Laser Learning Awards

QUALIFICATION SPECIFICATION

Research Skills for Academic Study



Laser Learning Awards

LASER supports its approved centres to develop flexible and responsive credit based courses. This includes those that widen access to lifelong learning, and address exclusion and participation. The structure of our qualifications enables learners to be recognised for their achievement, to accumulate credit, and use this to access further qualifications and learning over time.

LASER makes sure:

- quality assurance underpins all provision.
- only centres that meet national standards are approved (for course and qualification delivery and quality assurance).

LASER staff:

- have a wide experience of centre, course and qualification approval.
- support centres to make sure awards are valid and valued.

Contact us

www.laser-awards.org.uk

enquiries@laser-awards.org.uk

01932 569894

Copyright © Laser Learning Awards

Contents

Summary of Changes 4

Qualification Overview 5

1. About the Qualification 6

2. Offering the Qualification 6

2.1 Aims and Objectives 6

2.2 Entry Requirements 6

2.3 Target Group and Restrictions on Learner Entry 6

2.4 Achieving the Qualification 7

2.5 Total Qualification Time and Guided Learning Hours 7

2.6 Language Requirements 8

2.7 Progression Opportunities 8

2.8 Recommended Prior Learning 8

3. How the Qualification will be Assessed 8

3.1 Overview of the Assessments 8

3.2 Assessment Design 8

4. Special Arrangements for Learners with Particular Requirements 10

5. Approval to Offer the Qualification 10

6. Quality Assurance of the Qualification 11

6.1 Direct Claims Status (DCS) 11

6.2 Standardisation 12

6.3 Retaining Evidence 12

Appendix 1: Ofqual Level Descriptors – Level 3 13

Appendix 2: Unit List 14

Summary of Changes

Version	Publication Date	Summary of Changes
V1.2	November 2025	Review date updated to 31st May 2031.
V1.1	July 2024	Document and file links updated throughout to accommodate new LASER website. General grammar, formatting and spelling updates.

Qualification Overview

OFQUAL QUALIFICATION NUMBERS	
600/2786/1	LASER Level 3 Award in Research Skills for Academic Study

Laser Learning Awards is an awarding organisation regulated by Ofqual, the regulator of qualifications, examinations and assessments in England.

PURPOSE AND AIM OF QUALIFICATIONS	The qualification addresses the needs of students embarking on Level 3 qualifications, and who need to learn the skills of research for academic study.
WHO IS IT FOR?	The qualification is intended for students in all areas of the curriculum and can be contextualised.
ENTRY REQUIREMENTS	There is no minimum entry requirement although learners will benefit most if they are studying mainly at Level 3.
RULES OF COMBINATION	Learners must achieve the mandatory 2 credit unit.
UNITS	To see the unit content click **here**.
ASSESSMENT	The unit is achieved by evidence that the learner has met the assessment criteria. Details of assessment methods are contained within the information in each unit. There is no external assessment: evidence is assessed and internally verified by the provider, and verified externally by LASER.
PRICE	For LASER's price list, please click **here**.
DATES	Operational Start Date: 1 September 2011 Qualifications Review Date: 31 May 2031.
TO DELIVER	Centres must meet LASER's requirements for centre recognition and qualification approval. **Click here** for details of how to become an Approved Centre. Requirements include those around teaching and learning resources, staffing, course and venues, record keeping, delivery, assessment, and quality assurance. Once approved, centres can download necessary forms from the **Quartz Web Portal.** This resource includes a range of information and guidance as well as providing access to secure web-based functions, designed to make the administration and assessment of qualifications simple and efficient.

1. About the Qualification

LASER 'Research Skills for Academic Study' is a small, Level 3 qualification. It is designed to develop the research skills needed for academic study at Level 3 and Level 4, such as planning one's research, assessing the reliability of one's sources and using one's research to inform one's writing.

To offer these qualifications, a centre must be approved by LASER. For further information about becoming an Approved Centre or working in partnership with an Approved Centre please visit **our website**.

Existing approved centres must be approved to deliver this qualification. Please contact quality@laser-awards.org.uk for further information. Full details of all LASER requirements are provided in the LASER centre handbook which is also available via our **Quartz Web Portal**.

Back to contents

2. Offering the Qualification

2.1 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The Level 3 Award in Research Skills is intended for students engaged or about to engage with Level 3 programmes of study, who need knowledge and understanding of how to undertake research, regardless of the subject area. The Award will enhance students' Level 3 studies in mainstream subjects and prepare them for future Level 4 work.

This Award will help students to:

- define the range and methods they need
- assess the reliability of their sources
- understand how to use researched material safely and effectively
- understand referencing

2.2 ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

There are no formal entry requirements, but students should usually have achieved Level 2 in previous studies or have comparable experience, in order to benefit from the Award.

2.3 TARGET GROUP AND RESTRICTIONS ON LEARNER ENTRY

There are no restrictions on learner entry.

2.4 ACHIEVING THE QUALIFICATION

To gain the qualification, students must achieve the 2 credit mandatory unit, Research Skills for Academic Study.

2.5 TOTAL QUALIFICATION TIME AND GUIDED LEARNING HOURS

QUALIFICATION TITLE	CREDIT VALUE	GUIDED LEARNING HOURS (GLH)	TOTAL QUALIFICATION TIME* (TQT)
Level 3 Award in Research Skills for Academic Study	2	14	17

* Total Qualification Time represents an estimate of the total amount of time that a learner could reasonably expect to devote to successfully achieving the qualification. Total Qualification Time (TQT) is made up of Guided Learning hours (GLH) and Additional Hours (AH).

Values for Total Qualification Time, including Guided Learning, are calculated by considering the different activities that Learners would typically complete to achieve and demonstrate the learning outcomes of a qualification. They do not include activities which are required by a Learner's Teacher based on the requirements of an individual Learner and/or cohort. Individual Learners' requirements and individual teaching styles mean there will be variation in the actual time taken to complete a qualification. Values for Total Qualification Time, including Guided Learning, are estimates.

Some examples of activities which can contribute to Total Qualification Time include

- Independent and unsupervised research/learning
- Unsupervised compilation of a portfolio of work experience
- Unsupervised e-learning
- Unsupervised e-assessment
- Unsupervised coursework
- Watching a pre-recorded podcast or webinar
- Unsupervised work-based learning
- All Guided Learning

Some examples of activities which can contribute to Guided Learning include:

- Classroom-based learning supervised by a Teacher
- Work-based learning supervised by a Teacher
- Live webinar or telephone tutorial with a Teacher in real time
- E-learning supervised by a Teacher in real time
- All forms of assessment which take place under the Immediate Guidance or Supervision of a lecturer, supervisor, tutor or other appropriate provider of education or training, including where the assessment is competence-based and may be turned into a learning opportunity.

2.6 LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS

The qualification is only available in English.

2.7 PROGRESSION OPPORTUNITIES

The Award will support learners in preparing to continue their studies at Level 4. It is also especially useful for those going on to study vocational subjects.

2.8 RECOMMENDED PRIOR LEARNING

There is no recommended prior knowledge, attainment or experience needed by learners wishing to enrol on these qualifications.

Back to contents

3. How the Qualification will be Assessed

3.1 OVERVIEW OF THE ASSESSMENTS

This qualification is assessed by the centre and are subject to LASER's requirements for quality assurance. Once approved as a Laser Centre simply log on to the **Quartz Web Portal**[1] where you'll find a full resource bank of quality information, including the latest LASER Assessment Guidance.

The qualification consists of one unit with 3 learning outcomes. **See Appendix 1**. The second page of the unit contains details of prescribed assessment methods that must be applied to the unit at some point in the assessment.

LASER Level 3 Award in Research Skills for Academic Study			OFQUAL CODE: 600/2786/1	
LASER UNIT CODE	**UNIT TITLE**	**MANDATORY/ OPTIONAL UNIT**	**CREDIT VALUE**	**LEVEL**
WIY871	**Research Skills for Academic Study***	Mandatory	2	3

* Note that in Assessment Criteria 2.1 and 3.4, the term 'range' requires the use of at least three sources for each criterion, although the same sources may be used in 2.1 and 3.4 if appropriate.

3.2 ASSESSMENT DESIGN

One assessment method is prescribed for this unit, and other, relevant methods may be used at the discretion of the assessor. The prescribed assessment method is 'written description'. This means that students must include a written description at some point in the unit, but not that this method must be used

[1] All Approved Centres have access to the **Quartz Web Portal**.

to evidence all criteria.

LASER's Assessment Definitions for 'Written description 'at Level 3 give the following guidelines – note that there is considerable flexibility:

Consideration of a particular subject, situation or example selected by the tutor or by learners, which enables learners to apply knowledge to specific situations and to present them in written format.

The learning may be assessed by:

- Tutor
- One to one tutorial
- Discussion

Evidence could include:

- Tutor record of observation
- Learner notes
- Tutorial notes
- Completed report
- Charts
- Plans

LEVEL	ACTIVITY	ASSESSMENT	EVIDENCE
Level 3	Subjects should allow the application of knowledge in a range of complex areas, in a variety of familiar and unfamiliar context. GL = 1000 words.	Assessment through self-assessment and tutor assessment.	Evidence could be: tutor record, learner record, summary of feedback or completed work.

Other assessment methods as listed under the Assessment Information within the unit may be used as appropriate. These assessment methods are considered to be particularly appropriate:

- Oral Question and Answer
- Written Question and Answer
- Essay
- Report
- Project
- Group Discussion

LASER's Assessment Definitions for these methods must be referred to if assessors choose to use them. LASER's Assessment Definitions are available to approved centres on the Quartz Web Portal.

Assessors must ensure that all assessment criteria are evidenced, although more than one criterion may be evidenced within a specific task.

LASER recommends using a Tutor Assessment Planning Sheet as this helps to set out the various tasks, their assessment methods and the evidence needed to be produced, in a simple plan that can be shown to the internal quality assurer and LASER Quality and Curriculum Reviewer. It also allows the assessor to set out the options where more than one assessment method could be used for any one task: this information can then be transferred as required to the Individual Learner Record for each student, allowing for some different methods to be used for individual students, if individualised learning is appropriate. These planning sheets can be customised as Centres prefer, as long as all essential information is included.

Also available is a specially created 'Research Skills for Academic Study' Evidence Log for centres to record how and when each learner has achieved each unit assessment criteria. This has been pre-populated with unit information for ease of use by the centre. It includes room for tutor feedback and learner comments, making it ideal for inclusion in learner portfolios.

All assessment methods must be suitably evidenced, and templates for assessors' use are all available in the Document section of the **Quartz Web Portal**. Note particularly the use of a group witness or individual witness statement, to be used in conjunction with a list of questions or discussion prompts, or sample recordings, when the methods 'group discussion' or 'oral question and answer' are used.

It is acceptable for the evidence to be held in a mixture of places, for example in a student file and/or tutor file and on an intranet using a specific student programme. If this is the case, it must be clear for each student precisely where the information is held, (by using one record sheet such as the Individual Learner Record), and that the evidence is complete. Electronic evidence must be available to LASER Quality and Curriculum Reviewers when required.

Back to contents

4. Special Arrangements for Learners with Particular Requirements

For information on special arrangements please refer to the LASER policy document "**Access to Fair Assessment**". This gives clear guidance on the reasonable adjustments and arrangements that can be made to take account of disability or learning difficulty without compromising the achievement of the assessment criteria.

Back to contents

5. Approval to Offer the Qualification

To offer these qualifications, a centre must be approved by LASER. For further information about becoming an Approved Centre or working in partnership with an Approved Centre please visit **our website.**

Existing approved centres must be approved to deliver this qualification. Please contact quality@laser-awards.org.uk for further information. Full details of all LASER requirements are provided in the LASER centre handbook which is also available via our **Quartz Web Portal**.

Tutor Qualifications

LASER recommends that tutors, assessors, internal verifiers and Quality and Curriculum Reviewers should be experienced, have a clear understanding of the subject matter and should have or be working towards a relevant teaching/assessing (as appropriate) qualification.

Back to contents

6. Quality Assurance of the Qualification

Approved centres must implement the internal quality assurance arrangements detailed in the **LASER Centre Handbook**. To access this simply logon to the **Quartz Web Portal** and viist the Documents section. The LASER Quality and Curriculum Reviewer will regularly monitor compliance with these requirements. The Quality and Curriculum Reviewer will report on the progress of any agreed actions for quality improvement.

In brief, centres delivering LASER qualifications must have internal verification systems in place to underpin the delivery of the qualification. Internal Verification is a process by which the centre regularly samples and evaluates its assessment practices and decisions and acts on the findings, to ensure consistency and fairness. It involves two key processes – verification and standardisation – and is carried out by one or more internal verifiers. Systems will vary between centres according to their particular situation for example; practices that work in a large centre will not necessarily be effective in a smaller one. There are, however, two key points:

- there must be an appropriate system in place and
- there must be evidence that it is implemented effectively.

The outcome of the internal verification process is the recommendation of award of credit to learners. LASER supports two ways in which credit can be awarded to learners; through appointment of a LASER Quality and Curriculum Reviewer, or through Direct Claims Status.

6.1 DIRECT CLAIMS STATUS (DCS)

Direct Claims Status (DCS) can be awarded when a centre has one or more Approved Internal Quality Assurers (AIQA/s) for the appropriate sector or course(s). These centres can claim the award of credit directly from LASER. An application for Direct Claims Status must be made by the individual holding AIQA status and must show evidence of good internal quality assurance practice at the centre for which the application is made. When an AIQA leaves an organisation, DCS does not automatically continue for that centre nor can it be automatically transferred for the individual to any new centre. An application must be made in conjunction with the new centre.

AIQA and DCS status is monitored by the Quality and Curriculum Reviewer and can be withdrawn by LASER at any time if quality systems are not effective.

6.2 STANDARDISATION

LASER will hold standardisation events to ensure consistent application of assessment. Centres will be required to contribute to LASER's programme of standardisation and also to carry out appropriate internal standardisation.

LASER will hold standardisation events on a rolling basis to ensure that comparable standards are being achieved year on year and that there is a consistency of delivery and assessment across centres. Quality and Curriculum Reviewers will identify samples of learners' work that they wish to retain for standardisation purposes during verification visits. Where an AIQA is in place they will be expected to identify samples of learners' work to submit to national standardisation events. Centres are required to retain records of the assessment and internal verification process to contribute to standardisation events. Where units are common to other awarding organisations' qualifications LASER will work collaboratively to ensure standardisation requirements as set out by Ofqual are met.

6.3 RETAINING EVIDENCE

For all qualifications centres must retain complete and accurate records, for at least three years from the end of the year to which they relate. These records must be made available to LASER on request.

Back to contents

Appendix 1: Ofqual Level Descriptors – Level 3

LEVEL	KNOWLEDGE – THE LEARNER:	SKILLS – THE LEARNER CAN:
3	• Has factual, procedural and theoretical knowledge and understanding of a subject or field of work to complete tasks and address problems that while well-defined, may be complex and non-routine. • Can interpret and evaluate relevant information and ideas. • Is aware of the nature of the area of study or work. • Is aware of different perspectives or approaches within the area of study or work.	• Identify, select and use appropriate cognitive and practical, methods and procedures to address problems that while well-defined, may be complex and non-routine. • Use appropriate investigation to inform actions. • Review how effective methods and actions have been.

Appendix 2: Unit List

Please click below for the Unit List:

LASER Level 3 Award in Research Skills for Academic Study	OFQUAL CODE: 600/2786/1

As well as consulting this document, providers must also check LASER's essential information regarding the availability of all LASER's qualifications and units, including withdrawal notifications. LASER's 'Qualification and Unit Announcements' are available on the LASER website.

Back to contents