**Forest School Association (FSA)**

**Preamble: Trainer’s Quality Assurance Scheme (V15)**

**What is the Trainer’s Quality Assurance Scheme?**

* The Trainer’s Quality Assurance Scheme has been developed as a reflective process that supports trainers to develop their practice.
* This membership type is a route for those who train and assess Forest School courses to become FSA endorsed through a rigorous Quality Assurance process.
* As a Trainer Member the FSA will be endorsing that trainers are providing quality Forest School Training in line with the 6 core Forest School principles and that they are following a quality training process.
* We will use a three stage process to enable us to fully explore a trainer’s practice: 1) desktop assessment 2) interviews with trainees and 3) a panel interview with the trainer.

**Who is the scheme for?**

* The scheme is currently only open to those who both train and assess Forest School courses (this will be reviewed in due course).
* The Trainer’s Quality Assurance Scheme is open to anyone who facilitates level 1, 2 and/or 3 Forest School Training.
* This membership type applies to the individual trainer (not the organisation) and is therefore a personal and portable endorsement. The FSA have a separate provider membership scheme suitable for Schools and Organisations who provide Forest School experiences to clients.
* The applicant must facilitate at least 50% of the face to face elements of the course AND must act as the main point of contact/Lead Trainer for some cohorts.
* Recently qualified trainers can register for this scheme (i.e. go through Stage 1 and get on the ‘FSA Registered Forest School Trainer’ map/database) before they have trained any trainees. Applicants will need to have trained and assessed at least one cohort in order to pass through Stages 2 and 3 though.

**What are the benefits of the scheme?**

* Trainers in receipt of the FSA endorsement will be able to publicly demonstrate that they meet a variety of standards associated with providing quality training experiences in line with the 6 core Forest School principles.
* A personal and portable endorsement of a person’s quality training provision (because it applies to an individual not an organisation).
* A personalised e-badge and a certificate to display to publicise this endorsement.
* Presence on the public map and database of FSA Registered (after Stage 1) and Endorsed (after Stage 3) Forest School Trainers for those trying to identify a suitable trainer.
* Access to FSA branded materials such as clothes and badges.
* Voting rights within the FSA.
* Access to good practice and annual training for Forest School Trainers.
* An FSA membership discount code to offer to trainees (50% discount code made available to trainers upon Endorsement via ‘Basecamp’). Your students will be able to use the code to become members for £10.

**What costs are involved?**

* Due to the rigour of the scheme there is significant FSA staff and assessor time involved in the endorsement process. There is therefore a cost to trainers to undertake the endorsement, which has been calculated to cover costs only. The FSA Trainer’s Quality Assurance Scheme will not be generating surplus income for the FSA.
* The Quality Assurance Scheme has 2 associated costs 1) a one-off charge relating to the Quality Assurance process itself and 2) an annual charge for membership as a trainer. There are also optional marketing add-ons trainers can choose to subscribe to.
* The one-off charge for taking trainers through the Quality Assurance Scheme is £400 in total. This payment will be spilt into two invoices of £200; one issued upon submission of their Stage 1 application and the other upon endorsement at the end of Stage 3.
* The annual charge relating to membership for a trainer will be £150. This annual charge will be invoiced as soon as trainers start receiving membership benefits (i.e. when trainers get added to the ‘FSA Registered Forest School Trainer’ online map and database at the end of Stage 1) and annually thereafter.
* The optional marketing add-ons trainers can choose to opt into include:
	+ Once Endorsed you can market any Level 1, 2 or 3 courses on the FSA website and FSA Facebook and Twitter accounts. This will cost £30 per course.
	+ Purchasing from a selection of ethical ‘FSA Endorsed Forest School Trainer’ branded clothing such as fleeces and T-Shirts. Prices start from £19 and upon Endorsement at the end of Stage 3 trainers are provided with the details needed to order these.

**Will I still be a member of the FSA?**

* ‘Registered Trainer’ and ‘Endorsed Trainer’ are membership types in their own right. As soon as you have met our Stage 1 criteria you will become an FSA member and your annual membership fee will be levied then and annually thereafter.
* At the point of applying you may be an individual member. It is FSA policy not to offer refunds on membership fees so, depending on when you apply, you may have a period of a few months when you have concurrent memberships running
* You may choose to plan your application so that it coincides with the expiration of your individual membership. If that is the case, please be aware that if you let your individual membership lapse and you have a period of not being a member you will not receive membership benefits for that time.

**What do each of the Stages involve?**

* **Stage 1 desktop assessment** - our verifier undertakes a desktop assessment of information relating to the trainer, their course/s and their organisation provided via an application form and a series of documents they share with us. The required standard to become a Stage 1 FSA Registered Forest School Trainer is set out in the guidance accompanying each section on the *Stage 1 Application Form*. As a guide, we estimate that the completion of Stage 1 Application Form and the gathering of supporting documents can take between 0.5 and 2 days, depending on how many policies require revision. If all of the criteria are met, applicants will become an FSA Registered Forest School Trainer. Upon fulfilling our Stage 1 requirements, trainers will be added to our publicly searchable ‘FSA Registered Forest School Trainer’ online map and database and issued with an e-badge.
* **Stage 2 interviews with trainees** - our assessors explore the outcomes of training by conducting telephone interviews with up to 5 recent trainees (trained in the last 2 years). If, through our conversations with trainees, trainers demonstrate sound Forest School Training outcomes they are eligible to remain an FSA Registered Forest School Trainer. If we still have queries about a trainer’s practice after Stage 2 we can link them with a [mentor](http://www.forestschoolassociation.org/mentors-forest-school-trainer-quality-assurance-scheme/) who can work with them to develop practice in any of our areas of concern. Having successfully come through Stage 2 a trainer will be eligible to remain on our publicly searchable ‘FSA Registered Forest School Trainer’ online map and database, and proceed to Stage 3.
* **Stage 3 interview** - together with a small panel, trainers will participate in a Skype interviewwhere we explore skills and attitudes. Dependent upon the outcome of this interview applicants become a Stage 3 FSA Endorsed Forest School Trainer. If we still have queries about practice after Stage 3 we can link trainers with a [mentor](http://www.forestschoolassociation.org/mentors-forest-school-trainer-quality-assurance-scheme/) (a trainer already in receipt of the FSA endorsement) who can work with them to develop practice in any of our areas of concern. When trainers have completed Stage 3 of the Trainer’s Quality Assurance Scheme they will receive a new, prominent pin on our publicly searchable ‘FSA Endorsed Forest School Trainer’ online map and database which enables potential clients to identify a reputable trainer. At this point trainers will also be eligible to opt in to additional paid-for benefits to market your services further through the FSA’s website and social media sites, as well as purchase ‘FSA Endorsed Trainer’ branded clothing.
* **NB** Trainers have a maximum of 24 months from the date of registration (i.e. meeting our Stage 1 criteria and becoming a Trainer Member) to become endorsed. If a trainer has not been through Stage 3 after 24 months their membership will be cancelled and if they wish to apply for endorsement again they will have to begin Stage 1 again (and be liable for the associated cost) to ensure that we have up to date information relating to policy, procedures, CPD, insurance, first aid etc. Trainers should consider this timescale as they gather evidence and move between stages.

**What are my responsibilities after endorsement?**

* We expect FSA registered and endorsed trainers to only deliver Forest School training of the standard outlined in their Stage 1 application. The FSA will not continue to endorse trainers who begin to deliver courses that do not meet our benchmarks, for example fewer face-to-face days.
* In order to remain an FSA Endorsed Forest School Trainer, the FSA will request that trainers complete an annual declaration which asks questions about CPD, course content and changes in practice. Wherever criteria are no longer met trainers will need to declare this. If some criteria are highlighted as no longer met we will work with trainers to support them in reaching the standard again so that they are able to remain an FSA Endorsed Forest School Trainer.
* All FSA Endorsed Forest School Trainers will be required to attend a biennial Train the Trainers event (once every 2 years) arranged by the FSA. The cost of this event will be heavily subsidised but a nominal fee to trainers may be applied. This event will be held annually for those that wish to attend every year.
* There is an expectation that once trainers reach the standard to become FSA Endorsed they share practice among the network. Practice can be shared through videos, written case-studies or facilitation of sessions at biennial trainer’s events. The FSA will request submission of good practice via our annual declaration.
* Upon endorsement Trainers receive details relating to an online community called ‘Basecamp’ which enables you to network together with the other FSA Endorsed Forest School Trainers. You will be able to ask questions, share documents and have discussions.
* We expect Endorsed Trainers to informally support trainers going through the application process via our closed ‘ FSA Trainers Group’ Facebook page. People can have access to this page as soon as they submit their Stage 1 application form and it is a tool they can use to ask for help with any aspect of their application.
* For more complex queries from applicants we can offer to link them to a [mentor](http://www.forestschoolassociation.org/mentors-forest-school-trainer-quality-assurance-scheme/). Upon Endorsement you will asked if you wish to act as a mentor. There is no obligation to become a mentor.
* Should the FSA decide that we need to recruit more Assessors (to undertake Stage 2 and Stage 3 interviews) we will approach Endorsed Trainers. If demand for the scheme means that we need to appoint more assessors we will write to Endorsed Trainers outlining what the role involves and requesting expressions of interest.
* Endorsed Trainers are also expected to be occasionally available to act as a counter-signatory for applicants going through the process.

**Is there any support to help me through this process?**

* An FSA Development Officer (currently Nell Seal) will be available for phone or Skype discussions as trainers work through the three stages of the scheme: Email: salixeducation@gmail.com Skype: nellseal
* For ongoing straightforward queries you will able to use our closed ‘FSA Trainers’ Facebook group. You will receive an invitation to this group after you submit your Stage 1 application.
* The FSA can also signpost to an experienced [mentor](http://www.forestschoolassociation.org/mentors-forest-school-trainer-quality-assurance-scheme/) to support trainers through Stages 2 and 3 if desired. The trainer may be liable for a charge relating to this mentoring and this will be agreed directly with the mentor.
* NB Once an applicant becomes an FSA Endorsed Forest School Trainer they may opt to become a mentor or an assessor, should any vacancies for these roles become available. If trainers do decide to become a mentor or assessor, they will be recompensed for any work they undertake.
* In the event of you being dissatisfied with any element of the process there will be a chain of investigation as follows: Development Officer > FSA Chief Exec > Endorsed Trainer’s Group > Board of FSA Directors. In the first instance then please address your concerns to the FSA Development Officer (currently Nell Seal via salixeducation@gmail.com).

**How do you ensure applicants are getting a fair and consistent assessment?**

FSA Directors who sat on the Trainer’s Quality Assurance Scheme Working Group agreed an approach to standardisation:

* One in every ten Stage 1 Applications will be verified by both the Development Officer and an Endorsed Trainer to check that decisions about benchmarks are fair and record keeping in thorough.
* In the event of a new assessor undertaking Stage 2 interviews the Development Officer will sit in on one of those to ensure a standard approach to questioning and an appropriate interviewing style.
* Thereafter each Assessor will have the Development Officer observe on of their interviews every 2 years to ensure standards are maintained.
* The Development Officer will always be present during Stage 3 interviews to ensure consistency.
* If Assessors have queries or concerns about any aspect of the scheme they are encouraged to liaise with the Development Officer and there is an email group for Assessor queries.
* As stated in a previous section, in the event of you being dissatisfied with any element of the process there will be a chain of investigation as follows: Development Officer > FSA Chief Exec > Endorsed Trainer’s Group > Board of FSA Directors. In the first instance then please address your concerns to the FSA Development Officer (currently Nell Seal via salixeducation@gmail.com).

**How do I apply?**

* Digest the information in this preamble document
* Visit <https://www.forestschoolassociation.org/forest-school-trainer-quality-assurance-scheme/>
* Download the Application Form and check you meet the evidence requirement for each question.
* On the above webpage, scroll down to the online form to notify us of your intention to apply and make your initial payment. Choose your preferred method and pay us the first half of your registration fee (£200 now and £200 upon endorsement at the end of Stage 3).
* Upon completion of your application form, save a Word version of it and return it to us via Dropbox (instructions can be found on the application form) along with your supporting documentation.
* Ensure you send an email to [salixeducation@gmail.com](salixeducation%40gmail.com%20) to advise that you have submitted.

**What if I have been on maternity leave or had extended sickness absence during the preceding 2 year period?**

We will make allowances for maternity leave or sickness absence during the 2 year period leading up to applying, as follows:

* Our requirement for ongoing delivery practice will be approached on a pro-rata basis. We currently require an applicant to have 28 hours of delivery with at least two groups over the previous 2 years. We will base pro-rata calculations on your actual length of absence, up to a maximum of 12 months (maternity) or 6 months (sickness absence). As an example, if a person had taken 12 months of maternity leave we would reduce our requirement to only needing to have 14 hours of delivery experience. We would still expect all applicants to have worked with at least 2 client groups though.
* Likewise, we would approach our CPD requirement on a pro-rata basis. We require 28 hours of type 1 CPD over the past 2 years. For example, if a person had 6 months of sickness absence we would reduce this requirement to only needing to have 21 hours of Type 1 CPD in place. We would still expect all applicants to have undertaken CPD that relates to 3 of the 5 units though.
* However, our requirement that a trainer must have had 2 years’ experience of facilitating Forest School sessions prior to becoming a trainer will still stand. We would not accept, for example, 1 year of leading Forest School groups and 1 year of maternity leave.