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Qualification Specification

CFI Level 4 Certificate in Agroecological System Design: Sustainable Farming and Business Practices

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Key Facts

Qualification Title	CFI Level 4 Certificate in Agroecological System Design: Sustainable Farming and Business Practices
Qualification Number (QAN)	610/4500/7
Qualification Type	VRQ
Sector	3.1 Agriculture
Level	3
Rules of Combination	All units are compulsory
Total Qualification Time	128 hours
Guided Learning Hours	86 hours
Minimum age of learners	18
Assessment Methods	Portfolio of evidence
Grading system	Pass/Fail
How long will it take to complete?	3 months
Developed by	The qualification has been developed by CFI with subject-specific expertise provided by Apricot Centre.

Section 1: About this Qualification

1.1 Why take this qualification?

The Level 4 Certificate in Agroecological System Design - Regenerative Farming and Business Practices equips you with essential skills and knowledge to thrive in the evolving landscape of agricultural sustainability. This qualification aims to:

- Advance your understanding of agroecological principles, preparing you for higher-level qualifications such as a foundation degree or degree in sustainable agriculture, agroecology, or related fields.
- Enhance your employability in regenerative farming and agroecological system design, empowering you to contribute effectively to sustainable food production practices.
- Equip you for roles in farm management, agroecological consulting, and sustainable business practices within smallholdings and larger agricultural enterprises.
- Prepare you for innovative positions in regenerative food systems, including community-supported agriculture and sustainable supply chain management.
- Foster your ability to implement practical solutions in regenerative agriculture, supporting sustainable land stewardship and biodiversity enhancement.
- Encourage personal growth and lifelong learning, inspiring you to become an advocate for regenerative practices and environmental stewardship.

By pursuing this qualification, you will be well-prepared to play a pivotal role in transforming agricultural systems towards sustainable and regenerative practices, benefiting both the environment and the community.

1.2 What are the entry requirements?

To study on this qualification, you need to demonstrate to the centre that you have:

- A commitment to work-based learning – learners will be employed in a farming setting or food production business, working a minimum of 3 days a week throughout the duration of the qualification.
- In the case that English is not your first language, proof of spoken and written English at a level equivalent to IELTS 6.0.

1.3 What does the qualification cover?

This qualification comprises four mandatory modules:

Permaculture Design Skills

This unit provides opportunities for learners to develop a deeper understanding of the permaculture design practice in the context of regenerative land-based systems. Outcomes from this unit may also be used towards the Permaculture Diploma.

Permaculture Technical Design Skills

This unit provides opportunities for learners to explore a range of presentation skills for permaculture designs, to enhance their professional practice in presenting their design work to clients.

Strategic Business Skills for Agroecological and Regenerative Land-Based Systems

This unit provides opportunities for learners to explore a range of presentation skills for permaculture designs, to enhance their professional practice in presenting their design work to clients.

Operational Business Skills for an Agroecological and Regenerative Farming business

This unit provides learners with opportunities to develop operational business skills for a regenerative and agroecological farm business that reflects the core principles of this type of business system.

This qualification is at Level 4 as defined by Ofqual:

Ofqual Handbook: General Conditions of Recognition - Section E - Design and development of qualifications - Guidance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Knowledge descriptor (the holder ...)	Skills descriptor (the holder can ...)
Has practical, theoretical or technical knowledge and understanding of a subject or field of work to address problems that are well defined but complex and non-routine. Can analyse, interpret and evaluate relevant information and ideas. Is aware of the nature of approximate scope of the area of study or work. Has an informed awareness of different perspectives or approaches within the area of study or work.	Identify, adapt and use appropriate cognitive and practical skills to inform actions and address problems that are complex and non-routine while normally fairly well-defined. Review the effectiveness and appropriateness of methods, actions and results.

1.4 What are the assessment methods?

You will create a portfolio of evidence throughout your time working towards this qualification. This may include:

- Observation of practice by experienced tutors
- Written assignments
- Reflective practice
- Peer observation or feedback as witness testimony
- Artefacts

The portfolio must be your own work and centres will be responsible for verifying that work has been authenticated. CFI awarding takes any reports of suspected plagiarism or other forms of malpractice seriously and will investigate any such reports via the Malpractice Policy which is available on our website.

Note: Plagiarism This means claiming work to be your own which has been copied from someone or somewhere else. All the work you submit must be your own and not copied from anyone else unless you clearly reference the source of your information. This includes the use of AI (please see our AI policy for further information). If there is evidence that your work is copied from elsewhere, it will not be accepted, and you may be subject to a disciplinary procedure.

Section 2: Units

2.1 Unit List

This qualification has 4 units in total, each of which contributes to the learner's development of knowledge, understanding and skill.

All units are mandatory.

Unit title	Ofqual ref	Guided Learning Hours (GLH)	Total qualification time (TQT)	Credits
Unit 1 – Permaculture Design Skills	K/650/5394	22	42	4
Unit 2 – Permaculture Technical Design Skills	L/650/5395	22	42	4
Unit 3 – Strategic Business Skills for Agroecological and Regenerative Land-Based Systems	M/650/5396	21	42	4
Unit 4 – Operational Business Skills for an Agroecological and Regenerative Farming Business	R/650/5397	21	42	4
Qualification total		**92**	**128**	**12**

Unit 1: Permaculture Design Skills for Agroecological and Regenerative Land-Based Systems

Unit reference	K/650/5394	**Guided Learning Hours (GLH)**	22
Unit level	4	**Total Qualification Time (TQT)**	42

Unit aim

This unit provides opportunities for learners to develop a deeper understanding of the permaculture design practice in the context of agroecological and regenerative land-based systems. Outcomes from this unit may also be used towards the Permaculture Diploma.

Unit rationale

Learners will understand the requirements of the full design cycle for an agroecological and regenerative land-based system. Learners will also complete one design report.

Learning outcomes The learner will:	Assessment criteria The learner can:
1. Be able to carry out a site and client survey for a large-scale permaculture design	1.1 Use maps to research historical and current site usage
	1.2 Analyse the site survey for sectors and zones
	1.3 Undertake an input/output analysis
	1.4 Use permaculture observation methodologies to interpret a landscape
2. Be able to carry out a client survey process for a	2.1 Undertake a client survey process using a range of communication and facilitation skills

permaculture design	2.2 Analyse the client survey using a function and element analysis
	2.3 Carry out a SWOC analysis from the client survey
3. Be able to carry out a permaculture design process	3.1 Use the permaculture design process of element placement in zones and sectors
	3.2 Carry out a flow analysis using appropriate methods
	3.3 Evaluate how the completed design fulfils the permaculture ethics and at least three permaculture principles

Unit 2: Permaculture Technical Design Skills for Agroecological and Regenerative Land-Based Systems

Unit reference	L/650/5395	**Guided Learning Hours (GLH)**	22
Unit level	4	**Total Qualification Time (TQT)**	42

Unit aim

This unit provides opportunities for learners to explore a range of presentation skills for permaculture designs, to enhance their professional practice in presenting their design work to clients.

Unit rationale

The unit will develop the learners' professional practice within farm-scale designs including developing a range of presentation skills to a range of clients. Learners will develop an understanding of the Permaculture Design Process and how to further develop their Permaculture practice.

Learning outcomes The learner will:	Assessment criteria The learner can:
1. Be able to present a large-scale permaculture plan visually	1.1 Create a land-based plan in a suitable digital format
	1.2 Create a land-based plan in a suitable paper format
2. Be able to present a report on a large-scale permaculture design	2.1 Create a farm design report for a client
	2.2 Create a permaculture diploma design report in a suitable format
	2.3 Use visual aids and tables appropriately in the farm design report

Unit 3: Strategic Business Skills for an Agroecological and Regenerative Farming Business

Unit reference	M/650/5396	**Guided Learning Hours (GLH)**	21
Unit level	4	**Total Qualification Time (TQT)**	42

Unit aim

This unit provides opportunities for learners to understand how to apply business skills for an agroecological and regenerative farm business that reflects the core principles of this type of business system.

Unit rationale

In this unit, learners will understand the financial and legal requirements required to set up a new farm business, or to transition an existing farm to a new agroecological and regenerative farming business system, including rural grant schemes.

Learning outcomes The learner will:	Assessment criteria The learner can:
1. Understand strategic management skills needed in an agroecological and regenerative farming system	1.1 Explain the key requirements of a business plan
	1.2 Critically evaluate two different business structures that can be chosen by agroecological and regenerative systems
2. Understand the legal requirements and rural grants available to farming systems	2.1 Explain one type of land tenure system suitable for agroecological and regenerative systems
	2.2 Explain the legal and rural grant requirements for setting up a new farm business
	2.3 Explain the rural subsidy, grants and targets

	available to agroecological and regenerative farming systems, in the context of UK agricultural policy
3. Understand business diversification and adding value to agroecological and regenerative farming systems	3.1 Describe the benefits and challenges of one type of farm business collaboration
	3.2 Explain one legal method for formalising a farm business collaboration

Unit 4: Operational Business Skills for an Agroecological and Regenerative Farming Business

Unit reference	R/650/5397	**Guided Learning Hours (GLH)**	21
Unit level	4	**Total Qualification Time (TQT)**	42

Unit aim

This unit provides learners with opportunities to develop operational business skills for an agroecological and regenerative farm business that reflects the core principles of this type of business system.

Unit rationale

The unit allows learners to understand the operational financial, legal, human resources and marketing requirements for a new farm business, or to transition an existing farm to a new agroecological and regenerative farming business system.

Learning outcomes The learner will:	Assessment criteria The learner can:
1. Understand the financial and operational aspects of running an agroecological and regenerative business	1.1 Explain key financial considerations for setting up a land-based business
	1.2 Explain the day-to-day running of a land-based business
	1.3 Create financial reports for a land-based business
	2.1 Explain why a job description and contract is important for farm staff

2. Understand the HR operational aspects of an agroecological and regenerative farming business	2.2 Explain why a health and safety policy is critical to an agroecological and regenerative business
	2.3 Explain why annual staff reviews are critical for effective management of and progression for staff
3. Understand marketing and sales aspects for an agroecological and regenerative farm	3.1 Analyse two suitable marketing models/routes to market for agroecological and regenerative systems
	3.2 Explain digital marketing and sales systems for agroecological and regenerative systems
	3.3 Describe key details that a marketing strategy for a regenerative and agroecological farm should contain

Section 3: Delivering this qualification

3.1 Requirements for Centres

Centres must be approved by CFI awarding. In order to be approved to offer this qualification, centres must have:

- Staff who are appropriately qualified and experienced in regenerative farming and land-based systems
- A learning environment that combines both theoretical and practical experiences, including work experience and placement

For more information about the process of becoming a centre, please contact us at info@cfiwarding.com or refer to our Centre Handbook (www.cfiawarding.com).

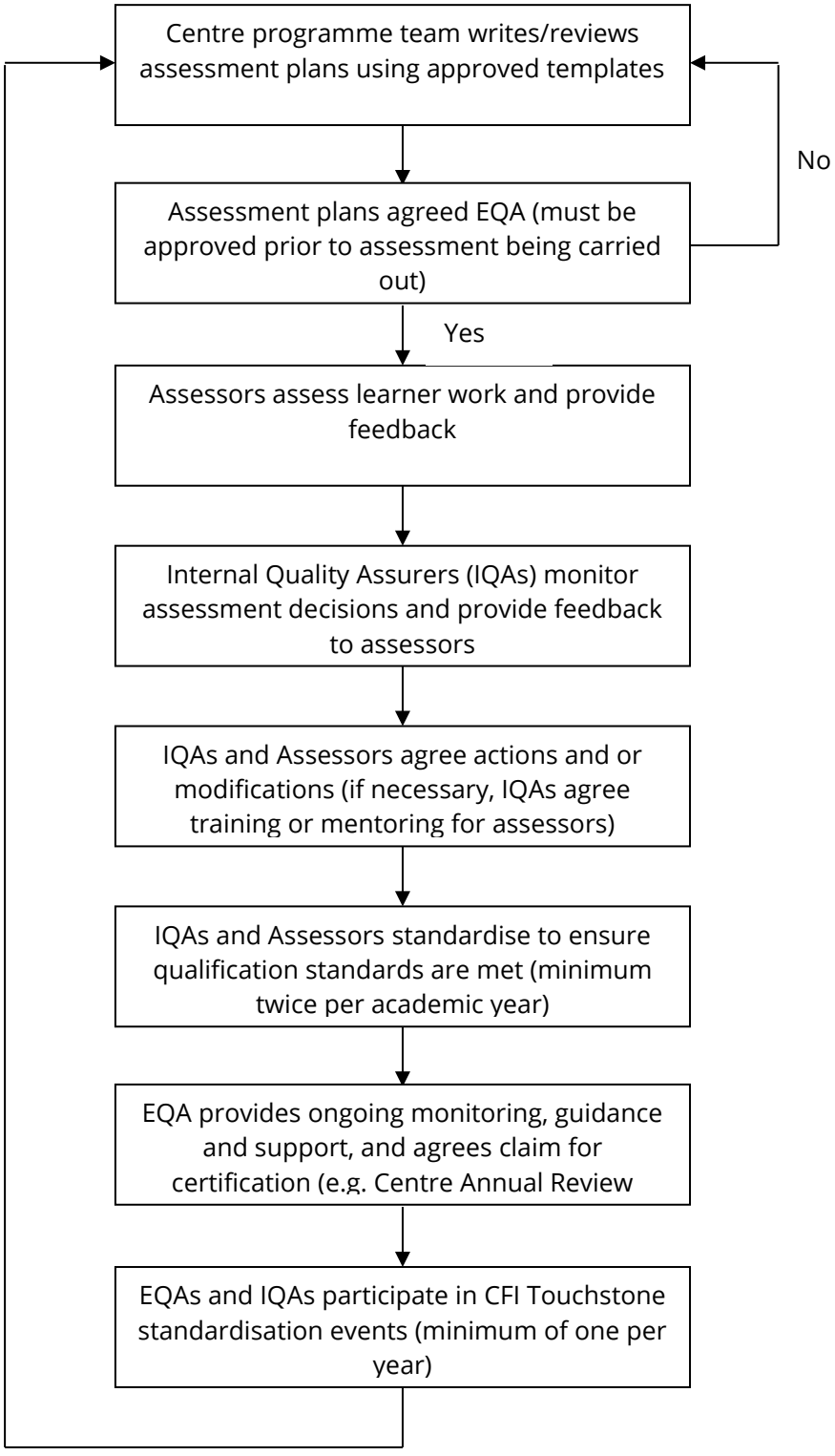
Learners wishing to use units in Permaculture (units 1 and 2) towards a Permaculture Diploma recognised by the Permaculture Association must show evidence that these units have been delivered and assessed by a Permaculture Association-certified teacher. Please see www.permaculture.org.uk for further details.

3.2 Quality Assurance

The CFI awarding approach to quality assurance is underpinned by educational values which address the holistic development and transformation of the learner. In these qualifications teaching, learning and assessment should be interconnected in order to support each individual to reach their full potential.

The primary aim of the CFI Quality Team is to support centres in delivering the best possible learning experience and high levels of achievement for learners. Centres will be allocated an External Quality Assurer (EQA) by the CFI QA Team.

Centres delivering this qualification are required to follow this CFI Quality Assurance process:


Centre programme team writes/reviews assessment plans using approved templates
No
Assessment plans agreed EQA (must be approved prior to assessment being carried out)
Yes
Assessors assess learner work and provide feedback
Internal Quality Assurers (IQAs) monitor assessment decisions and provide feedback to assessors
IQAs and Assessors agree actions and or modifications (if necessary, IQAs agree training or mentoring for assessors)
IQAs and Assessors standardise to ensure qualification standards are met (minimum twice per academic year)
EQA provides ongoing monitoring, guidance and support, and agrees claim for certification (e.g. Centre Annual Review
EQAs and IQAs participate in CFI Touchstone standardisation events (minimum of one per year)

3.3 Assessment Planning Guidance

This qualification uses a centre-devised approach to assessment. In planning their assessments, centres should ensure that assessment activities:

- are fit for purpose
- can be delivered efficiently
- meet the assessment criteria
- permit Reasonable Adjustments to be made, while minimising the need for them
- allow each learner to generate evidence which can be authenticated
- allow the specified level of attainment detailed in this specification to be reached by a learner who has attained the required level of knowledge, skills and understanding
- allow assessors to be able to differentiate accurately and consistently between a range of attainments by learners

They should also ensure that:

- sufficient time is allowed for assessment planning
- assessment tasks do not produce unreasonably adverse outcomes for learners who share a common attribute
- methods of assessment are in line with the assessment requirements in this specification
- reasonable timescales for assessment and feedback are given to learners
- a timely quality assurance process is conducted

3.4 Training and Support

To support centres in carrying out high-quality assessment and quality assurance practice, the following training and support measures have been put in place for this qualification:

- All centre assessors and quality assurance staff for this qualification are required to meet National Occupational Standards for assessors and IQAs. National qualifications (NVQs) are available for these roles. CFI awarding can also provide customised assessor and IQA education as well as review of assessor and IQA practice
- Assessors and IQAs must keep an up to date CPD log and be able to demonstrate the relevance of their CPD to this qualification and their role
- Handbooks, exemplars and templates are available from the CFI QA Team
- Where required, a customised Quality Assurance Action and Development Plan will be provided by CFI for centres

Please note: there may be a charge for training and resources provided by CFI.

3.5 Policies and Procedures

Each centre is required to work in partnership with CFI awarding to ensure that all learners have the best possible experience whilst taking this qualification and are treated fairly. Our commitment to this is supported by our Centre Handbook, which all centres should become familiar with.

CFI awarding has policies and procedures in place to support centres and learners. All centres must also implement their own policies, which comply with CFI's requirements – these will be checked during centre approval and in subsequent centre monitoring activities. It is the centre's responsibility to make relevant policies available to learners.

Relevant policies include:

- Learner Complaints Policy: which allows learners to take action if they feel they have been treated unfairly
- Learner Appeals Policy: which allows learners to appeal decisions made by centres
- Reasonable Adjustments Policy: which allows centres to make any necessary adjustments to assessments in the light of learners' individual circumstances at the start of the programme
- Special Considerations Policy: which allows centres to request extensions for learners in light of learners' individual circumstances which have delayed their completion of the programme
- Malpractice and Maladministration Policy: which gives a framework through which concerns about the delivery and assessment of the qualification can be addressed
- Equality and Diversity Policies: which ensures centres treat learners fairly and without any bias

CFI policies and other key documents are available on our website at www.cfiawarding.com or upon request via info@cfiawarding.com