



**Skills &
Education
Group Awards**

External Quality Assurance Policy

Contents

1.	What is External Quality Assurance?	2
2.	Who carries out External Quality Assurance?	2
3.	How we external quality assure	3
4.	Types of External Quality Assurance	4
5.	Retention of Assessment Evidence/Records	7
6.	Malpractice and Maladministration	8
7.	Sanction	8
8.	Standardisation	8
9.	Quality Assurance	8

1. What is External Quality Assurance?

- 1.1 Skills and Education Group Awards, through its External Quality Assurance Policy, ensures that approved Centres provide learners with access to fair and reliable assessment opportunities, and that evidence of learner achievement meets the standard required by the published learning outcomes and assessment criteria of our qualifications. It confirms the authenticity, validity, and objectivity of assessor practice.
- 1.2 It is expected that Centres will have a minimum of one annual quality assurance engagement per sub-sector (curriculum area) dependent upon the type, volume and nature of the qualifications/units offered usually towards the end of a course.
- 1.3 It is a flexible system which may be applied at any time of the year.
- 1.4 Centres are expected to keep learners informed about the external quality assurance process and must make it clear to learners that achievement may not be confirmed until it has taken place.
- 1.5 Where external quality assurance is undertaken with a face-to-face visit, additional quality checks are made to ensure continued compliance with our Centre Agreement, policies, and procedures.

2. Who carries out External Quality Assurance?

- 2.1 We train, appoint, and monitor external quality assurers who carry out the external quality assurance process on our behalf.
- 2.2 All external quality assurers are subject specialists and have detailed knowledge of the sub-sector and administrative arrangements to support the qualifications/units they quality assure. They are appointed according to set criteria and are inducted and trained in our policies and procedures.
- 2.3 External quality assurers act as our representatives liaising with Centres to sample and confirm assessment decisions. They review the Centre's internal assessment and quality assurance processes and confirm the evidence of achievement meets the assessment standards.
- 2.4 In addition, they offer advice and guidance to Centre staff in order to support continuous improvement. They encourage and support Centres in providing the most appropriate modes of evidence collection for the learner.

- 2.5 External Quality Assurers deal directly with Centres and it is the Centre's responsibility to deal directly with all learners' queries. Under no circumstances, must Centres encourage or advise learners to contact us or our External Quality Assurers directly.

3. How we External Quality Assure

- 3.1 External quality assurance is planned according to the course end date submitted by the Centre at enrolment. This course end date should be the date the Centre anticipates the course will be finished i.e. course delivery; assessment and internal quality assurance has been completed for all learners unless withdrawn.
- 3.2 The Centre must make all learners' work available for quality assurance.
- 3.2.1 Work must be complete, authenticated, cross-referenced against the learning outcomes/assessment criteria, assessed and internally quality assured.
- 3.2.2 Each learner portfolio or piece of assessment evidence, if submitted for external quality assurance separately, must include the learner's signed Declaration of Authenticity.
- 3.3 The External Quality Assurer will:
- 3.3.1 confirm the date, type and requirements of quality assurance with the Centre;
- 3.3.2 verify assessment decisions made in line with our sampling requirements;
- 3.3.3 carry out a quality audit of a Centre's delivery, assessment and internal quality assurance procedures;
- 3.3.4 offer advice and guidance to Centres on administrative procedures, physical and staff resources, and any technical issues relating to the learning outcomes and assessment criteria;
- 3.3.5 confirm requests for credit transfer and exemption where the learner has already achieved sufficient credits or qualifications that evidence prior achievement;
- 3.3.6 prepare a quality assurance report for the Centre which includes, when appropriate, an action plan listing actions to be taken in order that the full requirements of our procedures and the qualification assessment are met;

Examples of assessment practice that are likely to lead to intervention and actions from the External Quality Assurer include but are not limited to:

- Inconsistency of assessment decisions;
- Insufficiently qualified staff;
- Assessment tasks not valid or fit for purpose;
- Poor assessment practice;
- Insufficient records;
- Concerns regarding the authenticity of learners' work;
- Insufficient learner evidence.

3.3.7 follow-up action plans with Centres following the release of the report.

3.4 Centres which fail to comply with any action plans may incur sanctions resulting in one or more of the following:

- the requirement for additional support and external quality assurance;
- suspension of external quality assurance activity;
- suspension of learner registration/certification;
- the suspension or removal of qualification approval / Centre recognition.

4. Types of External Quality Assurance

4.1 Centres will be subject to one of the following types of external quality assurance. The type will be dependent on the status of the Centre and/ or specific requirements of the qualification. We will always determine the type of external quality assurance to be allocated and advise the quality assurer accordingly.

4.2 External Quality Assurance Visits

4.2.1 Centres will be allocated an External Quality Assurer per sub-sector (curriculum area) who will contact Centre staff to arrange a mutually convenient date, time, and place for the visit.

4.2.2 It is anticipated that a quality assurance visit will take 4 hours, but the sample size and issues encountered at the Centre may reduce/extend this.

4.2.3 During the visit the Centre will be expected to make available:

- all assessed learner evidence for which the centre will be claiming certification;
- personnel associated with the qualifications/units being externally quality assured e.g., tutors, assessors and internal quality assurers;
- learners (maximum 6) with whom the external quality assurer can discuss delivery and assessment provision at the Centre. Where learners are unavailable Centres are expected to provide their own evaluations.

4.2.4 The Centre is expected to inform the External Quality Assurer if an arranged visit cannot go ahead as planned. We reserve the right to charge for any pre-arranged visit that the Centre cancels without sufficient or reasonable notice, and the right to invoice and require payment of visit fees before the visit takes place. Repeated cancellation of external quality assurance may incur sanctions.

4.2.5 Following a visit, the Centre may feedback on the external quality assurance process. This feedback can be through the External Quality Assurance Report Form, separate contact with Customer Support or submitted via the website.

4.2.6 Centre Responsibilities

In order to facilitate an efficient and timely quality assurance the Centre will be expected to complete the following once they have been given details of their External Quality Assurer:

- to liaise with their External Quality Assurer and determine an appropriate date and time for the visit i.e., when assessment and internal quality assurance are complete;
- to complete the required sections (Planner Sections 4-7) of the External Quality Assurance Report and to return this via email to the External Quality Assurer at least 5 working days prior to the visit;
- to ensure they have met all other requirements by referring to the checklist provided when we confirm the name of the External Quality Assurer.

4.3 Remote External Quality Assurance

4.3.1 Remote quality assurance is undertaken when a face to face visit from an External Quality Assurer is not required. Remote or postal quality assurance of assessed work is usually conducted in the following circumstances:

- for established Centres with a positive quality assurance record;

- for higher risk provision, so that there are more external quality assurance activities;
- for reviewing additional samples following a visit;
- when it is an appropriate method of quality assurance for the Centre e.g., where there are distance learners;
- when it is an appropriate method of quality assurance for the qualification.

4.3.2 Centres will be informed of the sample of evidence required by the External Quality Assurer approximately 10 working days prior to the quality assurance visit. These samples must either be:

- securely packed, postage or carriage prepaid with return address included and then forwarded to the address specified by us within the agreed timeframe, or
- the External Quality Assurer given remote access to the Centre's ePortfolio or file-sharing platform which must be in an easily accessible format. Centres should read our guidance on remote quality assurance and make contact with us prior to the end of the course to ensure that potential technical issues do not delay the external quality assurance process.

4.3.3 Centre Responsibilities

- to liaise with their External Quality Assurer to confirm when samples will be available and how to access them;
- to complete the required sections (Planner Sections 4-8) of the Remote Quality Assurance Report form and to send this via email with or at the same time as the requested samples;
- to explain why samples requested are not available. Failure to explain why samples are unavailable will delay the process;
- to ensure you have met all other requirements by referring to the instructions provided in an email by the External Quality Assurer. Not least to include the following with the unit evidence provided:
 - Learners' Declarations of Authenticity;
 - Assessment Summary evidence for all cohorts included in this external quality assurance;
 - Internal Quality Assurance Plan and Summary of internal quality assurance undertaken.

4.4 Additional Quality Assurance

4.4.1 Following external quality assurance there may be a requirement for additional external quality assurance to take place. This is likely to occur where:

- the Centre was not fully prepared, and the external quality assurance could not be completed;

- the External Quality Assurer has made changes to the Centre's assessment decisions which necessitates further assessment and subsequent sampling;
- where the provision is deemed to be higher risk (for example where a licence to practice qualification is delivered)

4.4.2 Centres will be charged where additional external quality assurance takes place due to concerns raised through external quality assurance. In such instances, sanctions may also be applied.

4.5 Direct Claims

4.5.1 Under certain conditions we will allow Centre claims for certification between external quality assurance engagements. Please refer to our claiming certification Policy.

4.5.2 Evidence of assessment decisions and the internal quality assurance process will be required for review at the next external quality assurance for all courses certificated under Direct Claims.

5. Retention of Assessment Evidence/Records

5.1 Centres must retain all assessment evidence securely until external quality assurance has been completed and the period for appeals has elapsed.

5.1.1 Centres wishing to appeal against the External Quality Assurers' decision must retain the original evidence for any appeal requested. Enquiries or appeals against quality assurance decisions must be made in writing to customersupport@skillsedugroup.co.uk within the timescales specified.

5.2 Centres are required to keep assessment records and internal quality assurance for a period of three years. Please refer to our requirements for Centre Record Keeping on the website.

6. Malpractice and Maladministration

6.1 External Quality Assurers who suspect malpractice/maladministration or inequality during the external quality assurance process will communicate their findings directly to the Compliance and Regulation team in a separate report.

6.2 Centre staff who suspect malpractice on the part of learners or other Centre staff must inform Compliance and Regulation using the Notification of Suspected Malpractice (MM2) available on the website.

7. Sanctions

7.1 Our External Quality Assurers may recommend sanctions as an outcome of external quality assurance activity where they suspect malpractice / maladministration or they consider assessment decisions to be unsafe or inadequate. Recommendations for sanctions at Level 2 and above must be approved by the Compliance and Regulation team. Skills and Education Group Awards will communicate where sanctions are applied, the reasons for those sanctions and the actions required as a result.

8. Standardisation

8.1 We may, either directly or through our External Quality Assurers, ask for copies of learner assessment evidence for the purposes of standardisation. Centres are required to cooperate with all such requests to enable us to meet our Conditions of Recognition and to ensure that qualification standards are being met consistently across all those involved in the quality assurance process.

9. Quality Assurance

9.1 This policy and guidance is reviewed regularly to ensure it continues to meet the needs of our centres and Regulators.

Version	Description of change	Approval	Date of Issue
2024 V1	Complete overhaul of previous policy	SLT	December 2024