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SMALL & MEDIUM ENTERPRISES TRAINING PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION GUIDE

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE LCS

For organisations:

The LCS offers a solution for an organisation that wants:

- its continuous improvement training accredited and endorsed
- its staff to be rewarded and recognised for their lean knowledge and practical capability
- reassurance that its lean training approach is robust, technically sound and well managed
- a flexible, university developed, lean qualification framework that offers a universal standard that is adopted widely

For individuals:

The LCS offers a solution for the continuous improvement practitioner who wants:

- an acknowledged and relevant lean qualification
- a framework around which his or her lean competency can develop and improve
- access to a practitioner community for networking and peer-to-peer learning
- recognition for his or her lean expertise

1.2 AIM OF THIS GUIDE



This guide details the SME (Small and Medium Enterprise) accreditation process that results in a company's lean training programme being accredited by the Lean Competency System (LCS).

This will enable it to hold a two year licence to deliver LCS accredited training, allowing its training course participants to receive LCS Certificates of Lean Competency, providing they have successfully completed an LCS assessment.

The accreditation process involves reviewing the applicant's lean training programme, to ensure that it has the capability to deliver effective lean training and meets LCS standards that can be adhered to over the two year licence period.

This document needs to be used in conjunction with several other LCS documents and information, in particular, the LCS SME Terms and the [Detailed LCS Level Descriptions](#).

Visit the LCS website for more information and to download key documents that support accreditation. www.leancompetency.org

1.3 STANDARD & SME ACCREDITATION

There are two main types of LCS accreditation – Standard and SME.

With Standard accreditation, an organisation has the responsibility for managing all elements of its lean training programme. With SME accreditation, an organisation has responsibility for managing the course delivery element of the programme, and associated coaching/mentoring, but not the knowledge test or certification elements, which are undertaken centrally by the LCS organisation.

The table below highlights the main differences between the two types:

Aspect	Standard Accreditation	SME Accreditation
Designing and delivering courses aligned to the LCS	Yes	Yes
2 year licence to operate the LCS	Yes	Yes
Quality assurance responsibility	Yes	Yes
Issuing LCS certificates	Yes	No
Administering tests, exams	Yes	No
Managing the practical aspect assessments	Yes	Yes
Single up front accreditation fee and no other costs	Yes	No
Low up front accreditation fee plus additional pay-for-use costs	No	Yes
Fee paid to LCS for each person tested & certified	No	Yes

SME accreditation is suitable for start-ups or smaller organisations that have a small resource base and aim to carry out accredited training on a small scale or on an ad hoc basis and for start-up businesses that are not fully established. There is no requirement for a significant up-front investment and assessment costs should be covered by income received from customers/learners.

2. OVERALL ACCREDITATION PROCESS

2.1 KEY STAGES

The main stages in the SME accrediting process are shown below:

Stage	Activity	Who
1	Accreditation documents/links sent to the applicant	LCS
2	Registration form submitted to LCS	Applicant
3	Gap analysis (optional); portfolio assembly commences	Applicant
3a	Draft reviews (quantity and nature to be discussed)	LCS/ Applicant
4	Final portfolio submitted	Applicant
5	Accreditation sign off meeting	LCS/ Applicant
6	Final approval letter & welcome pack sent. Invoice sent to the applicant.	LCS

2.2 STAGE DETAILS

2.2.1 TRAINING PROGRAMME PORTFOLIO

Once the decision to accredit has been made and the relevant documents downloaded, the online registration form is submitted, marking the formal start of the accrediting process.

The main part of the process is the construction of the training programme portfolio, which should be submitted using the [online form](#); Section [2.3](#) below provides details.

Drafts submissions may be made and feedback is provided through Progress Checklist Reports. A final accreditation meeting will not be arranged if any issues are unresolved.

Note that an organisation can elect to become accredited to any level and can change its accreditation to encompass additional levels at any point once it is accredited. For example, the initial accreditation could cover just Level 1a, or Levels 1a, 1b and 1c. It can also upgrade its accreditation type to Standard if circumstances dictate.

The seven levels of the LCS framework is shown below:

1-Fundamental	Level 1a	Awareness
	Level 1b	Diagnosis & Analysis
	Level 1c	Improvement & Implementation
2- Technical	Level 2a	Implementation & Design
	Level 2b	Implementation & Leadership
3- Strategic	Level 3a	Strategic Enterprise
	Level 3b	Strategic Supply Chain

The length of time the whole process takes between three and 12 weeks.

2.2.2 ALIGNMENT MATRIX

Unit of learning	1a Lean Awareness					Total
	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	
Course 1	1	2	2	0	1	6
Course 2	1	1	0	2	2	6
Course 3	2		0	1	1	4
						0
Total	4	3	2	3	4	16

The completion of an Alignment Matrix is a key component of the submission, which demonstrates the course(s) alignment with the LCS framework.

1a Lean Awareness Knowledge	
A1	Origins and evolution of lean thinking and continuous improvement
A2	Underpinning and related concepts and approaches
A3	Key lean/CI principles and frameworks
A4	Core elements of lean and CI
A5	Awareness of the human and strategic dimensions of lean thinking

To complete the matrix, the applicant lists 'units of learning' in the first column and then assigns a value for each knowledge component, where 0=no coverage, 1=partial coverage and 2=full coverage.

In the example shown above, course 1 is partially aligned to A1 (origins and evolution of lean) and fully aligned to A2 (underpinning and related concepts).

When completed, the matrix will provide a clear overview of the degree of alignment, highlighting areas of strength and any gaps. A training programme is not required to achieve full coverage in all areas, but it should demonstrate a good breadth of coverage, while also reflecting the methodology, priorities and preferences of the applying organisation.

The matrix is available in MS Excel or MS Word versions and both can be downloaded from the submission form and then uploaded to the form when completed.

Full details of the LCS Levels are on this [LCS website page](#) where a PDF document can be downloaded.

2.2.2 ACCREDITATION SIGN OFF MEETING

Once the submission is considered complete and in order, an accreditation sign off meeting will take place which marks the formal submission by the applicant. This will review the overall submission, discuss processes to ensure courses are aligned to assessments, agree on candidate testing procedures and set up administration and communication procedures. This is a virtual meeting.

2.2.3 WELCOME PACK

Following the sign off meeting, providing there are no outstanding issues to resolve, a Welcome Pack is issued containing the formal confirmation letter, terms and conditions, the company certificate, a personal certificate sample and various communication materials.

A certificate is issued to the company indicating its accredited status.

2.3 INFORMATION REQUIRED IN THE SUBMISSION FORM

Information on the training programme or system should be provided using the online [Portfolio Submission Form](#), the section headings of which are shown below.

Guidance on the information requirements for each section is shown below and in the submission form.

- Typical questions that will be asked in the LCS assessment are shown for each section in this style

1. ORGANISATION & BACKGROUND

- Is the organisation background summary clear?
- Is it clear where the training system/programme sits in the overall organisation?
- Is it clearly stated how the organisation will use the LCS?

SUBMISSION INFORMATION REQUIRED

- Provide the organisation entity that will be accredited. This will usually be the company.
- State the person responsible for writing the submission and to whom queries and comments can be addressed.
- Provide a brief description of the organisation, indicating main activities, size history and any relevant strategic information. List any relevant existing accreditations, awards or quality standards the organisation already has.
- State how the organisation will use the LCS – eg own staff training, external training etc

2. LEAN TRAINING PROGRAMME/SYSTEM OVERVIEW

- Is the structure of the training organisation clearly explained, along with key responsibilities?
- Is it clear to which LCS levels to system/programme will be aligned (initially)?
- Is there a figure for the estimated number of certificates that will be issued over the two year period?

SUBMISSION INFORMATION REQUIRED

- Describe the structure of the training programme – course hierarchy, management, responsibilities, etc
- Indicate the LCS levels to which the programme will align. Note that you can plan to increase the number of levels over time as the training system matures.
- Provide an estimate of certificates to be issued over the two year accreditation period

3. COURSE INFORMATION

- Are aims and learning outcomes clearly defined?
- Are the appropriate topics covered in courses?
- Does contact time align to recommended levels?
- Do topics link to learning outcomes?

- Is there effective alignment between the organisation's lean training programme and the LCS levels?
- Has an LCS alignment matrix been completed?

SUBMISSION INFORMATION REQUIRED

- For each course, list its title, aim, learning outcomes, topics covered and learning hours.
 - Learning outcomes are statements about what participants should know and/or be able to do at the end of the course. In learning time, show the number of contact hours and how these are organised over a particular time. See the LCS Guide to Developing Learning Outcomes.*
 - Learning time can include class based face-to-face teaching, web based learning, post course activities, assessments, self-study, follow up reading and research, and work based learning.*
 - Indicative learning hours for each LCS level are indicated below, though these should be used as a guide only. Note that this includes class based face-to-face teaching time, post course activities, assessments, self-study, follow up reading and research, work based learning.*
 - LCS 1a: 3 to 6 hours (the latter typically with activities, simulations)
 - LCS 1b: 20-30 hours
 - LCS 1c: 20-30 hours
 - LCS 2a: 50 hours
 - LCS 2b: 25 hours
- Briefly describe how the course(s) aligns with one or more of the seven levels of the Lean Competency System.
- Complete an LCS ALIGNMENT MATRIX. There is a link to download a template that can be completed and then uploaded to the form.

4. TRAINING MATERIAL & DELIVERY

- Is there a clear account of how the training material has been developed and sourced?
- Have sufficient examples of material been provided?
- Is the training material understandable, of good format and presentation quality?
- Does training material help enable the achievement of the learning outcomes?
- Are the teaching methods adequately described and suitable for the target audience?
- Are there sufficient details of practical activities?
- Is there a class size approach that is geared towards small group teaching?

SUBMISSION INFORMATION REQUIRED

- Indicate how the material was sourced and developed.
- Provide examples of training material, such as presentations, workbooks, guides. These can be downloaded in the form
- Indicate the teaching styles used – such as classroom based teaching, workshops, online, self-study, workplace based teaching
- Describe the practical activities, simulations, interactions used in teaching
- Describe the approach taken to class sizes, including the expected number in groups.

5. ASSESSMENT

- Are adequate and appropriate assessment mechanisms used that ensure that the learning outcomes have been achieved?
- Is the practical application of knowledge in the workplace assessed effectively?

Note on Assessments

Learners need to demonstrate both knowledge and practical capability for each LCS level through which they progress, except for Level 1a, where only the knowledge aspect applies. Demonstrating knowledge is typically achieved through a test (administered by the LCS in SME Accreditation), while there are several ways to demonstrate practical capability.

For LCS levels 1b and 1c, evidence of a learner's practical capability can be in a variety of formats. The learner should have played a meaningful role in the activity, usually as part of a team with a specific role or on an individual basis. The evidence should be endorsed by an appropriate manager/stakeholder to signify it is an accurate account of what happened.

For LCS Level 2, the evidence of the practical capability should be more formal, through, for example, an assessed project implementation report, clearly demonstrating aspects such as leadership and planning. The overall assessment approach should be consistent with key assessment LCS principles:

- There should be a knowledge test for each LCS level where a certificate is awarded.
- There should be implementation evidence linked to courses (except 1a).
- An appropriate training course should be delivered for each LCS level where a certificate is awarded.

SUBMISSION INFORMATION REQUIRED

- Describe the assessment approach used, explaining how knowledge is assessed to ensure that learning outcomes have been achieved and how practical competence is demonstrated.
- List the type of practical assessment used (applies to Level 1b and higher), such as A3 reports, project reports, workbooks, project portfolio, diary, interviews
- If applicable, describe the methods used to record and assess Level 2 implementation, for example, project qualifying criteria, the nature of project reports, assessment methods and criteria

6. COURSE TEACHING

- Do appropriately qualified and experienced staff deliver training?
- Has a delivery capability assessment been produced?
- Are the credentials of all training deliverers' available (internal, external)?

SUBMISSION INFORMATION REQUIRED

- A DELIVERY CAPABILITY ASSESSMENT should be completed. This indicates the relative strength of the delivery resources across the key LCS knowledge levels and can be produced through a staff self-assessment exercise. A template can be downloaded, completed and then uploaded to the form.
- List those who will deliver training and add biographical information for each containing relevant information about their lean work experience/teaching credentials. A template for this can be downloaded, completed and then uploaded to the form.
- Provide a statement of the policy towards using external delivery resources (if applicable).

7. E-LEARNING (IF APPLICABLE)

- Is the eLearning platform fit for purpose?
- Are eLearning assessments robust with appropriate safeguards in place?

If your course, or aspects of it, are delivered via the web (eLearning), complete this section.

SUBMISSION INFORMATION REQUIRED

- i) Detail which parts of the training are delivered via the web.
- ii) Detail the learning management system, software, or e-learning provider used for e-learning g use the web
- iii) Detail the learning management system, software, or e-learning provider used for e-learning.
- iv) Provide an outline of how learners progress through the e-learning. For example, course entry, interaction with material, navigation through specific modules, specific activities undertaken, tests taken.
- v) Provide online access to the eLearning or examples or screenshots

8. QUALITY ASSURANCE & CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

- Are there mechanisms in place for evaluation of the training?
- Has an evaluation questionnaire been seen?
- Are there clearly defined selection criteria so that appropriate participants attend courses?
- Is there an appropriate feedback process to participants and delivers?
- Is there evidence of pre-delivery testing and continuous improvement activity after courses have been delivered and evaluated?
- Is there appropriate control over the training system when it is used on an international basis?

SUBMISSION INFORMATION REQUIRED

- i) Describe the approach to selecting participants for courses, for example, the prerequisites required, experience, role and qualifications (If applicable)
- ii) Indicate how training is evaluated by participants
- iii) Provide examples of evaluation questionnaires
- iv) Indicate the measures that demonstrate that there is a continuous improvement process in place after course evaluation and review.
- v) Where a training system is to be used on an international scale, detail the management control approach taken to ensure consistency in the delivery of the programme and the maintenance of standards.
 - a. *Detail the regions/countries in which the training system will operate, indicating how it is resourced, managed, levels to which it trains, language capability and any other relevant information.*

9. TRAINING SUPPORT & ORGANISATION

- Is there evidence of appropriate training management and support?
- Are there appropriate information resources available to support learners?

- Have examples of training records been seen?
- Is there an effective database system in place to record individuals training history?
- Is there a system for unique certificate referencing?

SUBMISSION INFORMATION REQUIRED

- i) Describe the facilities that will be used for training. This may not be applicable to training companies that use client facilities.
- ii) Describe how the training will be managed and supported – eg from which department or function, key roles undertaken by dedicated resources, or the use of other support resources, such as HRM
- iii) Describe any learner resources that are available, such as in intranet, physical library, mentoring/guidance, networks
- iv) Indicate how records are stored so that there is a secure history of a learners training history (eg date courses taken, assessments taken, certificate awarded, etc.)
- v) Provide an example the training records
- vi) Indicate the method used to give each certificate a unique reference that will allow traceability. Typically, these include components which reference the organisation, date, individual, etc.
 - a. *The structure of the standard LCS reference is: company – date of issue – person identifier eg LCS1810AB. You can opt to keep this approach or design one more suited to your needs.*

3. COURSE KNOWLEDGE ASSESSMENT

3.1 INTRODUCTION

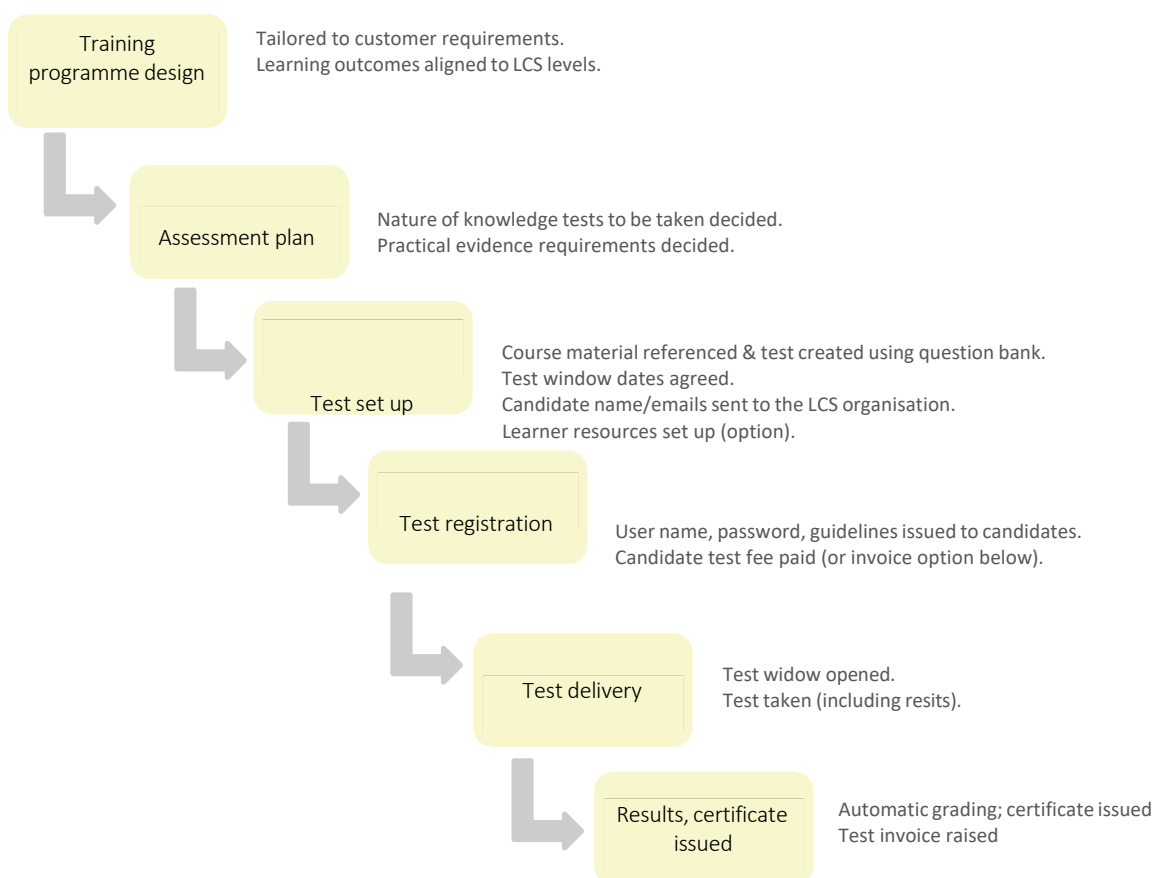
Under SME accreditation, training programme knowledge tests are managed centrally by the LCS organisation and there needs to be close coordination in setting these. Tests are taken online via the LCS assessment centre.

The LCS has a bank of questions that can be used to create tests, or SME organisations are free to develop their own. The final set of questions needs to reference the actual course material delivered and any other contextual information. This will involve the SME organization examining the course material delivered (eg presentations) to ensure it is correctly aligned and contextualised.

Note that the practical aspect of the assessment (e.g. project or initiative delivery) is still managed by the accredited organisation.

3.2 ASSESSMENT PROCESS OVERVIEW

The overall process for organising and delivering tests is shown below:



The training programme design should ensure that its learning outcomes are aligned with the LCS framework. An assessment plan will confirm the type of assessment to be used and how evidence of practical application will be captured.

Once the questions and answers are provided to the LCS, a knowledge test will be created. The time for candidates to take the test is agreed; note that tests are normally taken in a one or two week test window and the test should be taken within about a week of the course ending.

Candidate details are passed to the LCS organisation (name, email), that then issues them with guidelines, plus a username and password to enable access to the LCS Assessment Centre. The candidate test fees can be paid at this point paid if self-funded by candidates.

Candidates take the test in the test window; they are allowed one failure and then resit the test within the window. A second failure will require some intervention by the trainer before a third attempt is permitted, that may be in a new test window. An additional fee will not be required for a third test attempt.

Test marking is automatic and the result immediately communicated to the candidate after the test. Certificates of Lean Competency can be delivered directly to successful candidates by the LCS or these can be sent to the accredited business for onward communication.

PAYMENT FOR TESTS

The accredited company will normally pay the candidate test fee when the process has been completed, though there is an option for candidates to pay for the fee individually.

3.3 ONLINE KNOWLEDGE TEST PROCEDURE

Knowledge test details are as follows:

- Learners are sent a link to login and access the test website, as well as pre-test advice.
- A 'test window' is opened (usually one week in length) for candidates to take the test.
- Tests consist of mainly multiple choice questions and are effectively be 'open book' – ie learners are allowed to use reference material when attempting questions.
- Tests are timed (eg 45 minutes for a 50 question test); a test must be completed in one sitting and cannot be paused. Once the time has been reached, the test is stopped and submitted for marking.
- Questions appear one at a time and in random order; the learner is not told whether an answer submitted is correct or not.
- The standard pass mark is 66%. Negative marking is not normally used. Two attempts are permitted in a test window.

4. ACCREDITATION RESPONSIBILITIES & TERMS

4.1 LCS CERTIFICATES



Learners who successfully complete an accredited training programme and its assessment will receive a Certificate of Lean Competency from the LCS organisation.

The example shown illustrates the fields that are completed for each certificate issued.

The accredited training programme's company logo and authorising signatory may be placed on the certificate.

The accredited company will receive a certificate indicating accredited status.

4.2 COMMUNICATIONS & PROMOTION

The accredited company may communicate its LCS status via standard channels (eg brochures, website, PR etc) and use the LCS logo and accreditation insignia where appropriate.

Prior approval must be obtained from Cardiff

University for any use of the University logo.

The accredited company will feature on the LCS website and be mentioned in the LCS newsletter.

4.3 ACCREDITATION TERMS

Accredited companies need to abide by a set of terms – see the document SME Accreditation Terms.

A company's accreditation will be valid for 2 years from the date of accreditation on its certificate.

It is likely that the training programme will undergo continuous or incremental change over the period, for example, because of participant feedback, knowledge advances, new initiatives, etc. There is no requirement to inform the LCS of every change, however, if major changes are made, then the organisation should inform LCS management and discuss implications prior to the changes being implemented.

There is not a strict definition of what constitutes a major or significant change; examples could include wholesale course material changes, extending to higher LCS levels, expanding the programme's geographical scope, structural changes to learning outcomes, etc.

The company can renew its accreditation after 2 years, following successful completion of a renewal process, which involves a reapplication review.

The LCS organisation may withdraw accreditation at any point during the period should it consider that the accredited company has breached the LCS conditions.

4.4 ONGOING COMMUNICATION & INTERACTION

The LCS organisation will not schedule inspection visits over the licence period, though will welcome opportunities for Gemba visits which, for example, could involve observing the training programme in operation, or undertaking specific supporting activities or projects, such as performance reviews, process confirmation, material development or investigatory research.

There is also an opportunity for collaboration with the Lean Enterprise Research Centre and Cardiff University in several areas, which can be discussed during the accrediting process.

4.5 LCS Community Platform



The LCS Community Platform is a new space to connect with fellow improvement practitioners, share experiences, and accelerate your learning and impact. This provides a platform to encourage lean practitioners to continue their personal and professional development.



The facility promotes peer-to-peer learning and includes teaching resources, topical articles, networking facilities, collaboration groups, discussion forums and events signposting.



Share this platform with your trainers, learners and wider groups to become part of a vibrant, supportive, and forward-thinking improvement community.

5. FEES

5.1 STRUCTURE

There are two parts to the fee structure:

1. An accreditation licence payment.
2. A fee for everyone who passes an assessment and receives an LCS certificate.

The licence payment is payable after the company's training programme has been accredited, while the assessment fees are payable after learners pass knowledge tests.

5.2 RATES FOR 2026

The fees are as follows:

- Initial accreditation fee for a 2 year licence: £2,500 (€3000)
- Renewal 2 year licence accreditation fee: £1,750 (€2100)

Multiple choice tests and reports:

- LCS tests for 1a, 1b, 1c, 2a, 2b: £95 pp, 115 EUR pp

Note the above are exclusive of VAT; VAT may not be applicable if the company is based outside of the UK and no training is delivered in the UK.

Prices are subject to change at any time and the website should be checked for the latest information.