



ESW Suite of Qualifications

External Verification/Quality Assurance Visit: Procedures for Centres

Introduction

1. The purpose of external verification/quality assurance visits is to confirm that a centre is correctly applying the ESW standards and that its internal quality assurance procedures (as provisionally approved during the Qualification Approval stage) are robust, rigorous and working in practice.
2. To this end, WJEC's External Verifier/Quality Assurers (EV/EQA) select and scrutinises a sample of completed Assessment Packs, Candidate Packs and supporting evidence and associated internal quality assurance documents to ensure that the centre's assessment decisions are correct, fair, reliable and consistent.

Arrangements

3. Before the external verification/quality assurance visit the centre should confirm with WJEC:
 - the campus/site to which the EV/EQA should go and for whom to ask for upon arrival
 - whether any parking restrictions apply
 - that material outlined in point 5 below is available in a room suitable for the EV/EQA to work undisturbed
 - that access to refreshments and lunch facilities is available
 - a contact telephone number of the person(s) to whom feedback will be given.
4. The centre must ensure that each EV/EQA has access to the work of ALL candidates, either who are registered or who have successfully completed a Controlled Task at the time of the visit. When assessment has been carried out at more than one campus/site, all material requested is brought together in one central location.
5. The centre is to make available:
 - a list of Controlled Task titles used by its candidates
 - the names of all Lead IV/IQAs, IV/IQAs and assessors
 - completed Assessment Packs, Candidate Packs, supporting evidence and associated internal quality assurance documents separated by
 - * Lead or Internal Verifiers/IQA (IV/IQA)
 - * Campus/site
 - * Skill and level
 - evidence for the Essential Digital Literacy Skills (EDLS) and Essential Employability Skills (EES) Structured Discussions
 - records of quality assurance meetings and reports.

6. Since it is not possible to predict the issues that might arise during an external verification/quality assurance visit no formal programme other than the date, start time and list of requirements – point 5 above – will be circulated. Arrangements for the visit will be kept as fluid as possible to allow the EV/EQA the opportunity to review the work and optimise the time available; this includes ample time to give and discuss feedback upon completion.

During the External Verification/Quality Assurance Visit

7. The EV/EQA will begin by sampling the quality assurance decisions of all Lead or Internal Verifiers/IQA, reviewing the accuracy of their decisions including feedback to their assessors/IV/IQA. The minimum sample to be taken from each Lead or Internal Verifier is **three** completed Controlled Tasks along with the associated quality assurance records at each level and Skill they are verifying. For example, if an IV/IQA was quality assuring levels 1 and 2 EAoNS the sample would be a minimum of 4 completed Controlled Tasks.
8. Individual assessors will only be sampled if the EV/EQA considers it necessary to do so, for example:
 - where a single Lead IV/IQA has responsibility for multiple assessors;
 - where sampling of a Lead IV/IQA gives rise to concerns of that individual's judgement.
9. In such instances, if necessary, the visit may need to be extended or another EV/EQA brought in.

What the EV/EQA looks for

10. When sampling completed Assessment Packs, Candidate Packs, supporting evidence including that for the EDLS and EES Structured Discussions and associated internal quality assurance documents the EV/EQA will:
 - record which Tasks have been used, including the version number to ensure the most recent has been used
 - ensure that all Tasks for the skill and level offered by the centre have been sampled
 - check that the assessment documentation has been completed correctly and authenticated
 - check that the candidate has 'passed' each sub-section as indicated in the Assessment Pack and has 'passed' the Task as a whole
 - check that details of when each session started and ended have been recorded and meet the 'maximum working period' (8 weeks) and 'working time allowance' (level specific)
 - see what evidence has been presented and whether it is referenced and annotated
 - check there is evidence of the quality assurance process
 - check what marks have been awarded as recorded on Assessment Pack
 - judge whether there is agreement with the marks awarded
 - comment on the application of the Assessment Pack.

Outcome of External Verification/Quality Assurance Visit

11. Upon completion of the external verification/quality assurance visit, the EV/EQA will give a verbal report to the named person(s) at the centre.
12. The feedback must be well managed with the centre and the EV/EQA given the opportunity to present their findings and recommendations in a professional and business like atmosphere. Should the centre feel unsure about the EV/EQAs findings, it should ask for clarification.
13. The verbal report will be followed up by a detailed written report, the purpose of which is to give clear feedback on the conduct and outcomes of the external verification/quality assurance visit in relation to assessment, internal quality assurance and any development points that the EV/EQA recommends. It will also highlight good practice that has been observed.
14. The report helps build a profile of each centre and also supplies WJEC with feedback on how effectively the ESW qualifications are being delivered and quality assured. WJEC aims that the completed written report is released to a centre within two weeks of the visit. The report will be clear as to what was seen during the visit, what was deemed to be good practice, and what required further work.
15. There are four recommendations that the EV/EQA can make to WJEC's officers:
 - * certification **can** proceed for EDLS and/or EES
 - * Confirmatory Tests **can** be scheduled for Essential Application of Number Skills (EAoNS) and/or Essential Communication Skills (ECommS)
 - * certification **cannot** proceed for EDLS and/or EES
 - * Confirmatory Tests **cannot** be scheduled for (EAoNS) and/or (ECommS).

Successful external verification/quality assurance

16. If external verification/quality assurance is successful, the EV/EQA will confirm to WJEC that 'pass' results can be processed for all ESW qualifications verified. For EAoNS and ECommSs, certification itself will be subject to individual candidates successfully completing the Confirmatory Test. For EDLS and EES, candidates must also 'pass' the Structured Discussion. Where both the Controlled Task and Structured Discussion are confirmed as having 'passed' the EV/EQA will be able to recommend to WJEC that certificates can be processed according to WJEC's published certification programme.

Unsuccessful external verification/quality assurance

17. If external verification/quality assurance reveals flaws in the centre's quality assurance, the recommendation will be that 'pass' results **cannot** be issued for EAoNS and/or ECommS or for either of the Controlled Task and/or Structured Discussion for EDLS and/or EES as appropriate. This decision will be conveyed to the centre before the EV/EQA completes the visit.
18. WJEC's officers will consider the recommendation and decide whether or not to place a hold on certification. If the EV/EQA recommendation is supported, WJEC will confirm to the centre in writing that a hold has been placed on certification until the issues identified have been rectified and a subsequent, successful external verification/quality assurance activity has taken place.
19. The written report produced by WJEC will detail the reasons for this decision and describe the action the centre may take to address the issues. The circumstances which may cause an EV/EQA to recommend a hold on certification are:
 - *Evidence presented is incomplete or insufficient:* if evidence is not available or cannot easily be located once identified as missing, the EV/EQA will be unable to make a proper judgement about the assessment decisions and will recommend a hold on certification. Should a centre suspect that it will not have sufficient evidence to present at the time of the visit, WJEC's ESWS Team should be alerted to enable the visit to be rearranged.
 - *Assessment decision judged to be inaccurate:* should an assessor record a 'pass' to a candidate and the EV/EQA considers that the evidence is insufficient to meet the requirements of the Controlled Task; the External Verifier will recommend a hold on certification because the evidence presented has been inappropriately judged.
 - *Inconsistent assessment decisions:* the EV/EQA will sample a range of assessment decisions associated Lead or Internal Verifiers/IQA. If the evidence presented fails to reach the level defined in the Assessment Pack but has been judged by the assessor to have met these criteria, this raises doubts as to the reliability of assessors' assessment decisions. In these cases the EV/EQA will recommend a hold on certification.
20. As well as considering evidence in relation to assessment, the EV/EQA will also make a judgement on the efficiency of the centre's internal quality assurance arrangements.
21. Centres must demonstrate that outcomes are consistent:
 - * between assessors and
 - * across candidates.

22. The EV/EQA will not recommend a hold on certification purely on the absence of one or both of these requirements. However, it is distinctly possible that if there are flaws in the internal quality assurance arrangements and practices, this will be reflected in flawed assessment decisions, in which case, the EV/EQA will recommend a hold on certification.
23. Please note that any hold on certification is purely temporary measure; it is designed to safeguard the credibility of the ESW qualifications by ensuring that candidates are not credited with success where the evidence cannot justify a 'pass' being confirmed. In such an event, before the EV/EQA leaves the centre they will discuss the steps to be taken to address the conditions that have led to the hold being recommended and also discuss with WJEC officers.

Withholding certification

24. If a hold on certification is confirmed it will apply to **all** candidates undertaking that qualification at that centre.
25. Where an EV/EQA recommends a hold on certification they will include in their report details of the issue that led to the recommendation and the actions that the centre must take to address these. The EV/EQA may request an additional sample of candidate work is sent within a specified timeframe to ensure that the issues have been addressed.

Releasing a hold on certification

26. If additional evidence has been requested it can be sent through the post, shared remotely or sent by secure file transfer to the EV/EQA. In these instances the EV/EQA will inform the centre of exactly what evidence they wish to see. For example, the centre will be informed whether they are required to send re-submitted assessment evidence for all candidates, or only for a sample of candidates.
27. Where it is neither possible nor desirable that materials are sent in this way, the EV/EQA may prefer to make a second centre visit. In that instance WJEC's ESWs Team will contact the centre to arrange a return visit.

Notification of lifting a hold on certification

28. Once the EV/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.

Direct Claim Status

29. Where a centre's quality assurance is found to be of a consistently high standard consideration can be given to granting 'Direct Claims Status' (DCS). To be granted, a centre must demonstrate that all aspects of its internal quality assurance is robust and is capable of consistently delivering sound assessment decisions over time.

30. Once a centre has successfully completed two External Verification visits and/or postal inspections DCS may be granted for a period up to twelve months. As the ESW Suite of qualifications is relatively new additional sampling may take place over this period to ensure internal quality assurance is continuing to be effective.

Appeals against an EV/EQA decision

31. If a centre disagrees with an EV/EQA decision, the centre should, in the first instance, contact WJEC. This will allow discussion on the content of the report, and in particular 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.
32. If, after this, the centre still feels that the verification decision is wrong, a formal appeal against the decision can be made.