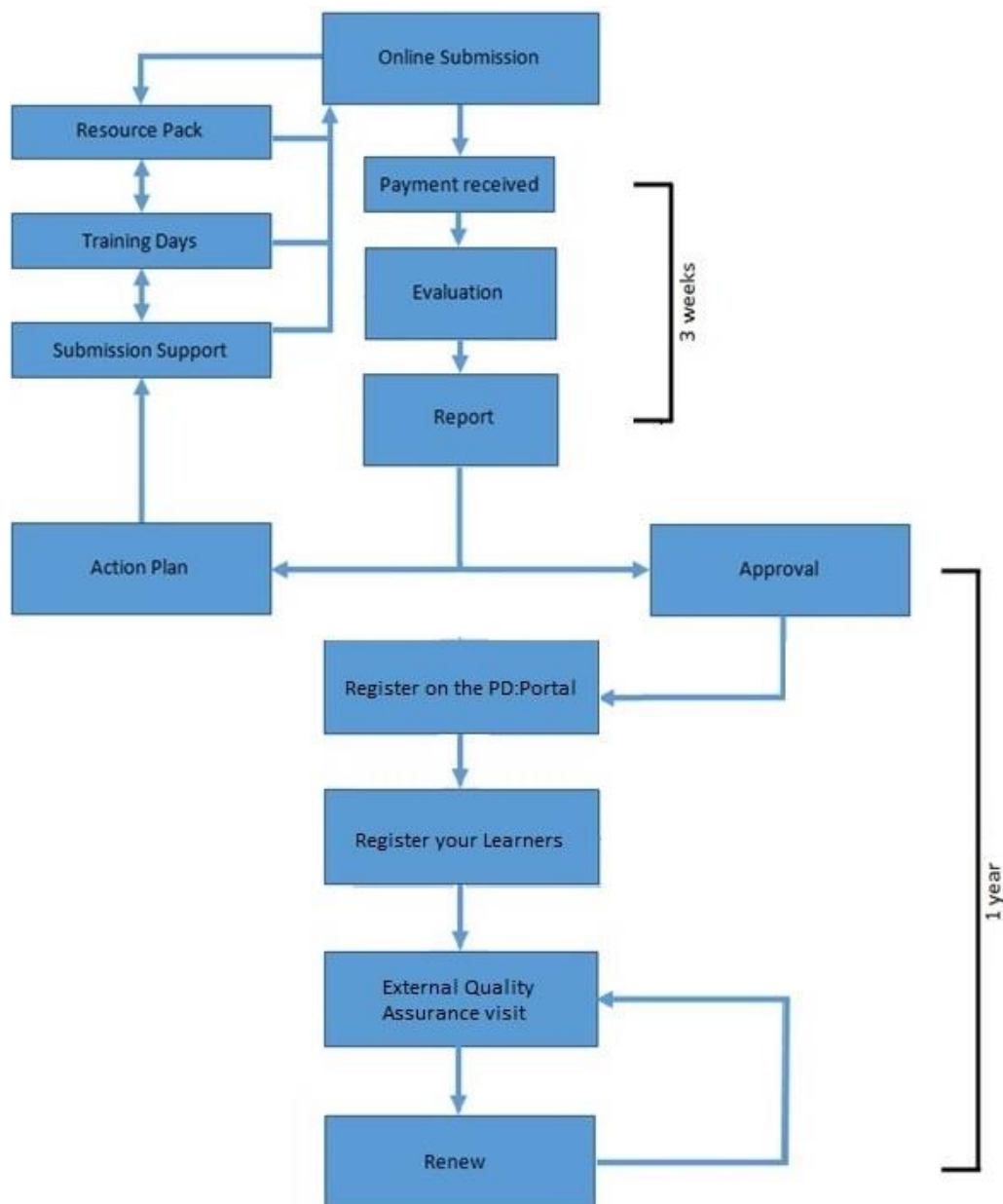
### 3.1 Submission details

The online submission process has been structured to make it as streamlined as possible, and requires you to provide us with a few key pieces of evidence which will be explained in detail later.

Each submission will be evaluated by a PDA appointed Technical Evaluator who will cross reference your evidence against robust criteria. Once complete, they will produce a report and, if required, an action plan which will need to be addressed by the HEI to proceed to approval. The action plan will be detailed and have deadlines attributed to each criterion. Our initial evaluation process will take a maximum of six weeks. On approval you will be formally notified with a letter of endorsement and a certificate of authentication. You will also have access to a portal to advertise your training.

### 3.2 The Degree + endorsement flowchart

This flowchart illustrates the endorsement journey in year 1.



### 3.3 The submission process

The submission process is all online through our website – visit [www.pdapproval.com/sta](http://www.pdapproval.com/sta) and take a moment to read through the features and benefits as this will ensure that you make full use of your endorsement.

When you are ready, go to our [Get Endorsed](#) page and select your Degree +. You will then be taken to a sign-in page. Input your contact details including email address and then press submit to receive access details to your personal application form.

**Handy Hint:** Please be aware that once you have submitted this first part of the application form to receive your access details, you cannot start another application with the same email address until you have submitted the original endorsement application. If this happens, please contact [sta.endorsement@pdapproval.com](mailto:sta.endorsement@pdapproval.com) so we can reset the system.

An automated secure HTML link will be emailed to the email account you specified. This unique link will enable you to return to your form whenever you wish before you submit, and all information you upload will be saved automatically. Click on the link in the email and it will take you through to the submission form builder.

**Handy Hint:** Bookmark the secure link in your browser so that you don't have to keep going back to your email each time.

Continue filling in the relevant boxes and, when you reach the upload area, hover over each criteria to reveal a pop up information box on how best to meet the evidence requirements.

**Handy Hint:** Use our online instant chat which is on every page of the website should you get stuck. If we are offline then we will be notified and one of the team will make it a priority to respond.

### 3.4 Confidentiality

All members of the PDA team have signed a Code of Confidentiality agreement. PDA will endeavour to ensure that there is no conflict of interest between you and any PDA team member working with you. However, if you feel there may be a conflict of interest between yourselves and any member of the PDA team, please inform us immediately.

Read on for a full breakdown of the criteria required for your successful endorsement.

## Section 4: Criteria for Approval

### 4.1 The evidence checklist

The criteria is explained in full on the submission forms in pop-ups, and a summary of each one can be found here:

#### 1. Contact details

This part of the form is mandatory, so that we have full details of the centre contact should we need to call, email or send any correspondence by post regarding endorsement. There are also areas to record invoicing and administrative contacts, which help towards a speedy and efficient approval. Please remember to let us know if these details change once you are endorsed to ensure that you always get the communications we send you.

#### 2. Organisation details

This mandatory information ensures that our records hold the correct information for the location of the endorsed provider. You also have the option to fill in the correct invoicing and administrator contact details if they are different from those of the main contact. Please remember to let us know if these details change once you are endorsed to ensure that you always get the communications we send you.

#### 3. Website address

Please provide the website address where your degree programme is advertised, if available.

#### 4. Where you deliver the degree programme

For our records and data collection purposes we ask you to record the regions in which you deliver your degree programmes as we are aware many HEIs have satellite campuses.

#### 5. Do you own the intellectual property of the programme you are submitting?

If you don't own the intellectual property of the programme you wish to have endorsed, you will need to upload a letter of authority from the person who does, allowing you to deliver or distribute it under your company name.

#### 6. When do you want to deliver this programme?

Let us know when you are hoping to run your endorsed vocational award(s).

#### 7. Title of your training

Ensure the title you enter is exactly the same as it appears on your learning materials as this is how we will record it on our system

#### 8. Target market

Let us know who you are aiming your training at.

#### 9. Description of training

You will be asked to provide a brief overview of your training to include research sources.

#### 10. Degree title

Please provide the exact title of the degree programme, and ensure it is consistent with how it will be displayed throughout your marketing.

#### 11. Tutor:student ratio

Let us know how big a class you intend to teach.

#### 12. Guided Learning Hours (GLH)

Guided Learning Hours (GLH) must be consistent with the requirement of current qualifications underpinned by the National Occupational Standards e.g. Level 2 Fitness Instructor (Gym) 150 hours, Level 3 Personal Trainer, Level 3 Pilates and Yoga equal 240 hours. A practical face to face assessment is required as well as practical face-to-face teaching of 20%. The GLH includes self directed study and directed study and takes into consideration pre-course reading, the assessment and refreshment breaks.

#### 13. Prerequisites

This is where you must stipulate any prior qualification that the learner needs to have in order to undertake your award.

#### 14. Facilities and Equipment

Use the template provided on the form to detail the facilities and equipment required to run the endorsed modules.

#### 15. Biographies and certificates

Use the template provided on the submission form to detail the experience, training and qualifications of everyone involved in your delivery team, including the programme's author if applicable. In order to ensure that the right delivery team is in place - vocational tutor, assessor and internal quality assurer (IQA) - each member of the team needs to be occupationally competent (gained relevant industry qualifications recognised by the STA).

Below is a list of the qualifications acceptable for tutors, assessors and IQAs:

##### **Tutors:**

- Level 3 Award in Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (QCF) (PTTLS)
- Level 3 Award in Education and Training (QCF)
- Level 4 Award in Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (QCF) (PTTLS)
- Level 4 Certificate in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (QCF) (CTTLS)
- Level 4 Certificate in Education and Training
- Level 5 Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (QCF) (DTTLS)
- Level 5 Diploma in Education and Training
- Certificate in Education

##### **Assessors:**

- Level 3 Award in Understanding the Principles and Practices of Assessment (QCF)
- Level 3 Award in Assessing Vocationally Related Achievement (QCF)
- Level 3 Award in Assessing Competence in the Work Environment (QCF)
- Level 3 Certificate in Assessing Vocational Achievement (QCF)
- A1 (previously D32, D33)

##### **IQA:**

- Level 4 Award in Understanding the Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice (QCF)
- Level 4 Award in the Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice (QCF)

- Level 4 Certificate in Leading the Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice (QCF)
- V1 (previously D34)

## 16. Learner Information

This is the pack of information that the learner needs once they sign up to your endorsed programme. Your Learner Pack must include:

- An overview of your organisation, accolades, values and ethos, along with relevant contact details
- A contents page and page numbers
- Relevant company policies ie equal opportunities, complaints, appeals etc
- An overview of the training programme
- The programme timetable
- Pre-course instructions
- Resources the learner needs to bring with them on the training (pens, paper, gym kit etc)
- The main technical element which details the training, with illustrations and clear instructions - ensure that you try to incorporate different learning styles (VAK)
- An overview of the assessment and the criteria (if applicable)
- An appendix for forms, etc

Your learner pack must be grammatically correct with no spelling errors. If applicable, remember to upload anything your learners receive before the course and after they have passed.

**Handy Hint:** PDA has created electronic manuals for L3 and L4 Sports Massage which you can use instead of creating your own (fees apply). The manual cost per learner will be added at registration.

**Please note:** You must use the same resources for the whole of each of your annual endorsement periods, but can switch at renewal as long as you provide us with the new materials to review before renewal takes place.

## 17. Assessment

Formative invigilated assessments are to be seen as a bolt on and separate to the degree(s), not as embedded. This is for the following reasons: it provides optional industry recognition for learners; the degree or foundation degree is already validated and cannot be changed; and the industry STA pass mark is 70%.

If HEI's would like to embed a summative assessment as part of the degree programme, then assessment portfolios for each learner are an option to avoid double assessing. The portfolios can be used as evidence providing all units have been signed off by an approved tutor/assessor.

Students must also undertake a minimum of 36 hours practicum which is recorded in a logbook. An example of how these hours can be broken down:

- 12 hours – Event Work – supervised
- 12 hours – Case Study – academic setting (supervised clinic) – practical assessment
- 12 hours – Community – unsupervised

For further guidance on assessments please see [Appendix 2](#).

**Handy Hint:** PDA has created a LAP and MCQs for L3 and L4 Sports Massage which you can use instead of creating your own, for a one-off fee. If you do want to create your own, our Resource Bundle

includes a range of Assessment templates to save you time. Visit our [Shop](#) for more information on the Bundle and the other resources included.

### 18. Validation Document

All degree programmes will be validated and as such will have programme specifications ready-prepared along with module guides, so in most cases this will be a case of just bringing the information together to upload to the submission form.

We are aware that these documents are for HEI's internal use and have been approved by the validation panel. So, if the degree programme has already been validated then changing it is not permitted. Therefore, if additional modules or guided learning hours are required as a formative measure please amend a copy for PDA's internal use only to highlight the required changes. Please note, PDA sees this as a formative adjustment to the degree programme as part of an industry body's request, outside of the degree itself.

### 19. Quality Assurance

The vocational element of the degree programme must be internally quality assured, and you will be required to provide a quality assurance strategy, systems and procedure as part of your submission for endorsement. If required, PDA provides an internal quality assurance [training day](#) specifically to write a strategy for quality assuring vocational training.

Your quality process will include tutor and assessor standardisation training, programme staff meetings with minutes, learner feedback forms, observations, etc. There are many ways to quality assure but providing that you can evidence how you are internally checking and recording the quality of decision making when assessing and standardising best practice when delivering the endorsed elements then you will meet the criteria.

For additional guidance please see [Section 6](#).

### 20. Programme Snapshot

Please provide teaching materials and delivery resources from one week in the endorsed programme ie lecture notes, handouts, lesson plans.

### 21. Mapping to National Occupational Standards (NOS)

Degree programmes that already cover Sports Therapy, Exercise Rehabilitation etc. will in most cases cover 80% of the information required in the mapping toolkits. Therefore, it might only mean a few small formative adjustments. NOS underpin job roles in the sector related to categories of registration on the STA and ensure that there is a benchmark for individuals and employers to identify a common skills set against a member's registration category. To ensure that all HEIs applying for endorsement meet the STA benchmark related to the category being sought, you must map 100% to the NOS using our mapping toolkits (provided on request).

The mapping toolkits have been created for lecturers to simply identify in a blank column next to each competency which modules throughout the degree programme relate to those outcomes. Please see [Appendix 3](#) for an example of mapping.

**Handy Hint:** When developing a new degree or adjusting it to meet STA requirements, please note that learners must cover all the standards and be assessed before they can gain that category of registration. Therefore in the interest of increasing employability for undergraduates it is preferable

to group the required NOS and assessment together, rather than spreading them throughout the three years of the degree. If you are using PDA's manuals and assessment you won't need to do any mapping.

## 22. Agreements

At the end of the submission you will be asked to confirm your agreement to the following:

- That any venues, facilities and physical resources have met health & safety guidelines and venues are covered by any necessary insurances
- That you have read and understood the requirements of endorsement and agree to pay the non-refundable fee
- That you agree to the [Contract Terms including Endorsement and Code](#)

***You must ensure that you are fully aware of your commitments to the contract terms.***

## Section 5: The Evaluation

Once payment is received for your submission, PDA will appoint an independent technical evaluator to review your evidence. They will review it in line with PDA's endorsement criteria and the standards set by the STA and you will receive their report within 3 weeks.

### 5.1 The evaluation result

The technical evaluator will rate your submission with one of the following:

- **Accept:** this means that your evidence has met all requirements and your training is endorsed – congratulations!
- **Approval Pending:** this means that parts of your submission fall just short of meeting all the requirements and your report contains actions and a deadline for them to be completed by. There is no fee.
- **Further Evidence Required:** this means that parts of your submission has failed to meet the standards by some way, so your report contains actions and a deadline for them to be completed by. In order to proceed with the submission, you will be required to pay an additional fee of £200+VAT to cover the evaluator's time in reviewing the new evidence, should you decide to go ahead. If you haven't already, at this stage you should consider purchasing the [Resource Pack](#) or using our [Technical Support](#) to help you achieve a successful submission. **NB** you may also have a Further Evidence Required status if you fail to adhere to the deadlines on an Approval Pending report.
- **Decline:** this means that unfortunately your submission has failed to reach the standards set by PD:Approval and the STA despite the support of the evaluator, or that you have failed to complete actions set for you in your Additional Evidence Required report or missed the deadline. The submission process for the programme in question will end and you will need to start a new submission if you wish to become endorsed. Your report will guide you on what you must do to improve a future submission.

Once your submission has been approved, PDA will issue you with your endorsement logos and a certificate of authentication for you to display. Additionally, your main contact will be added to our database to receive our regular newsletter. You will also be able to register on the [PD:Portal](#) and can start [registering your students](#).



## Section 6: Quality Assurance

### 6.1 External Quality Assurance (EQA)

Your endorsement will last one year during which you will receive a quality assurance visit from PDA which will focus on the practical skills as well as the formative assessments/assessment portfolio and internal quality assurance. You will be notified of your allocated External Quality Assurer (EQA) upon approval and will receive guidance before their visit. This service is not set up to replicate QAA; your EQA will only be looking at the outcomes that relate the vocational elements of your degree programme. Furthermore, PDA is not linked to a funding council.

Your EQA report will grade you according to PDA's [quality framework](#): Outstanding, Good, Requires improvement, Unsatisfactory. Please note should the HEI not meet the framework standards then a status of Unsatisfactory will be applied. A detailed report will be compiled along with deadlines for receiving evidence. The report will offer structured guidance on how we can help support you in a timely manner to achieve an improved quality status. Please note that if an additional EQA visit is required as part of this process, a fee will be incurred and mandatory training may be required.

### 6.2 Internal Quality Assurance (IQA)

Endorsed providers are required to conduct their own internal quality assurance process to ensure that the standard of training and assessment that learners are receiving is of a consistently high standard. The following are useful strategies to help you internally quality assure vocational training:

1. **Video** - Providing that you have been given permission to film then this can be a great way to reflect on one's own delivery as a tutor or assessor. Additionally, it can be a great training tool to train new assessors or to provide a standardisation task.

**Handy Hint:** Video the practical element, get your assessors to assess it and then come up with their decisions. See how different people assess and then have an open discussion when replaying it back to ensure everyone at the end comes to the same conclusion.

2. **Team Meetings** - Simple yet effective. It is important that all those involved in the programme as well as those who are involved with other degree pathways that share the same modules, come to meet regularly to ensure that any changes, amendments, learner feedback etc are all recorded in official minutes and that there is evidence of actions been completed against timeframes. It is recommended that Team Meetings are held once a month.
3. **Learner Feedback** - This is essential to ensure that you are meeting the needs of your learners. It is important that they understand the importance of vocational training and that industry qualifications will support them in gaining employment when choosing modules that are perhaps optional. All learner feedback must be recorded.

**Handy Hint:** Learner feedback is invaluable especially when incorporated into their tutorial as this is more personal, or done anonymously using for instance Survey Monkey as a tool. Anonymous surveys will sometimes come up with more honest feedback as it removes the fear of possible reprisals for negative feedback. Survey Monkey provides analysis of the results to save time. Plus it's free.

For more information and ideas please attend PDA's Internal Quality Assurance Training Day. Visit our [website](#) for more information and to book.

## Section 7: Now you are approved

Once you have achieved approval, there are some responsibilities you must be aware of, some of which have already been detailed but are listed here as a reminder.

### 7.1 Registering your learners

All students must be registered on the PDA website ([Stage 1: Learner Registration](#)) for Level 3 and for Level 4 using a secure ATP code which will be provided to you on approval, in order to receive an official, secure Certificate of Achievement for each level once they have successfully passed their assessment and their status has been updated ([Stage 2: Learner Status Update](#)). A registration and certification fee of £40+VAT is charged per learner, per qualification.

**Please note:** You must gain permission from your learners upon enrolment to pass their information to us, which will be used solely for the purposes of recording their assessment status and issuing a Certificate of Achievement for those who have passed.

You must allocate a unique learner number to each of your learners when you register them, and we will ask for this number on the registration form.

For each of your learners, you must provide us with the following information via our website by filling in the [Learner Registration](#) form:

- Full name
- Date of birth
- Email address (for access to StudyHub)
- Learner Number (the number you have allocated to the learner and is required for security and identification purposes)
- Date of learner's registration (the date they registered with you on to the qualification)
- The qualification they are undertaking

Once the learners have completed each final assessment, you will need to update us on who has passed, failed, been referred or withdrawn by completing the [Learner Status form](#). We will then start processing the Certificates of Achievement for those who have passed.

Depending on your referral process, you can then update us again with the same online form if they subsequently pass or fail.

### Security

Your learners' details will be kept securely on a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system with a two-step verification process for access, and will not be shared by any third party. Records will continue to be stored until the learner informs us that they wish them to be removed, so that duplicate certificates can be provided on request (a fee of £40+VAT will be incurred for duplicate Certificates of Achievement).

PD:Approval complies with all requirements for General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and is a member of the [Information Commissioner's Office](#) (IOC). All members of PDA have signed a Code of Confidentiality.

### 7.2 Certification

PDA will provide you with an official, secure electronic Certificate of Achievement for each of those learners who have successfully passed their final assessment at L3 and L4. The certificates will contain

a QR Code to protect against copying, and will have a unique certificate number, the qualification they have achieved, your provider name and the date the learner passed their final assessment. If you provide your own certificate, please be aware that it will not be recognised by the STA.

When scanned, the QR Code will show:

- the learner's name
- the qualification they have achieved
- the date achieved
- your university name

Upon receipt of their L3 certificate, learners will be able to register with the STA as an Affiliate Member, and with their L4 certificate will become a Soft Tissue Therapist Level 4 member.

Electronic certificates are processed every week for learners whose status is recorded as 'passed' and payment has been received by 4pm on any Tuesday, and we will send an email to the Main Contact by the end of the same week to inform them that copies of the certificates have been uploaded to their Dropbox. Please check the certificates and inform us of any errors within 24 hours of receipt – this does not include change of name that should be notified to us before the certificate is issued. After the 24 hour period any changes to the certificate will be charged at £40+VAT.

### 7.3 Replacement certificates

Replacement certificates will be charged at £40+VAT each unless due to an error by PD:Approval or typing errors reported within 24 hours of receipt.

### 7.4 Assessments

You must regularly review the MCQs used in your summative assessment to ensure they can't be anticipated by the students. Any new MCQs must be approved by PDA before they are used as part of your endorsed industry award.

### 7.5 Making amendments

If you plan to make any major changes to your award/s during the endorsement period, you must make these known to PDA before they take effect. This could include for instance new delivery team members, or changes to policies and procedures, or to the content. Evidence must be uploaded to the Amendments folder in your Endorsement Dropbox for evaluation to ensure that it meets our criteria and doesn't affect your current endorsement.

Continuing to deliver endorsed awards when changes have occurred without informing us or gaining approval could result in a sanction or termination of your endorsement.

### 7.6 Dropbox

Upon approval you will receive access to your own Endorsement Dropbox, which will be shared with the Main Contact you specify, the PDA Team, and the EQA we appoint to you. The Dropbox will be used to store all documentation and records relating to your endorsement.

#### **Creating your Dropbox:**

You will need a Dropbox account opened with the email address of the Main Contact in order to access it. Your Dropbox will *only* be shared with the Main Contact you have specified, at their email address. If the Main Contact wishes anyone else to have access to the PDA Endorsement Dropbox, they must email [sta.endorsement@pdapproval.com](mailto:sta.endorsement@pdapproval.com) with authorisation.

To create your own Dropbox, the Main Contact must visit the Dropbox website [here](#), complete the First Name, Last Name and email boxes (with the Main Contact's email address), then create a

password. Once you have gained Full Approval, we will 'share' your PDA Endorsement Dropbox with the Main Contact, who will receive an email with a link which will provide them with full access.

**Your Endorsement Dropbox is the property of PDA. Please note that whilst you may add any information you feel is relevant to your Dropbox, nothing can be deleted without the prior consent of PDA.**

Your Endorsement Dropbox will contain the following folders for each of the awards we endorse:

1. Approved Submission: the approved submission materials
2. Evaluation: your evaluation report/s
3. Approval: PDA's confirmation email and Certificate of Authentication; your ATP code password document will also be saved here.
4. Logos: STA and PD:Approval endorsed logos, and guidelines for their use
5. Quality Assurance: the reports provided by your EQA
6. Renewal: records of your renewal applications and confirmation emails; updated Certificates of Authentication will be kept here
7. Additional Degree or Discipline: evidence for additional endorsements
8. Amendments: where you record the evidence for any changes you make to your endorsement (see [8.4 Amendments](#))
9. Delivery Team: evidence for new members of your team
10. Certificates: PDA certificates for your passed learners
11. Other Info: for relevant information that doesn't fit in any of the other folders

The Dropbox will also contain a pdf document explaining how to use your Endorsement Dropbox

### 7.7 PD:Portal

Once you have Full Approval, you can register for an account on the [PD:Portal](#), which is available for anyone to find quality assured training internationally. The portal provides you with an opportunity to market your award to anyone looking for quality assured training in the sector. Please download our [step-by-step guide](#) to help you navigate the system. Look out for some great features:

- Direct referral form
- Learner review area
- Learner grading
- Gallery for images of your training and facilities
- GPS navigation

### 7.8 Renewal

Endorsement is renewable annually at the cost of £600+VAT; additional costs may be added depending on the number of awards that have been endorsed, and the number of degrees they are embedded in. Your renewal fee provides a new period of approval and continuing support from your EQA. It also provides you with continuing exposure via the PD:Portal. Please make a note of your renewal date, which will be communicated to you in your confirmation email. PDA will provide timely renewal reminders to the Main Contact specified in the submission form, so if this changes please ensure you let us know immediately.

As long as payment for your renewal is received before the endorsement expiry date your new period of approval will continue without interruption.

### 7.9 Complaints and Appeals

In the event of a complaint or appeal against PDA or against one of our endorsed training providers, we will do all we can to reach an amicable resolution. Any upheld complaints or appeals will be sent to our licensing body as part of our annual independent assessment. An upheld complaint against an endorsed provider may result in a [Sanction](#).

To make an appeal against a decision by PDA or to complain about either PDA or another endorsed provider, please follow our [Complaints and Appeals](#) process.

## Section 8: Appendices

### Appendix 1 - Price list

Product	Price	Price + VAT	Details
<b>Degree+</b> with one award category	£600	£720	Per annum
<b>Additional category at submission</b>	£150	£180	Per annum
<b>Additional Pathway</b> with same assessment, tutors and assessors, module and mapping to the NOS	£400	£480	Per annum
<b>Additional Pathway</b> with different non shared assessment and delivery team	£500	£600	Per annum
<b>L3/L4 Technical Manuals and A&amp;P Manual</b>	£70	£84	Per learner
<b>L3 Learner Assessment Packs and MCQs</b>	£5	£6	Per learner
<b>L4 Learner Assessment Pack</b>	£5	£6	Per learner
<b>Certificate of Achievement</b>	£40	£48	Per qualification
<b>1-2-1 Technical Support</b>	£40	£48	Per hour
<b>Resource Pack</b>	£200	£240	-
<b>External Quality Assurance support visit</b> Additional visit if rated as Unsatisfactory after approval	£380	£456	Per day

Endorsement renewal prices are the same as above.

## Appendix 2 - Guidance on assessment

### Practical Assessment

**Formative Practical Assessing** needs to be robust enough to ensure that the learners are competent and have the necessary practical skills and/or experience, either in terms of a log book to demonstrate competence or an observation checklist. In most cases an observation checklist will be created that covers the practical learning outcomes in the NOS e.g. “demonstrate and explain”. The qualified assessor will have the discretion to mark the learner as either a pass or fail against the criteria on the checklist. With all assessments including practical there needs to be a marking criteria to ensure that the assessor can arrive at a decision to pass or fail the learner. The STA has a 70% pass rate, which is 5% above industry standard.

All practical observations should cater for the ability to ‘viva question’ the learner if there is some doubt on their competence in the criteria. However, it is essential the assessor writes the question in the comments box as well as the learner’s answer, and the learner must also sign after receiving feedback to ensure that this is a true reflection of their answer.

All assessment paperwork produced for the learner must have marking criteria so that both the learner and assessor(s) are aware of what competences they have to meet.

It is also essential that the learner receives feedback on an assessment action plan which can be linked to the observation checklist. Both the assessor and learner must sign to say that they agree with the decision.

**Handy Hint:** Place details of the appeal policy on the reverse of the assessment sheet so that the learner is aware of the process.

**Practical Portfolio assessment** - each degree programme will be required to ensure that the learner has achieved 36 hours of practical case study before they can be signed off as competent. For each level 3, 4 and 5 massage 36 hours is a minimum. Please note that these hours can count towards the practical assessment providing that this is evidence in the portfolio and signed off by an assessor. An example of these hours can be broken into three main areas:

- 12 hours – Event work – supervised
- 12 hours – Case Study – academic setting (supervised clinic) –practical assessment
- 12 hours – Community – unsupervised

### Guidance on Re-sits

When a learner has not met the required standard of 70%, the feedback action plan must clearly and positively/constructively help the learner understand what criteria they did not meet and areas within the module that they should focus more on. Information on next steps i.e. re-sits will also appear here. List the process and the next assessment dates, if available. If no dates are available then we would suggest that you provide contact details of how to book in for another. In most cases the learner will be allowed to re-sit one assessment, however if there is a second then a fee may be charged. It is important that before learners undertake the assessment that they are made aware of this.

If the learner has failed the assessment it might also be a good opportunity to introduce a few tutorials before they take the re-sit to ensure the best chance of success. It is also a good way to ensure that the learner is on track with revision, or can ask any outstanding questions that they are not clear on.

### Guidance for writing Multiple Choice Questions

The following tips have been adapted from [The E-learning Coach](#).

#### 1. Test comprehension and critical thinking, not just recall

Multiple choice questions (MCQ) are criticised for testing the superficial recall of knowledge. You can go beyond this by asking learners to interpret facts, evaluate situations, explain cause and effect, make inferences, and predict results.

#### 2. Use simple sentence structure and precise wording

Write test questions in a simple structure that is easy to understand, and try to be as accurate as possible in your word choices. Words can have many meanings depending on colloquial usage and context.

#### 3. Place most of the words in the question stem

If you're using a question stem, rather than an entire question, ensure that most of the words are in the stem. This way, the answer options can be short, making them less confusing and more legible.

#### 4. Make all distracters plausible

All of the wrong answer choices should be completely reasonable. This can be very hard to accomplish, but avoid throwing in those give-away distracters as it detracts from the test's validity. If you're really stuck, get help from your friendly SME.

#### 5. Keep all answer choices the same length

This can be difficult to achieve, but expert test-takers can use answer length as a hint to the correct answer. Often the longest answer is the correct one. If you can't get all four answers to the same length, use two short and two long.

#### 6. Avoid double negatives

Don't use combinations of these words in the same question: not, no, nor, the -un prefix, etc. For example, this type of question could confuse test-takers: 'Which of the following comments would NOT be unwelcome in a work situation?' Flip it around and write it in the positive form: 'Which of the following comments are acceptable in a work situation?'

#### 7. Mix up the order of the correct answers

Make sure that most of your correct answers aren't in the "b" and "c" positions, which can often happen. Keep correct answers in random positions and don't let them fall into a pattern that can be detected. When your test is written, go through and reorder where the correct answers are placed, if necessary.

#### 8. Keep the number of options consistent

Did you ever have to convince a SME that he or she can't have answer choices that go to 'h' in one question and 'c' in the next? It's something of a user interface issue. Making the number of options consistent from question to question helps learners know what to expect. Research doesn't seem to agree on whether 3 or 4 or 5 options is best. We recommend 4 options as a fair choice.

#### 9. Avoid tricking test-takers

As faulty as they are, tests exist to measure knowledge. Never use questions or answer options that could trick a learner. If a question or its options can be interpreted in two ways or if the difference between options is too subtle, then find a way to rewrite it.



**10. Use 'All of the Above' and 'None of the Above' with caution**

When you run out of distracters, *All of the Above* and *None of the Above* can come in handy. But they may not promote good instruction. Here's why. *All of the Above* can be an obvious give-away answer when it's not used consistently. Also, the *All of the Above* option can encourage guessing if the learner thinks one or two answers are correct. In addition, the downside to *None of the Above* is that you can't tell if the learner really knew the correct answer.

## Appendix 3 - Example of mapping to National Occupational Standards

The example below gives an indication of how to map to the NOS.

### Level 3 Sports Massage Mapping Toolkit

#### CNH20

#### Plan, apply and evaluate massage methods

This standard is about preparing for and applying the following massage methods to non-pathological tissue:

- effleurage
- petrissage
- tapement
- vibration

Massage applies to all relevant areas of the body.

Users of this standard will need to ensure that practice reflects up to date information and policies.

#### How to use this Mapping Toolkit

Using the righthand column, indicate where in your training materials the evaluator can see the relevant criteria evidenced.



Performance Criteria	Mapping
<b>You must be able to:</b>	
1. ensure there is adequate public liability and professional indemnity insurance	Module 106 Year 1
2. apply agreed standards of personal hygiene, dress and appearance	Module 222 Year 1
3. make sure equipment meets current health and safety requirement	Module 365 Year 1
4. make sure equipment and area provide for the comfort and dignity of the client	Module 106 Year 1
5. make sure equipment and area are clean and hygienic	Module 450 Year 1
6. select materials that are appropriate for the planned massage method	Module 323 Year 1
7. where necessary, follow approved guidelines for the presence of a chaperon	Module 129 Year 1
8. prepare and store records according to legal requirements	Module 98 Year 1
9. obtain information relevant to the cautions and contraindications to massage and respond appropriately	Module 99 Year 1
10. observe, palpate, assess and move the area in a way that is appropriate to the client and their needs	Module 27 Year 1
11. refer when necessary to a relevant professional	Module 28 Year 1
12. devise a massage strategy appropriate to the client, their needs and your scope of practice	Module 223 Year 1
13. make sure the client understands the nature and purpose of the massage method and the equipment to be use	Module 421 Year 1
14. follow the correct procedures to obtain informed consent	Module 422 Year 1
15. where necessary, follow approved guidelines for the presence of a chaperone	Module 433 Year 1
16. prepare the relevant body area with due respect to the client's dignity and	Module 80 Year 1

## Appendix 4 - Contact us

For support with anything to do with your endorsement, please contact PD:Approval at

- [sta.endorsement@pdapproval.com](mailto:sta.endorsement@pdapproval.com)
- 0333 577 0908
- Instant Chat: Tawk To (accessible on every page of the [website](#))