Centre Quality Handbook for Verified Qualifications

September 2024

Section 1: Introduction

This document provides guidance for organisations wishing to become WJEC approved centres, and centres already delivering WJEC qualifications and/or assessments.

It covers the centre and qualification approval process as well as providing guidance on assessment and quality assurance for the following qualifications:

- Essential Skills for Work and Life
- Essential Skills Wales
- Pathways to Employment: Preparing for Employment
- Pathways to Employment: Securing Employment
- Pathways to Employment: Self-Development and Wellbeing
- Sustainability in Action
- Sustainability in Context

The information in this handbook should be read in conjunction with the qualification specifications and any associated guidance for the specific qualification(s) being delivered.

How to use this handbook

The handbook is presented in seven sections, each covering a specific aspect of the assessment and quality assurance process. Each section can be downloaded as an individual document or combined with the other sections to form a comprehensive handbook.

Sections	Purpose
1 Introduction	This section outlines the purpose of the handbook and provides an overview of each section
2 WJEC Quality Criteria for Verified Qualifications	This section outlines our quality criteria for verified qualifications and the tariff of sanctions which will apply should a centre be non-compliant. The criteria published in this section underpin our quality assurance processes for verified qualifications.
3 Centre and qualification Approval	The section summarises the requirements for, and process by which centres can apply for, centre and qualification approval.
4 Assessment	This chapter provides an overview of the assessment requirements for our verified qualifications.
5 Internal quality assurance	This chapter provides an overview of the internal quality assurance cycle for WJEC verified qualifications.
6 External quality assurance	This chapter provides an overview of the external quality assurance cycle for WJEC verified qualifications.

Section 2: Quality criteria for verified qualifications

Section Contents

Introduction
Quality criteria
- Management systems
- Resources
- Candidate support
- Assessment and verification
- Records

Sanctions

Introduction

This section sets out our quality criteria for verified qualifications and the tariff of sanctions which will apply should a centre be non-compliant.

Centres are required to comply with the quality criteria at all times. These criteria are used as part of our external quality assurance activities as set out in Sections 3 and 5 of this handbook.

Any action plans or recommendations are referenced to these criteria to allow centres to improve and develop practice.

It is not possible for us to check a centre's compliance against all of these criteria at the Qualification Approval stage as some criteria can only be checked when the qualification is being delivered and learners have been registered. The table below shows which criteria will be check during qualification approval and what will be checked as part of post approval monitoring activities (external quality assurance visits and sampling).

Quality criteria

Management systems				
		Checked as part of:	Qualification approval	Post approval monitoring
	Criteria	**Possible sources of evidence**		
1.0	The centre's aims and policies are supported by senior management and understood by the assessment team	Documented quality procedures Progress reports and staff updates		✓
1.1	The centre's access and fair assessment policy is understood and complied with by assessors and candidates	Documented policies and procedures Access and fair assessment policy review mechanisms		✓
1.2	The roles, responsibilities, authorities and accountabilities of the assessment and verification team across all assessment sites are clearly defined, allocated and understood	Documented Internal Quality Assurance procedures An organisational chart Documented and signed agreements indicating the lines of accountability of partner organisations in relation to the management of assessment and internal quality assurance Records of all assessment sites and personnel CVs of the assessment team and Internal Quality assurers		✓
1.3	There is effective communication within the assessment team and with WJEC	Staff handbooks and updates Organisation charts Minutes of team meetings Records of communication with the awarding body		✓
1.4	WJEC is notified of any changes that may affect the centre's ability to meet the centre approval requirements	Notification of changes to the assessment and internal quality assurance team Notification of changes to resources		✓
1.5	Assessors and verifiers have sufficient time, resources, and authority to perform their roles and responsibilities effectively	A record of assessor/candidate allocation Candidate/assessor ratios and time allocation Confirmation from assessors/ Internal Quality Assurers		✓

1.6	Registration and certification information supplied to WJEC is complete and accurate	Records of candidate registration details and certificate claims		✓
1.7	Queries about the specification, assessment or related WJEC material are resolved and recorded	Records of queries raised with WJEC Records/minutes of queries raised with Internal Quality Assurers		✓
1.8	Candidate records and details of achievements are accurate, up to date, securely stored and available for external verification and auditing	Candidate registration details Candidate assessment records Evidence portfolios Security and access arrangements		✓
1.9	Requests for access to premises, records, information, candidates, and staff for the purpose of external verification are complied with	Data and information management systems Candidate tracking systems Internal Quality Assurer and assessment records		✓

Resources				
		Checked as part of:	**Qualification approval**	**Post approval monitoring**
	Criteria	**Possible sources of evidence**		
2.0	Sufficient competent and qualified assessors and Internal Quality Assurers are in place to meet the demand for assessment and quality assurance activity	CVs and development plans for the assessment team A list of qualified assessors and Internal Quality Assurers Assessor/candidate ratios	✓	✓
2.1	A staff development programme is established for the assessment and quality assurance team in line with identified needs	Staff induction and guidance materials Records of meetings/ briefings/ updates. Records of individual development plans Action plans to acquire the relevant qualifications		✓
2.2	Resource needs are accurately identified in relation to the qualification and resources are made available	Records of resource availability Evidence of any additional resources obtained	✓	✓
2.3	Equipment and accommodation used for the purposes of assessment comply with the requirements of relevant health and safety acts	Public employee liability certificates Records of equipment and accommodation Maintenance schedules Health and safety policies	✓	✓

Candidate support				
		Checked as part of:	Qualification approval	Post approval monitoring
	Criteria	**Possible sources of evidence**		
3.0	Information, advice and guidance about qualification procedures and practices are provided to candidates and potential candidates	Candidate guidance and induction materials Details of support services available. Appeals procedures Confirmation by candidates		✓
3.1	Candidates' development needs are matched against the requirements of the qualification and an agreed individual assessment plan is established	Candidate initial assessment procedures Candidate assessment plans Learner/trainee contracts		✓
3.2	Candidates have regular opportunities to review their progress and goals and to revise their assessment plan accordingly	Candidate assessment plan Frequency of review meetings Examples assessment plan revision		✓
3.3	Access to assessment is encouraged using a range of valid assessment methods	Assessment plans and candidate assessment records Provision for candidates with particular assessment requirements		✓
3.4	Particular assessment requirements of candidates are identified and met where possible	Materials/equipment/facilities to support candidates with particular requirements		✓
3.5	Established appeals procedure that is documented and made available to all candidates	Documented appeals procedure including details of grounds for appeal and timescales Records of appeals made and their outcomes		✓
3.6	Unit certification is made available to candidates	Records of units registered/claimed/ awarded Induction materials		✓

Assessment and verification				
		Checked as part of:	**Qualification approval**	**Post approval monitoring**
	Criteria	**Possible sources of evidence**		
4.0	Internal quality assurance procedures and activities are clearly documented, consistent with national requirements and ensure the quality and consistency of assessment	Internal verification plans and reports Sampling strategy and schedule of activity Records of assessment team meetings. Assessor networking opportunities		✓
4.1	Assessment decisions and practices are regularly sampled, and findings are acted upon to ensure consistency and fairness	Sampled assessments (observation, candidate portfolios etc) Internal Quality Assurance plans and records of internal quality assurance activity Records of assessment sampling strategies Minutes of assessment team meetings Records of networking - standardisation events		✓
4.2	Records of internal quality assurance activity maintained in line with WJEC requirements and made available for the purposes of auditing	Internal quality assurance plan and sampling record Minutes of assessment team meetings		✓
4.3	The effectiveness of the internal quality assurance strategy is reviewed against national requirements and corrective measures are implemented	Internal reviews of sampling strategies External verifier reports Evidence of corrective actions taken		✓
4.4	Assessment is conducted by qualified and occupationally competent staff	Details of the assessment team including occupational background, experience, possession of relevant qualifications Details of countersigning arrangements for any assessment decisions made by unqualified assessors		✓

4.5	Internal quality assurance is conducted by appropriately qualified and experienced staff	Details of Internal Quality Assurers occupational background, experience, and relevant qualifications Details of countersigning arrangements for any Internal Quality Assurerance decisions made by unqualified Internal Quality Assurers		✓

Records				
		Checked as part of:	**Qualification approval**	**Sampling activity**
	Criteria	**Possible sources of evidence**		
5.0	The centre's achievements are monitored and reviewed and used to inform future centre qualification developmental activity	Internal audit/self-assessment arrangements Records of findings against the approval requirements Evidence of corrective actions taken/implemented		✓
5.1	Candidate, employer, and other feedback is used to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of qualification provision against the centre's stated aims and policies, leading to continuous improvement	Evaluation forms/surveys Users' charter/customer service statements		✓
5.2	Actions identified by external quality assurance visits are disseminated to appropriate staff and corrective measures are implemented	External Quality Assurer report(s) circulated to the assessment team and senior management Action plans		✓
5.3	Information and recording systems enable candidates' achievements to be monitored and reviewed in relation to the centre's equal opportunities policy	Achievement records in relation to the access and fair assessment policy Statistical information on achievement and certification rates analysed by factors such as ethnic origin, disability, and gender		✓

Sanctions

The table below indicates the tariff of sanctions WJEC and/or WJEC External Quality Assurers (EQAs) will use to report on centre compliance. Any required actions which need to be addressed by the centre staff will result in a recommendation of the relevant sanction.

WJEC and WJEC EQAs may also make recommendations to centres on areas for improvement.

Level of transgression	Sanction	Rationale
0	Recommendation recorded in EQA (External Quality Assurance) report	Centre is compliant with the quality criteria but does not reflect accepted good practice.
1	Entry in action plan	Non-compliance with the quality criteria but no threat to the integrity of assessment decisions
2	Removal of direct claims status, i.e., claims for certification must be authorised by the EQA	Close scrutiny of the integrity of assessment decisions required
3	a. Suspension of registration for specific qualifications b. Suspension of certification	a. Threat to candidates Loss of the integrity of assessment decisions – risk of invalid claims for certification
4	Withdrawal of qualification approval of specific qualifications	Irretrievable breakdown in management and quality assurance of specific qualifications.
5	Withdrawal of qualification approval for all qualifications	Irretrievable breakdown in management and quality assurance of all qualifications run by the centre.

Section 3: Centre and Qualification Approval

Section Contents

Centre approval
Qualification approval
Post approval monitoring

The qualifications covered by this handbook require two types of approval:

- centre approval
- qualification approval

Centre approval

Centre approval is based upon an organisation's ability to meet the centre approval requirements can be found in the following documents:

- JCQ General Regulations for Approved Centres
- General Conditions for WJEC Centres

Our approved centres must adhere to the requirements set out in these documents (as relevant to the qualifications being offered).

If your centre wishes to offer these qualifications and is not yet approved as a centre, please contact our Centre Support department (centres@wjec.co.uk) for an application form.

When centre approval has been granted, you will be given either an NCN or WJEC centre number depending on the type and range of qualifications you intend to deliver, and the category of centre approval granted.

All approved centres with a national centre number (NCN) must complete the annual declaration sent by NCN. Failure to do so will result in suspension of WJEC registration.

Qualification approval

Qualification approval confirms that your centre has the required resources and processes in place to support the delivery, assessment and internal quality assurance of the qualifications listed on your application.

The Qualification Approval Process involves a remote/desk-based review of evidence submitted by your organisation to demonstrate compliance with specified aspects of our quality criteria for verified qualifications and may include a visit to your centre or remote verification activity.

We aim to provide the qualification approval decision within 30 working days of the submission of the completed application, with four possible outcomes:

- Qualification approval granted
- Qualification approval granted subject to action plan
- Qualification approval withheld subject to action plan
- Qualification approval denied

Qualification approval is deemed to have been granted when we confirm the status in writing to the centre, or when the approval has been approved via the Connect system, and not before.

If you already have qualification approval for one or more of our verified qualifications, you can seek to expand your qualification approval to offer additional qualifications. You can apply for approval to offer additional qualifications at any time. You will have to show that your centre continues to meet our Quality Criteria as you deliver and assess your qualification(s).

Post approval monitoring

Any actions that are identified and agreed during the qualification approval process will be monitored to ensure that they are completed in the agreed timescales.

We also routinely monitor all our approved centres to ensure that they continue to have the necessary management and quality assurance systems and that they meet the assessment and internal verification requirements for the qualifications being offered. This is completed as part of our external quality assurance activities

Please refer to section 6 of this handbook for more information about external quality assurance.

We reserve the right to withdraw qualification approval if no candidates have been entered for a qualification after one year of receiving centre approval.

Section 4: Internal assessment

Section Contents

Introduction

Principles of assessment for WJEC verified qualifications

The assessment cycle

Initial assessment

- Accessibility and reasonable adjustments

Planning assessment

Assessing evidence

- Types of evidence
- Recording evidence
- Use of e-portfolios

Making assessment decisions and providing feedback

Reviewing progress

Templates

Introduction

Internal assessment is the process of judging an individual learners' competence against the learning outcomes and assessment criteria as set out in the qualification specification. Each centre must appoint assessors in sufficient numbers and with sufficient experience and expertise (as set out in the qualification specification) to carry out the internal assessment of the units. We will provide training for assessors, and support material, including sample documentation and assessment activities, is also available.

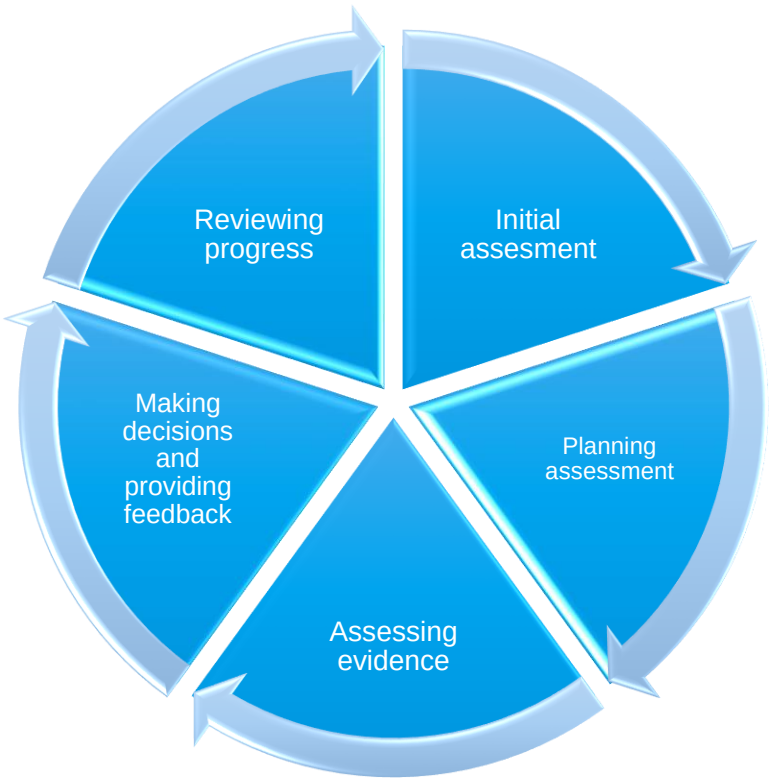
Principles of assessment for WJEC verified qualifications

The Principles of Assessment are known by the acronym VARCS:

- **Valid** – the work is relevant to what is being assessed, and is at the right level
- **Authentic** – the work has been produced solely by the learner
- **Reliable** – the work is consistent over time
- **Current** – the work is still relevant at the time of the assessment
- **Sufficient** – the work covers all the requirements at the time

The assessment cycle

Regardless of the subject you are assessing, you should follow the assessment cycle illustrated below.



The cycle will continue until all aspects of the assessment have been achieved by the learner.

Initial assessment

An initial assessment of each learner should be made before the start of their programme to identify:

- if the learner has any specific training needs
- support and guidance they may need when working towards their qualification
- any units they have already completed, or credit they have accumulated which is relevant to the qualifications
- the appropriate type and level of qualification
- whether a learner has any prior learning or achievements that could be recognised as prior learning
- current level of literacy, numeracy, and digital/ICT skills
- any relevant previous sector/work experience.

It is recommended that learners are provided with an induction programme so that they fully understand the requirements of the qualification, their responsibilities as a learner, and the responsibilities of the centre. The induction programme should also include clear career pathways and progression routes.

Accessibility and reasonable adjustments

All qualifications have been designed to offer fair access for all learners. It is important however that you identify as early as possible whether learners have disabilities or

difficulties which will put them at a disadvantage in the assessment situation and select appropriate units or make adjustments that will allow them to demonstrate attainment.

It is expected that, normally, individual learners' abilities, interests and needs will be appropriately catered for by the centre through the choice of units available.

Where required, adjustments can be made to standard assessment arrangements based on the individual needs of learners.

Please refer to the JCQ (Joint Council for Qualifications) booklet Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments at www.jcq.org.uk.

Planning assessment

Assessors are responsible for planning assessment with learners, including:

- agreeing the best methods of assessing a learner in relation to their individual circumstances
- agreeing the best source of evidence to use for units
- agreeing a flexible timetable for unit completion and assessment
- confirming when specific assessments will take place (times, dates, and places)
- liaising with employers/mentors (If applicable).

Assessors must make a note of their assessment planning. The assessment plan should clearly outline what the assessment will entail. For example, what criteria the assessment will target, what type of evidence the learner should produce/carry out, what the learner needs to prepare).

Assessing evidence

Types of evidence

A variety evidence types can be utilised to demonstrate a learner's competence. Assessment can use a combination of some, or all these types and it is the responsibility of the assessor to ensure that as wide a range of valid types are used.

Observation

Observation by the assessor as the learner carries out tasks or activities can contribute to satisfying the assessment criteria. Observations can take place in the workplace, or in any other place where the learner is undertaking practical activities. Assessors need to plan observation to take advantage of any skills or activities that occur naturally in the learner's environment, and to make the best use of the available resources. Technology can be used to support observation, allowing assessors to judge evidence from a distance, or at a later stage. Digital photographs and audio/visual recording can also be used with the prior agreement of the learner.

Professional Discussion

Professional discussion is planned by the assessor and learner. The discussion is based on a particular topic and allows the learner to discuss their knowledge and opinion. The discussion should be planned by the learner who decides on the areas they would like to discuss; the learner should also provide the assessor with their notes.

The discussion can be recorded via an audio file or scripted by the assessor. The evidence should be referenced to the units of the qualification to show where competence claims are met.

Guided discussion

Guided discussion is planned by the assessor and learner. The discussion is based on a particular topic and allows the learner to discuss their knowledge and opinion.

The discussion is led by both the assessor and the learner with the assessor prompting the learner or structuring the discussion so that it is manageable for the learner.

The discussion can be recorded via an audio file or scripted by the assessor. The evidence should be referenced to the units of the qualification to show where competence claims are met.

Learner reflection

Learner reflection allows the learner to reflect on practice or past experiences to generate evidence for their qualification. The reflection can be produced in written format or recorded via an audio file.

Product evidence

Covers a range of potential types, such as multi-media evidence, personal statements, written work, and outcomes derived from the learner's experience.

Work product evidence may also be generated from live documents used in the workplace.

Questioning (Verbal or written)

Questioning is used to assess knowledge and understanding and has various applications, such as confirming actions taken by the learner and planning, analysing, and evaluating. Questions may be oral or written.

Project/Assignment

Project/Assignment evidence is set by the assessor on a chosen topic area. The topic is linked the units within the qualification. Project work can be produced in written, video or presentation format which allows the learner to highlight their knowledge and understanding.

Recognition of prior learning

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) is normally assessed at the start of the learner's programme. The assessor should review past achievements and qualifications completed by the learner to assess if any recognition of prior learning is applicable to the new qualification.

The assessor would need to provide evidence of recognition of prior learning such as certificates of achievement/guided discussion.

Tests

Tests can be devised by centres to assess a learner’s specific knowledge and understanding linked to unit criteria. Tests can take a variety for formats including multiple choice format or extended writing answers.

Expert Witness Testimony

Expert Witness Testimony can be valuable when assessing competence qualifications. This type of evidence can be used in replacement of direct assessor observation. This

form of evidence is only available to people who work directly with the learner, are occupationally competent in the subject area and are a qualified assessor.

The centre should complete an onboarding exercise with the Expert Witness to introduce them to the centre policies and procedures. The Expert Witness should also be familiar with the qualification.

Witness testimony

Witness testimony can be a valuable source of evidence where it has been produced by a reliable witness, the more reliable the witness, the more valuable the evidence. Whilst a 'reliable' witness is familiar with the specification, this does not preclude a person who is not familiar from being able to e.g., confirm or authenticate that the learner has carried out activities at specified times and to authenticate evidence that the learner claims to have produced.

Recognition of prior learning

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a method of assessment that considers whether a learner can demonstrate that they can meet the assessment requirements for a unit through knowledge, understanding or skills they already possess and do not need to develop through a course of learning. Recognition of Prior Learning is sometimes referred to as Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) and/or Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL).

Prior learning can include:

- Prior non-formal learning – learning that may be assessed but does not typically lead
- to formal certification, for example, learning and training activities undertaken in the
- workplace, voluntary sector, or community- based learning
- Prior informal learning – learning that takes place through life and work experiences or paid employment. This is often unintentional learning
- Prior certificated learning i.e., learning demonstrated through the award of units/ qualifications awarded by a recognised Awarding Organisation/Body

Centres should advise learners that they can bring forward any relevant learning (gained either formally or informally) so that it can be assessed, using a formal assessment method which is referenced against the assessment criteria specified in a unit or units the learner aims to complete. It is important that the assessor makes it clear to learners that the RPL process is concerned with how the learner has acquired the knowledge, understanding and skills; it does not mean that the learner is exempt from the assessment.

Centres should refer to our Recognition of Prior Learning Policy for further information.

Recording evidence

All evidence must be clearly identified and recorded so that it also may go through the internal quality assurance process.

In all instances, evidence must be supported by a completed and authenticated Assessment Checklistk with all work annotated as appropriate by the assessor. Evidence and completed assessment records must show that the learner has completed all parts of the assessment criteria and clearly show where competence is claimed.

We have provided several templates to support the recording of evidence and assessment process, that you may wish to use and/or adapt. Please note, there is no requirement to use these templates.

Use of e-portfolios

Where a centre is using an e-portfolio, they must ensure that:

- evidence is clearly identified against specific units and assessment criteria
- evidence has been authenticated by the learner, assessor and IQA (Internal Quality Assurer)
- additional learning needs can be accommodated
- confidentiality has been maintained (GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) / data protection / safeguarding)
- WJEC External Quality Assurers are given access during sampling activities

Making assessment decisions and providing feedback

Assessors must decide when the learner has provided enough evidence of sufficient quality to confirm that they have reached the required standard.

Assessors must also ensure the authenticity of the learner's work. When assessors observe learners carrying out assessment activities, they have direct evidence that the work is being done by them and them alone. If assessors do not see the learner completing an assessment task, they must find ways of ensuring that there have been no instances of plagiarism, copying, collusion or other malpractice. This is particularly the case with learners who carry out tasks in groups. Where learners do work in groups, it is important that assessors are able to make an accurate assessment of everyone's contribution to the group.

Assessors must ensure that all criteria in the unit have been met before the assessor signs the unit off as complete.

Assessors should provide learners with constructive feedback with suggestions of improvement for the future.

Reviewing progress

Periodic reviews should take place to discuss the learner's overall progress and achievements. This also provides a good opportunity to raise and hopefully resolve any other issues. Accurate records should be kept ready for the assessment cycle to start over again.

Templates

We are aware that many centres will have their own processes and documentation in place for monitoring and recording assessment. We have produced a number of templates that you can choose to use and adapt if needed. There is no requirement for you to use these documents.

Section 5: Internal Quality Assurance

Section Contents

Introduction
Developing an internal quality assurance strategy
The role of the Internal Quality Assurer
Standardising assessment decisions
Quality assuring assessment
Types of sampling
Sampling strategy
Approaches to sampling evidence
Monitoring assessment practice
Implementing outcomes of sampling activities
Gathering feedback
Supporting and developing assessors
Recording Internal Quality Assurance activities
Templates

Introduction

Robust internal quality assurance is a crucial aspect of WJEC's quality assurance process and ensures that centre assessment decisions are valid, reliable, and aligned to the relevant assessment standards.

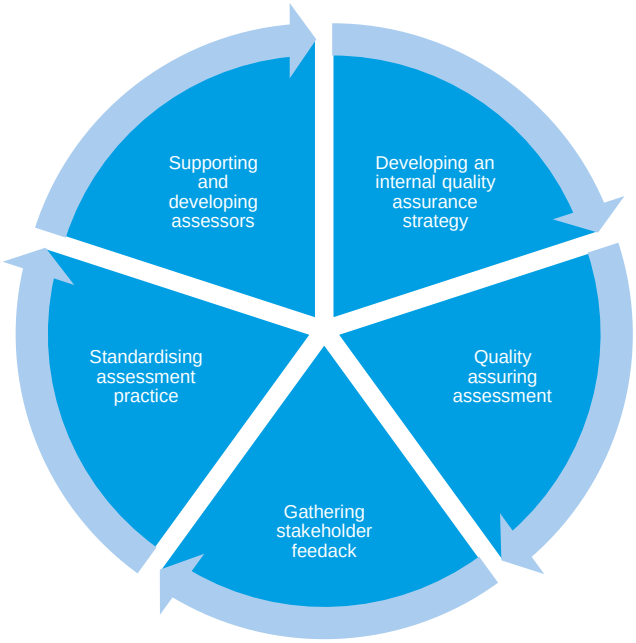
Centres are responsible for organising their internal quality assurance and must have a documented internal quality assurance strategy in place that sets out how they will monitor and maintain the quality, consistency, and integrity of WJEC qualifications and related assessments.

This includes ensuring that all candidates have equal and fair access to assessment, ensuring that accurate internal quality assurance records are kept, and preparing for, and cooperating with, external quality assurance activities.

Internal quality assurance procedures must be periodically reviewed, and relevant feedback and recommendations from WJEC external quality assurance activities should be incorporated as appropriate.

Effective internal quality assurance is an ongoing process. It allows good practice to be shared and can help identify potential problems at an early stage. Leaving internal quality assurance until the end of the assessment process is poor practice and can jeopardise candidates' chances of gaining qualifications because there may not be sufficient time to carry out remedial action or re- assessment.

Key aspects of an effective Internal Quality Assurance system are identified in the diagram:



Developing an internal quality assurance strategy

A robust quality assurance process will help ensure that all learners are assessed fairly and consistently against the requirements the specification, and that any possibility of malpractice is minimised.

Centres must have and follow a documented internal quality assurance strategy which details how the staff responsible for quality assurance will ensure that the centre is meeting WJEC quality assurance requirements. This includes how:

- quality assurance staff will monitor all stages of the learner journey to ensure quality
- assessments will be reviewed to ensure that they will generate sufficient evidence to allow candidates to show that they have met the requirements
- assessment practice and outcomes will be monitored to ensure compliance with qualification requirements and standards
- training of learners will be monitored to ensure compliance with qualification requirements
- observation of delivery staff practice will be carried out to monitor effectiveness
- delivery staff (Tutors, Assessors and IQAs) will be recruited and supported
- Continuous Personal Development (CPD) of delivery staff will be maintained
- appeals will be addressed in transparent and fair manner
- assessment practices between Assessors will be standardised
- quality improvement will be supported
- adequate resources, including physical and staff, will be maintained and managed to support continuous qualification delivery
- malpractice and maladministration will be prevented and investigated when it occurs.

Centres must ensure that they have an identified individual who has responsibility for the co-ordination of the quality process, with clear and documented roles and responsibilities. The internal quality assurance strategy will be checked first at the qualification approval stage and again through subsequent external quality assurance activities, including centre visits.

WJEC recognises that there are many ways of ensuring effective internal quality assurance. For example, the internal quality assurance system for a smaller PRU will be different from that of an FE College, operating across multiple sites.

It is the centre's responsibility to use a system that is appropriate for its organisational structure, the qualification, and its learners. As part of the qualification approval process, WJEC will undertake a risk-assessment to identify any potential areas for improvement at the outset.

The role of the Internal Quality Assurer

Internal Quality Assurers play a key role in implementing quality assurance within a centre and act as 'guarantors' that standards are being met and maintained. The Internal Quality Assurer, or internal quality assurance team within larger centres, is responsible for ensuring the validity of internal assessments and the reliability of assessors' judgements. There are three main parts of the Internal Quality Assurer role:

- quality assuring assessment
- developing and supporting assessors
- managing quality of delivery

Please note that no individual can act as an assessor and Internal Quality Assurer for the same group of candidates. Internal quality assurance is a 'check' of candidates' evidence against the relevant assessment criteria to ensure it is sufficient and valid; it is not a re-assessment.

It is the centre's responsibility to ensure that all Internal Quality Assurers are competent and that they understand and apply the internal quality assurance system consistently. An effective selection and induction process and any training or development needs for IQA should be identified.

Standardising assessment decisions

Standardisation (sometimes referred to as benchmarking or moderating) is an important part of Internal Quality Assurer responsibilities. Standardisation is important in ensuring that:

- each assessor consistently makes valid decisions
- all assessors make the same decision on the same evidence base
- all candidates are assessed fairly

There are different ways of carrying out standardisation, depending on the nature of the evidence. The Internal Quality Assurer should ensure that the most appropriate method is used. The following examples are standardisation exercises that could be used by centres:

- selecting examples of candidate evidence and asking each Assessor to make a decision based on what is in front of them. It is also helpful to ask them to note any queries they may have e.g., further information needed or authentication of a piece of evidence. This enables the Internal Quality Assurer to check that Assessors are asking the right questions when looking at evidence as well as arriving at the correct decisions i.e. that the process as well as the judgement is sound.

- double marking of assessments against the assessment criteria to allow assessors to review the same candidate evidence to check each other's application. Alternatively, the evidence can be divided so that the same assessor assesses the same section across all candidates. This allows each assessor a better chance to understand and

apply associated assessment schemes. In either case, particular attention should be paid to 'borderline' decisions
- When assessing process evidence, such as that occurring through discussions with assessors, making (with the agreement of the candidate) audio/video recordings that are assessed collectively, perhaps involving pairs of assessors carrying out dual assessment. Both should initially make independent judgements, and then discuss any discrepancies and reach a consensus.

Standardisation exercises should be arranged at regular intervals to ensure that messages are reinforced.

Quality assuring assessment

Quality assuring assessment is concerned with maintaining the quality of assessment for all candidates. In most centres, this forms the core part of the Internal Quality Assurer's duties. There are three strands to quality assuring assessment:

- sampling assessments
- monitoring assessment practice
- standardising assessment judgements

Types of sampling

Sampling assessments involves reviewing the quality of assessors' judgements at both interim and summative stages.

Interim sampling: It is important that the Internal Quality Assurer "dips in to" the assessment process undertaken with the candidate at different stages in that process. This includes reviewing candidate work

(a) before decisions have been made on any unit, and

(b) looking at portfolios with one or two completed units.

It will entail checking the progress review report given to candidates by Assessors, this will enable the Internal - Quality Assurer to evaluate the quality of formative guidance on assessment and the effectiveness of assessment planning.

Interim sampling will enable the Internal Quality Assurer to pick up problems at an early stage and so avoid the situation of turning down final decisions. It will also highlight individual Assessor needs for support or training which in turn may be used to develop the assessment team as a whole. Similarly, it provides an opportunity to identify and share good practice within the centre, particularly where one or more of the Assessors has wider experience (see Standardising Assessment Judgements).

Summative sampling: Correct summative sampling should entail reviewing the quality of the assessment decision by evaluating how the Assessor has reached that decision. The Internal Quality Assurer must be able to follow an audit trail which clearly demonstrates that the Assessor has checked that the evidence presented has been confirmed as:

- valid - relevant to the standards for which competence is claimed
- authentic - produced by the candidate
- reliable - accurately reflects the level of performance which has been consistently demonstrated by the candidate
- current - sufficiently recent to be confident the same level of skill/understanding/knowledge exists at the time of claim

- sufficient - meets in full ALL the requirements of the standards.

Sampling strategy

The sampling strategy for each centre will vary according to the needs of the centre and the particular qualification(s) being offered, but in all cases must be agreed with the WJEC during the Qualification Approval process.

To decide on what to sample and from whom, centres should consider the following:

- assessors: qualifications, experience, workload, locations
- learners: any particular requirements, ethnic origin, age, gender, locations
- methods of assessment and learners' evidence: e.g., observation, questions, witness testimonies, tests, simulation, prior learning, work products
- records and decisions: assessment planning records, decision and feedback records, ensuring validity and reliability.

Assessor experience: If assessors are qualified and experienced it may not be necessary to look at more than one or two decisions per candidate, and only one or two candidates (depending on candidate numbers).

If Assessors are inexperienced (e.g., gained the Assessor award less than 12 months ago or have been assessing for less than a year), or new to a particular qualification, the Internal Quality Assurer may need to sample substantially more of their decisions for the first 6-12 months. The objective would be to ensure that the Internal Quality Assurer reviews the new assessor's decisions on all units in any qualification. This is particularly important where specifications require very specific evidence, or the standards are often misinterpreted.

Workload*:* The Internal Quality Assurer needs to look at the workload of each Assessor so that the total sample also fairly reflects the numbers of decisions being made by individual Assessors. Increasing ratios of candidates to Assessors may also indicate assessment problems, which require the attention of the Quality Assurer; it can also lead to diminishing quality of assessment. In these cases, sampling should be increased.

Location*:* The location and type of assessor is also a factor in deciding the sampling strategy. In some centres, assessment is widely dispersed, both in terms of geographical location and where candidates are based, e.g., in centre or with an external organisation/employer.

Some centres have satellite centres i.e., organisations who link to the main Approved Centre to facilitate access to certain qualifications, but who may have varying approaches to assessment.

Other Centres may have links through franchise agreements to organisations which may have highly varied functions. The internal quality assurance sample must capture a picture of assessment across the full range of assessment sites. In effect the strategy should be repeated for all assessment sites. If these arrangements are complex, then the strategy needs to be carefully thought through, and discussed with WJEC who can offer advice about the frequency of sampling across the assessment sites.

Methods of assessment*:* The range and frequency of use of particular assessment methods may vary depending on the qualifications being delivered. The Internal Quality Assurer should have a thorough knowledge of the qualification and the likely range of assessment methods and evidence sources that could be used.

In addition, the Internal Quality Assurer must sample the full range of assessment methods used for any one qualification.

It is important that the Internal Quality Assurer looks at assessment decisions of all the team in any given period (possibly on a calendar basis, or by candidate cohort). Once the other sampling factors are taken into account, the sample size will almost decide itself. It is critical that the process follows this route rather than the other way round i.e., deciding on a set sample size and trying to "fit" a strategy round this.

To help monitor the overall sampling strategy it is strongly recommended that the Internal Quality Assurer maintains an overall Sampling Plan.

Approaches to sampling evidence

There are a few different approaches IQAs can use to sample material:

Vertical sampling: Sampling one unit or learning outcome across assessors or sites.

Horizontal sampling: Sampling something from several or all units or learning outcomes from one learner.

Diagonal sampling: Sampling across units and learners/assessors to get a wider picture of the overall quality of course delivery.

Thematic sampling: Sampling based on a particular activity.

Internal Quality Assurers can use one or a combination of sampling methods as appropriate, depending on the situation.

Monitoring assessment practice

Monitoring assessment includes the Internal Quality Assurer observing assessors in action, looking at how they conduct an assessment and giving them feedback on their performance. It also includes reviewing the internal quality assurance records completed with each Assessor and evaluating all aspects of their performance as recorded in the internal qualification records.

The Internal Quality Assurer should aim to monitor and support all the Assessors on an ongoing basis, the frequency of monitoring activities should depend on the size and level of activity of the assessment team, and your risk assessment strategy. The Internal Quality Assurer should select the assessment methods to monitor, the most obvious being observation of candidate performance, professional or guided discussions and simulated exercises. When selecting the monitoring sample, the Internal Quality Assurer must be aware of safety, confidentiality, security and any additional organisational requirements which could be affected by their presence. These items should be discussed with the Assessor before arranging to monitor them.

The quality and accuracy of assessment plans as well as assessor records/reports should be included in the review. The Internal Quality Assurer should also look at the individual Assessor's assessing and interpersonal skills, with a view to noting any areas which would benefit from advice or further training/development. Internal Quality Assurers must also note any problematic areas which could create difficulties for other Assessors.

Larger centres may have a designated manager or Senior or Coordinating Internal Quality Assurer with overall responsibility for the assessment and quality assurance team. In this case, the routine of observing assessment practice must be extended to include observation of Internal Quality Assurers.

Following the monitoring exercise, the Internal Quality Assurer should provide both constructive and positive feedback to the Assessor to support their professional development.

Implementing outcomes of sampling activities

Feedback from internal quality assurance activities should be provided as feedback to Assessors and used to refine assessment practices and outcomes. It is essential that sampling takes place throughout the assessment process as it ensures fairness to all candidates.

All work that is sampled must be 'signed off' by the Internal Quality Assurer before candidates' results are reported to WJEC. This can be done by countersigning the Assessor's form, by using an Internal Quality Assurance checklist, or by some other means devised by the centre.

Evidence that an internal quality assurance process has taken place must be available for scrutiny by WJEC.

Where a centre's internal quality assurance process identifies weaknesses with an individual assessor, WJEC expects the centre to act to ensure that these weaknesses are addressed. This could mean:

- additional training is provided to the Assessor being allowed to undertake any further assessment
- all assessment decisions of the Assessor are subject to internal quality assurance until such a time that the Internal Quality Assurer has confidence that assessor understands and is applying the required standards.

It is important that centres have an internal process in place for Assessors to appeal the outcomes of any internal quality assurance monitoring.

Gathering feedback

Monitoring also creates an opportunity to speak to learners to ensure that their assessment needs are being properly met. In particular, Internal Quality Assurers should check that learners:

- know which qualification they are working towards, and understand the requirements
- understands the assessment process
- knows what progress they have made towards achievement
- is aware of their right to unit certification
- understands their role in evidence generation, collection and cross-referencing
- has confidence in their Assessor
- understands the appeals process
- has no unmet current learning needs
- is aware of progression opportunities/next steps.

Supporting and developing assessors

Internal Quality Assurers are responsible for guiding, supporting and ensuring the continuing professional development of the assessor team. This includes ensuring that occupational competence is maintained where this is a requirement of the qualification(s) the Assessor is assessing.

New Assessors should receive an appropriate level of induction. This will depend on their previous experience, and familiarity with the qualifications they will be assessing.

Recording Internal Quality Assurance activities

The Internal Quality Assurer must keep records of all the monitoring of assessment (and verification, where applicable) practice undertaken. Many centres will already have processes and documentation in place to monitor and record Internal Quality Assurance activities however, a number of templates have been provided for centres to use and adapt if required.

Templates

- Assessment Overview
- Assessment Checklists
- IQA Activity Overview

Section 6: External Quality Assurance

Section Contents

Introduction
The EQA Process
Your External Quality Assurer
Arranging a visit
Preparing for the visit
During the visit
After the visit
Withholding and releasing certification
Appealing an EQA decision

Introduction

External quality assurance is the process by which we confirm that assessment decisions in centres are:

- made by competent and qualified assessors
- the product of reliable and fair assessment practice
- recorded accurately and appropriately
- in accordance with the requirements published in the qualification specification.

External quality assurance also provides an opportunity for centres to seek support and guidance and for the External Quality Assurer to update centre staff on emerging best practice in assessment and internal quality assurance.

The EQA Process

External Quality Assurance can be undertaken through a centre visit (face-to-face) or remotely, Every centre will be subject to either face-to-face or remote quality assurance activities, prior to certificating any learners. The External Quality Assurance activity is undertaken against the Quality Criteria and includes the sampling of candidate work.

Additional centre visits may be undertaken upon request. In certain circumstances, e.g., low volume of candidates or when centres are awarded Direct Claim Status (DCS), this may be replaced by desk-based scrutiny.

Your External Quality Assurer

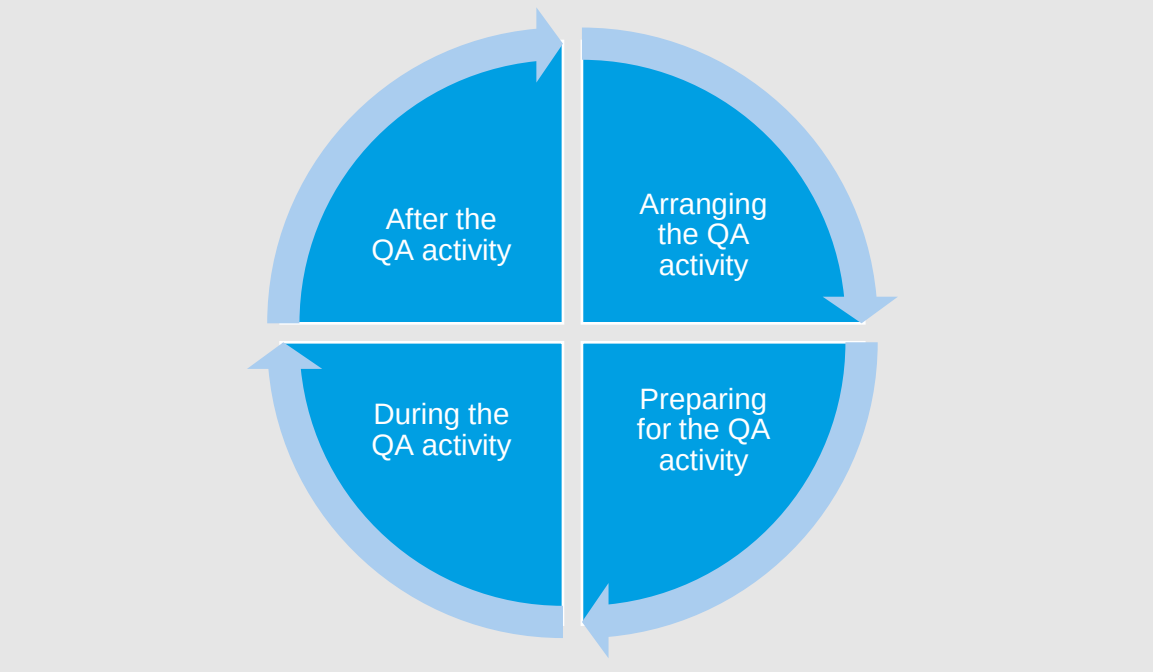
For each group of qualifications you offer, you will be allocated an External Quality Assurer who will complete the quality assurance activity for all levels delivered within that qualification.

Having one dedicated External Quality Assurer for each qualification will ensure you build a positive relationship with your External Quality Assurer and streamline the external quality assurance process, minimising the impact on your time when preparing for external quality assurance reviews.

External Quality Assurers will:

- sample assessment and learner evidence of achievement
- follow up any recommendations or action plans from previous external quality assurance activities
- ensure that rigorous processes are in place for the assessment, tracking and recording of individual learner achievements in accordance with our Quality Criteria
- be appointed for a group of qualifications and will scrutinise the evidence for all units offered by the centre in that sector
- sign off the recommendation for the award of credit/release of certification
- recommend Direct Claims Status where appropriate
- produce a report of the external quality assurance visit/activity. These reports are made available to the centre and form an important source of evidence for the centre quality improvement plan.

There are four stages of the external quality assurance process as illustrated by below.



Before the Quality Assurance/ Planned Sampling Activity

Prior to the EQA activity, centres must complete sampling plans that include the following:

1. a list of learners enrolled in the centre that need certification, along with information on which learners and units were included in the internal quality assurance process, or
2. if the centre has DCS status, a list of learners enrolled in the centre, and those who have certificated since the last EQA visit, along with information on which learners and units were included in the internal quality assurance process.

This information will be used by the EQA to identify the sample for the external quality assurance activity.

Preparing for a Centre Visit

Before the external quality assurance visit the centre should confirm with the EQA:

- the campus/site to which they should go and who to ask for upon arrival (face-face visits only)
- whether any parking restrictions apply (face-face visits only)
- that material outlined below is available in a room suitable for the EQA to work undisturbed (face-face visits only)
- a contact telephone number of the person(s) to whom feedback will be given
- access to e-portfolio system (where relevant) - user name and password along with user handbook.

The centre must ensure that the EQA has access to the work of all candidates, either who are registered or have been successfully internally assessed and internal quality assured at the time of the visit. When assessment has been carried out at more than one campus/site, all material requested should be brought together in one central location.

Please note, it is important that the Internal Quality Assurer is present when the External Quality Assurer carries out a visit so that they can discuss the internal quality assurance process. When arranging a visit to a centre, the External Quality Assurer will confirm:

- the date, time, and approximate length of the visit
- the site(s) to be visited (where relevant)
- the names of the candidates, assessors and (where relevant) other IQAs they wish to meet.

During the visit

During the first visit the External Quality Assurer will look at the quality and consistency of assessment decisions and assessment practice. This involves:

- sampling candidate assessments
- speaking with candidates (where appropriate) and assessors to ensure that evidence and records of assessment are both valid and authentic
- reviewing records of assessment, internal verification and team meetings reviewing procedures.

Centres must ensure that each candidate's work selected for sampling includes:

- an assessment checklist completed and signed by the assessor to confirm the assessment decision
- an evidence referencing record, clearly showing where evidence is located if not included in the candidate's portfolio
- witness statements confirming the nature, existence and location of any evidence not included in the portfolio
- a declaration sheet signed by the candidate confirming the authenticity of the evidence presented
- all evidence produced by the candidate in completion of the assessment annotated appropriately by the assessor.

The EQA will review all evidence presented to ensure standards are aligned.

Upon completion of the external quality assurance visit, the EQA will give a verbal report to the named person(s) at the centre, including any recommendation or actions for the centre. The centre will have the opportunity to fully understand EQA expectation before the EQA visit is brought to a close.

After the visit

Your EQA will produce a report within 10 working days of the visit. Once the report has been completed, it will be sent to the Exams Officer who will be responsible for sharing with the IQA team. The report will also be uploaded to the Connect system.

There are three possible outcomes to the EQA activity:

Certification can proceed for all or some learners	This means that your EQA has confirmed you have effective quality assurance procedures in place. Your EQA has agreed that you are assessing learners to the national standard but may offer recommendations on how to strengthen current practice. Certificates can be claimed for all learners named in the sampling plan for the visit.
Certification cannot proceed for learners as there are minor concerns about the assessment and quality assurance process	If external quality assurance reveals some minor issues with the centre's quality assurance process, the recommendation may be that some immediate remedial action is taken by the centre. This may include learners resitting an assessment once all corrective actions have taken place and/or gathering additional evidence to demonstrate full achievement of the learning outcomes and assessment criteria. In such instances the centre must ensure that the internal quality assurance process is followed again prior to the External Quality Assurer conducting a further sampling activity. Minor issues are likely to be either incomplete evidence provided, or some minor errors in assessors' judgement.

Certification cannot proceed for learners as there are significant concerns about the assessment and quality assurance process	If external quality assurance reveals some major issues with the centre's quality assurance process, the recommendation will be that 'pass' results cannot be issued for learners. The EQA report will detail the reasons for this decision and describe the action the centre may take to address the issues. Major issues are likely to cover areas such as: • Assessment decision judged to be inaccurate: an assessor applies a assessment criteria incorrectly to a learners' work or has made an incorrect judgement about whether the learner has achieved or not. • Inconsistent assessment decisions: the External Quality Assurer will sample a range of assessment decisions made by an Internal Quality Assurer. If the evidence presented fails to reach the required standard/level defined in the mark scheme but has been judged by the assessor to have met these criteria, this raises doubts as to the reliability of assessors' assessment decisions.

Withholding and releasing certification

If certification cannot proceed for learners, this will apply to all learners undertaking that qualification in that assessment window at that centre.

The EQA may request an additional sample of learner work is sent within a specified timeframe to ensure that the issues have been addressed.

If additional evidence has been requested, it can be sent electronically to the EQA.

Once the EQA is satisfied that the hold on certification should be lifted, they will inform WJEC who in turn will contact the centre to confirm that the hold on certification has been lifted.

Appealing an EQA decision

If a centre disagrees with an External Quality Assurance decision, the centre should, in the first instance, contact WJEC. This will allow discussion on the content of the report and will enable the centre to indicate whether there is any relevant information which was not available at the time of the original decision. WJEC will then investigate and notify the centre of the outcome.

If, after this, the centre still feels that the quality assurance decision is incorrect, a formal review/appeal against the decision can be made, following the standard review/appeals procedure with WJEC.