Laser Learning Awards

QUALIFICATION SPECIFICATION

Forest School



Qualification Review Date: 31 August 2029

www.laser-awards.org.uk

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

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Summary of Changes

Version	Publication Date	Summary of Changes
v1.1	April 2026	New qual spec issued following review of Forest School suite.

Qualification Overview

OFQUAL QUALIFICATION NUMBERS	
603/2810/1	LASER Level 1 Award in Forest School Ethos and Principles
603/2811/3	LASER Level 2 Award for Forest School Assistants
603/2812/5	LASER Level 3 Certificate for Forest School Leaders

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 Level 1 Award in Forest School Ethos and Principles provides an introduction to outdoor learning in a Forest School setting requiring the learner to participate in a range of Forest School experiences. The Level 2 Award for Forest School Assistants covers the knowledge and skills required to support Forest School Leaders to deliver outdoor learning programmes and activities. The Level 3 Certificate for Forest School Leaders develops the knowledge and skills required to plan and lead Forest School programmes and activities.
ENTRY REQUIREMENTS	There are no specific entry requirements, except for a minimum age of 14 years (Level 1) and 18 years (Level 2 and 3). No formal qualifications are required but learners should be able to read and write at Level 2 or above and centres are advised to carry out an initial assessment.
RULES OF COMBINATION	**LASER Level 1 Award in Forest School Ethos and Principles. Qualification Number: 610/7036/1** To achieve the LASER Level 1 Award in Forest School Ethos and Principles the learner must achieve the 1 credit single mandatory unit. **LASER Level 2 Award for Forest School Assistants. Qualification Number: 603/2811/3** To achieve the LASER Level 2 Award in Forest School Assistants the learner must achieve the 2 mandatory units, totalling 7 credits. **LASER Level 3 Certificate for Forest School Leaders. Qualification Number: 603/2812/5** To achieve the LASER Level 3 Certificate for Forest School Leaders the learner must achieve all 5 mandatory units, totalling 18 credits.
UNITS	Please follow the link to the **units lists**, For Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications, detailed indicative content is available to approved centres via our Quartzweb portal.
ASSESSMENT	The qualifications are achieved by providing evidence covering the learning outcomes and assessment criteria of each unit. Details of assessment methods are contained within 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 2026 Qualifications Review Date: 31 August 2029
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 (including indicative content), assessment and quality assurance. Once approved, centres can download the 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(s)

There are three LASER Forest School qualifications: a Level 1 Award, a Level 2 Award and a Level 3 Certificate. All are regulated by Ofqual and sit on the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF).

The suite is specifically designed to meet the needs of Forest School learners, Forest School Assistants and Forest School leaders.

The Level 1 Award in Forest School Ethos and Principles provides an introduction to outdoor learning in a Forest School setting requiring the learner to participate in a range of Forest School experiences.

The Level 2 Award for Forest School Assistants covers the knowledge and skills required to support Forest School Leaders to deliver outdoor learning programmes and activities.

The Level 3 Certificate for Forest School Leaders develops the knowledge and skills required to plan and lead Forest School programmes and activities.

A one page Qualification Summary outlining the LASER Forest School qualifications is provided in **Qualification Overview**.

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

LASER recommends that all Tutors and Assessors delivering this qualification are experienced, and have a clear and complete understanding of the subject matter. All staff involved in the delivery of the qualification should have, or be working towards, a relevant teaching/assessing/ quality assurance qualification.

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2. Offering the Qualification(s)

2.1 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Each of the LASER Forest School qualifications cover the ethos of Forest Schools and can underpin Forest School activity, but with a different focus:

- The Level 1 Award is intended to familiarise the 14+ learner with the Forest School way, and is suitable for a wide range of people, such as young people, offender learners, youth workers, teaching assistants, teachers and anyone else with an interest in teaching and learning in the outdoors;
- The Level 2 Award is for anyone 18+ seeking to be an Assistant Forest School leader and/or looking to

progress to become a Forest School Leader in the future, such as youth workers, teaching assistants and teachers;

- The Level 3 Certificate is designed for adult learners to gain accreditation to become a Forest School Leader, it is particularly suited to those already in training or developing in their role, such as youth workers, teaching assistants, teachers and other professionals.

2.2 TARGET GROUP

The target groups are explained above but in summary:

- the Level 1 Award is suitable for learners aged 14 years or older whom the centre has established would benefit;
- the Level 2 Award is suitable for learners aged 18+ seeking to assist with Forest School activities;
- the Level 3 Certificate is for professionals aged 18+ wishing to train as Forest School Leaders.*

2.3 ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

There are no specific entry requirements, except for a minimum age of 14 years (Level 1), and 18 years (Level 2 and Level 3). Tutors must ensure that the level of the qualification is appropriate to the learner, and may wish to consult the guidance published by the Forest School Association (see **http://www.forestschoolassociation.org** for information).

The Forest Schools Association (FSA) requires 80% face-to-face delivery of this Level 3 Certificate for Forest School Leaders qualification, largely outside, in order to obtain membership of their organisation. This would equate to a minimum of 75 GLH (Guided Learning Hours). If you wish to join the FSA as a Registered Forest School Trainer please refer to the Application Form on the FSA website for full details.

* Please note that the Forest School Association requires a minimum age of 18 for Forest School Programme Assistants and Forest School leaders. Learners should possess a current DBS disclosure if appropriate. These requirements are stipulated by the Forest School Association.

2.4 ACHIEVING THE QUALIFICATION(S)

To achieve one of the LASER Forest School qualifications, the learner must undertake and achieve specified mandatory units, as per the following 'rules of combination':

LASER Level 1 Award in Forest School Ethos and Principles
Qualification Number: 610/7036/1

To achieve the LASER Level 1 Award in Forest School Ethos and Principles the learner must achieve the 1 credit single mandatory unit.

LASER Level 2 Award in Forest School Assistants

Qualification Number: 603/2811/3

To achieve the LASER Level 2 Award for Forest School Assistants the learner must achieve the 2 mandatory units, totalling 7 credits.

LASER Level 3 Certificate for Forest School Leaders
Qualification Number: 603/2812/5

To achieve the LASER Level 3 Certificate for Forest School Leaders the learner must achieve all 5 mandatory units, totalling 18 credits. Learners are required to plan and deliver six pilot Forest School sessions. Please note: these sessions are mandatory but do not contribute to the Guided Learning Hours (GLH) for the qualification. They must therefore be completed in addition to the published GLH.

To view the units and assessment criteria, please see the **Unit tab** on our website. Indicative content is available to approved centres for Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications. It is important that this guidance is followed. Please note that Level 3 learners are required to deliver a six session Forest School pilot programme during their training.

Each assessment criteria must be evidenced to have been met in order for a learner to achieve a unit. For more detail, please see **Section 3.2**.

2.5 TOTAL QUALIFICATION TIME AND GUIDED LEARNING HOURS

The recommended number of guided learning hours is as follows:

QUALIFICATION TITLE	CREDIT VALUE	GUIDED LEARNING HOURS (GLH)	TOTAL QUALIFICATION TIME** (TQT)
LASER Level 1 Award in Forest School Ethos and Principles	1	7	14
LASER Level 2 Award in Forest Schools	7	54	70
LASER Level 3 Certificate in Forest Schools	18	96	180

** 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).

Total Qualification Time, including Guided Learning, is 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 LASER qualifications for Forest Schools promote progression onto further study and work opportunities, perhaps in the outdoors[1], but not exclusively, or within teaching and training.

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3. How the Qualifications will be Assessed

3.1 OVERVIEW

The qualifications are 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** to access a range of documents designed to make the assessment and internal quality assurance of the qualifications simple and efficient.

3.2 ASSESSMENT DESIGN

These qualifications are assessed through the development of a portfolio of evidence. LASER's Assessment Definitions are available to approved centres on the Quartz Web Portal

The portfolio should comprise a series of tasks devised by the centre, mapped to the assessment criteria. LASER's Assessment Definitions are available to approved centres on the Quartz Web Portal.

Satisfactory completion of the tasks and compilation of the portfolio will provide evidence that the learner has met the requirements of the qualification.

The centre must assess the learner in terms of whether they have met each unit assessment criteria. All the

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

unit assessment criteria in a unit must be met (and evidenced) before a unit can be deemed achieved. Level Descriptors are provided in **Appendix 1**.

To view the units and assessment criteria, please see the **unit tab** on our website.

Assessment must be valid, reliable and sufficient to meet the outcome, and allow transparent authenticity: this means it must be apparent that evidence produced by a learner is the work of the individual learner, even if they have worked in a group. It is recommended that assessments are internally verified to meet these standards before they are implemented.

Assessed work must be internally quality assured (**See Section 6**).

3.3 RECORD KEEPING

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 learner, allowing for some different methods to be used for individual learners, if individualised learning is appropriate. These planning sheets can be customised as centres prefer, as long as all essential information is included.

It is acceptable for the evidence to be held in a mixture of places (hard copy or digitally), for example in a student file and/or tutor file or 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.

Also available are specially created Forest Schools' Evidence Logs for centres to record how and when each learner has achieved each unit assessment criteria. These have been pre-populated with unit information for ease of use by the centre. They include room for tutor feedback and learner comments, making them ideal for inclusion in learner portfolios.

Electronic evidence must be available to the LASER Quality and Curriculum Reviewers on request. Records must be kept of all internal quality assurance activity. Exemplar templates for recording this activity are available on the **Quartz Web Portal.**

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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.

[2] All approved centres have access to the **Quartz Web Portal**

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5. Tutor/Assessor/Internal Quality Assurer Requirements

LASER recommends tutors, assessors, and internal quality assurers are experienced, and require that they have a clear understanding of the subject matter. All staff involved in the delivery of the qualification should have, or be working towards, a relevant teaching/assessing/quality assurance qualification as appropriate.

Tutors delivering and/or assessing these qualifications must have the following:

- teaching or training and assessing qualification such as a level 3, 4 or 5 education and training qualification, PTLLS (or equivalent);
- Level 3 Certificate for Forest School Leaders.
- A minimum of 2 years, post qualification, experience leading a Forest School with at least one long term (i.e. through the seasons) programme.
- First Aid qualification of at least 16 hours in duration and which includes an outdoor element (including if appropriate a paediatric element).
- Professional indemnity and public liability insurance.

It is also recommended that Tutors delivering and/or assessing these qualifications have the following:

- An appropriate food hygiene certificate where programmes are likely to involve regular handling, preparing and cooking of food (such as camp cooking).
- A DBS (Disclosure and Barring Services) check – if working with children or vulnerable adults.

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6. Quality Assurance of the Qualifications

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.** The LASER Quality and Curriculum Reviewer will regularly monitor compliance with these requirements. The LASER 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 quality assurance systems to underpin the delivery of the qualification. Internal quality assurance is the 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 done by one or more internal quality assurers.

Systems do vary between centres according to their particular situation, for example practices that work in a

large centre are not necessarily effective in a smaller one. However there must be:

- an appropriate quality assurance system in place and
- evidence the system is implemented effectively.

The outcome of the internal quality assurance process is the recommendation of award of credit to learners (RAC). There are two ways credit can be awarded to learners: through a LASER Quality and Curriculum Reviewer, or through Direct Claims Status.

6.1 STANDARDISATION

LASER will hold regular standardisation events to make sure there is consistent application of assessment. Centres are required to contribute to LASER's programme of standardisation and also to carry out appropriate internal standardisation.

LASER hold standardisation events on a rolling basis to make sure comparable standards are being achieved year on year and there is a consistency of delivery and assessment across centres. LASER Quality and Curriculum Reviewers will identify samples of learners' work that they want to retain for standardisation purposes during quality assurance visits. Where an AIQA is in place they will identify samples of learners' work to submit to national standardisation events. Centres are required to retain records of the assessment and internal quality assurance processes to contribute to standardisation events. Where units are common to other awarding organisations' qualifications, LASER will work collaboratively to make sure standardisation requirements as set out in the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) and Ofqual's General Conditions of Recognition are met.

Standardisation activities also include opportunities for networking and sharing of resources, together with regular information about new or replacement units. Centres are recommended to attend these annual meetings, in addition to centre visits by LASER Quality and Curriculum Reviewers.

6.2 RETAINING EVIDENCE

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

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Appendix 1: Ofqual Level Descriptors – Levels 1, 2 & 3

LEVEL	KNOWLEDGE (THE HOLDER ....)	SKILLS (THE HOLDER CAN .....)
Level 1	Has basic factual knowledge of a subject and/or knowledge of facts, procedures and ideas to complete well-defined routine tasks and address simple problems; and Is aware of aspects of information relevant to the area of study or work.	Use basic cognitive and practical skills to complete well-defined routine tasks and procedures. Select and use relevant information. Identify whether actions have been effective.
Level 2	Has knowledge and understanding of facts, procedures and ideas in an area of study or field of work to complete well-defined tasks and address straightforward problems. Can interpret relevant information and ideas. Is aware of a range of information that is relevant to the area of study or work.	Select and use relevant cognitive and practical skills to complete well-defined, generally routine tasks and address straightforward problems. Identify, gather and use relevant information to inform actions. Identify how effective actions have been.
Level 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 skills, 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.

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Appendix 2: Unit List

Please click below for the Unit Lists:

LASER **Level 1** Award in Forest School Ethos and Principles	OFQUAL CODE: 603/2810/1
LASER **Level 2** Award for Forest School Assistants	OFQUAL CODE: 603/2811/3
LASER **Level 3** Certificate for Forest School Leaders	OFQUAL CODE: 603/2812/5

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.

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