

INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE & ASSESSMENT STRATEGY

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TABLE of CONTENTS

Purpose.....	4
Scope.....	4
Objectives.....	4
Introduction.....	4
Initial Assessment.....	4
Formative Assessment.....	4
Candidate registration for Summative Assessment.....	5
Summative.....	5
Feedback.....	5
Procedures for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.....	5
1. Externally-Accredited Programmes.....	5
1.1 Role and responsibilities of assessor.....	5
1.2 Developing plans for assessing competence with candidates.....	6
1.3 Judging evidence against criteria to make assessment decisions.....	6
1.4 Providing feedback and support to candidates on assessment decisions.....	7
1.5 Contributing to the internal quality improvement process.....	7
1.6 Recording assessment activity.....	7
2. Internal Verification.....	7
Introduction.....	7
2.1 Role and responsibilities of internal verifier.....	8
2.2 Carrying out and evaluating internal assessment and quality improvement systems....	8
2.3 Supporting assessors.....	9
2.4 Monitoring the quality of assessors' performance.....	9
Sampling assessments.....	9
Formative and summative sampling.....	10
Sampling across assessors.....	10
Observation of assessment practice.....	10
Standardising assessment judgements.....	10
Feedback to the assessor.....	10
Meetings and communications.....	11

2.5 Frequency and volume of internal verification activity.....	11
Awarding body requirements.....	11
New qualifications / and newly appointed assessors.....	11
2.6 Meeting external quality improvement requirements.....	11
2.7 Recording verification activity.....	11
Recording documentation.....	11
Evaluation of procedures.....	12
Currency and security.....	12
Claiming certification.....	12
2.8 External verification visits.....	12
Liaison with external verifier.....	12
Awarding body requirements.....	12
Issues and concerns.....	12
2.9 Equal opportunities.....	12
Appendix 1 - Assessment /IV process map.....	13
Appendix 2 - CANDIDATE ACADEMIC APPEALS PROCEDURE.....	14
Candidate Appeal: To be completed by candidate.....	15
Candidate Appeal: To be completed by Internal verifier/ Appeals Panel.....	16

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to set out the internal quality assurance and assessment strategy for Free2Learn and how it is to be implemented.

Scope

This policy relates to all delivery staff and the management and leadership team.

Objectives

The core business of Free2Learn is to provide a high quality learning experience and achievement for every learner managed by the centre on a consistent basis. It is crucial that Free2Learn maintain and review systems to ensure the high standard of delivery to meet the standards set by both internal and external bodies and that these systems are continually improved and developed. The Internal Quality Assurance and Assessment strategy forms part of the organisation's Quality Improvement processes.

Introduction

Tutors and learners are continuously engaged in the process of assessment, which at times may be informal or unplanned. Assessment may be initial, formative or summative.

Initial Assessment

Well-planned and executed initial assessment is integral to the induction process.

This may commence at the enrolment stage with a pre-course questionnaire to establish learners' interests, experience and motivation. It is important that there is also some form of skill/knowledge assessment which can be validated by the tutor's discussion with individual learners about what they can do and want to be able to do.

Initial assessment:

- establishes the existing skill and knowledge levels of learners and may establish how each learner learns
- introduces learners to some of the skills and knowledge they will need to acquire on the programme
- provides information to help tutors plan the programme
- can provide a helpful introduction to assessment in a non-threatening way

Formative Assessment

This takes place throughout the course and involves checking that learning is taking place including:

- finding out what knowledge and skills the learners have acquired
- helping to plan the next steps
- enabling the tutor to give feedback
- encouraging motivation
- helping the tutor to modify the course if necessary

- enabling learners to identify what they have learned and what they want to learn next

Candidate registration for Summative Assessment

In accordance with the awarding body guidelines all candidates must be registered for the qualification at which they will be seeking certification. It is the relevant tutor's responsibility to ensure that the candidates' personal details are accurate, including spelling of their names, DOB, etc. while registering the students for the relevant tests. If the awarding body registration has not been approved **DO NOT** sit the candidates for examinations.

Summative

This is used at the end of a course to:

- enable learners to recognise their achievements
- justify awarding a qualification or other recognition of achievement
- help the tutor plan future courses
- guide learners through their next steps

Feedback

Learners appreciate feedback, which should always be given after assessment. It is a vital part of the learning process and may be given verbally or in writing.

Procedures for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

Assessment should be a fair test of learners' knowledge and what they are able to do. However, for some learners the usual format of assessment may not be suitable. Providers must ensure that the likely needs of individual learners are anticipated and not merely responded to as they arise.

Therefore, reasonable adjustments must be made in advance of any assessment activities, as well as during the assessment process, so that the equity, validity and reliability of the assessments can be assured eg adapting assessment materials, such as providing materials in Braille.

1. Externally-Accredited Programmes

For externally-accredited programmes, where assessors are assessing candidates against agreed standards of competence, the following policy and procedures should be adopted:

1.1 Role and responsibilities of assessor

An assessor must:

- have relevant qualifications, knowledge and/or experience in the subject area
- being assessed
- have relevant qualifications, training and experience in the assessment process

- ensure that learners are fully briefed on assessment procedures and methods, including appeals procedures
- involve learners in the assessment planning process
- provide constructive feedback to learners on assessments, discuss targets and areas for development on an individual basis
- adhere to the awarding body's assessment specification in the judgement of evidence towards an award
- record outcomes of assessment using appropriate documentation
- follow agreed procedures for recording, storing, reporting and confidentiality of information

Responsibilities

An assessor has responsibility for the following:

- developing plans for assessing competence with learners
- judging evidence criteria to make assessment decisions
- providing feedback and support to learners on assessment decisions
- contributing to the internal quality assurance process

It is the assessor's responsibility to choose the best methods of assessing a candidate in relation to their individual circumstances. The methods chosen must be valid, reliable, safe and manageable and suitable to the needs of the candidate.

1.2 Developing plans for assessing competence with candidates

The assessor should:

- check that all learners understand the assessment process involved, the support available to them and the complaints and appeals procedures
- agree fair, safe, valid and reliable assessment methods
- identify appropriate and cost-effective opportunities for assessing performance
- identify how past experience and achievements of learners will contribute to the assessment process
- identify how to protect confidentiality and agree arrangements to deal with sensitive issues
- ensure that learners' progress is reviewed and that records of achievement are regularly updated
- be aware of ways of handling difficulties or disputes in the assessment process

1.3 Judging evidence against criteria to make assessment decisions

The assessor should:

- ensure that the work being assessed is the learner's own work
- make fair, safe, valid and reliable assessment decisions based on the agreed standards
- apply any agreed special arrangements to make sure the assessment is fair
- make a record of the outcomes of assessments by using an agreed recording

system

1.4 Providing feedback and support to candidates on assessment decisions

The assessor should:

- give learners feedback at an appropriate time and place
- give learners feedback in a constructive and encouraging way, which meets their needs and is appropriate to their level of confidence
- clearly explain assessment decisions
- provide advice and encouragement to learners where it is necessary for them to re-submit work or to provide more evidence
- follow the agreed complaints and appeals procedures if candidates disagree with the assessment decision

1.5 Contributing to the internal quality improvement process

The assessor should:

- ensure assessment records are accurate and up-to-date
- contribute to standardisation arrangements so that assessment decisions are in line with others
- contribute to the agreed quality improvement process

1.6 Recording assessment activity

Assessment decisions should be recorded using current documentation available such as tracking sheet. Assessment records should be available to the internal verifier and the centre management as appropriate.

2. Internal Verification

Introduction

The internal verification process establishes and maintains the quality of assessment for internally assessed, externally accredited learning programmes. The process provides the link between internal assessment and external verification systems and plays a key role in the Quality Improvement process.

Internal verification ensures that learners receive fair and equal access to assessment, which is free from discrimination and is made by well-informed and well-supported assessors. It also ensures that the standard of assessment remains consistent across time and candidates with respect to individual assessors, and that there is consistency and standardisation between assessors. This form of standardisation is vital in the maintenance of a national standard of assessment.

2.1 Role and responsibilities of internal verifier

The internal verifier must:

- understand the process of assessment and verification within the context of quality improvement
- have a relevant occupational background which can be related to the vocational area to be verified
- ensure health, safety and environmental protection procedures are applied within assessment arrangements
- apply and monitor equal opportunities and access procedures throughout all assessment procedures
- have a clear understanding of the standards to which the candidate is being assessed and ensure that any queries relating to the interpretation of the standards are brought to the attention of the external verifier
- work with others to ensure the standardisation of assessment practice and outcomes
- follow agreed procedures for the recording, storing, reporting and confidentiality of information

Responsibilities

The internal verifier has responsibility for the following:

- carrying out and evaluating internal assessment and quality improvement systems
- supporting assessors
- monitoring the quality of assessors' performance
- meeting external quality improvement requirements

The role of Lead IQA has been developed within Free2Learn to provide a central focus for quality assurance of accredited provision. Where a programme has more than one internal verifier, the lead IQA will ensure consistency and will take responsibility for co-ordinating the activities of the internal verifiers on the programme.

The Lead IQA will monitor quality of the provision, registration and certification with the awarding bodies, liaise with the external verifier and report to Adult Training Network and the delivery team on all aspects of quality.

2.2 Carrying out and evaluating internal assessment and quality improvement systems

The internal verifier must ensure that:

- arrangements for carrying out internal verification meet requirements and those of the external awarding body
- administrative and recording arrangements meet external audit requirements
- the eligibility of assessors to undertake assessment is checked against awarding body requirements
- appropriate support for assessors is available
- standardisation of assessments is carried out

- a procedure for complaints and appeals, which meets the requirements of awarding bodies, is in place and is followed when necessary
- appropriate recommendations to improve internal quality improvement arrangements are made to Lead IQA and management of Free2Learn.

2.3 Supporting assessors

The internal verifier must ensure that:

- assessors have appropriate technical and vocational experience
- assessors are familiar with and can carry out specific assessments and follow the recording and internal audit procedures
- the development needs of assessors are identified in relation to: principles of assessment; needs of candidates; their technical expertise and competence
- assessors have the opportunity to develop their assessment experience and competence and their progress is monitored
- assessors have regular opportunities to standardise assessment decisions
- assessors are able to maintain quality standards.

2.4 Monitoring the quality of assessors' performance

The internal verifier must ensure that assessors:

- plan and prepare for assessment opportunities effectively
- have effective processes for making assessment decisions
- apply safe, fair, valid and reliable methods of assessing candidates' competence
- set up and maintain effective working relationships with candidates at all stages of the assessment process
- apply relevant health, safety and environmental protection procedures,
- meet equality and access criteria
- give timely and effective feedback to candidates
- maintain accurate and secure records
- receive accurate and helpful feedback on their assessment decisions from the internal verifier

The internal verifier may carry out the following activities:

- sampling assessments
- observing assessors carrying out assessments
- standardising assessment tasks and assessment judgements

Sampling assessments

The internal verifier must ensure that the sampling strategy:

- meets awarding body requirements
- covers all assessors, candidates, units, assessment methods and locations for each programme
- is an on-going process
- includes an increased ratio of assessment decisions made by new or inexperienced assessors
- checks that evidence is valid, sufficient, authentic, current, reliable and consistent
- ensures that internal verifiers do not verify evidence that they have assessed.

Formative and summative sampling

Sampling assessments should involve reviewing the quality of assessors' judgements at both formative and summative stages.

Formative sampling:

It is important the internal verifier samples assessment activity at different stages of the assessment process.

Summative sampling:

The internal verifier should review the quality of the final assessment decision by evaluating how the assessor has reached that decision.

Sampling across assessors:

The minimum amount of sampling within a portfolio is determined by the risk assessment. The internal verifier should sample at least 20 - 40% of assessments (including portfolios) carried out by each assessor as well as comparing evidence for certain units, elements or performance criteria across assessors to ensure consistency between assessors over time and with different candidates. This process also assists in identifying the most appropriate forms of evidence that can cover the requirements of the qualification/scheme.

Observation of assessment practice:

By observing the assessor at work, a greater understanding of the assessment process is gained, particularly in the area of decision making; the internal verifier also achieves a greater understanding of how the diverse needs of candidates are met.

Standardising assessment judgements:

When a unit of assignment is delivered and assessed by more than one person, standardisation must be carried out before any formal assessment and internal verification has taken place. The function of standardisation is to agree the standard by discussing and mutually assessing a sample of learner work to reach a consensus. This must be done with reference to the assessment criteria and assessment guidance provided in the qualification specifications.

Once agreement has been reached, the assessors can then assess individually the learners work they are responsible for. The internal verification process should then take place and it is acceptable for the assessors to internally verify each other's assessment decisions.

The internal verifier must ensure that:

- consistency and reliability of assessment is maintained
- records of standardisation meetings/exercises are kept
- problems encountered with individual candidates are discussed and appropriate action taken.

Feedback to the assessor

The outcome of the internal verification should be recorded on an IV feedback form and this is part of the audit trail and should be signed and date by the assessor and the IV. Rather than just ticking boxes, the feedback section on the form should be used to provide advice and guidance. A rigorous IV will give pointers on both what can be done to improve the

assessment process and areas of good practice that could be shared. If action is identified by the IV, the assessor should complete this and return it to the Internal Verifier for sign off.

Meetings and communications

It is important that the outcomes of the above process, as well as feedback from the Lead IQA and the external verifier and awarding body issues etc, are disseminated and discussed at regular meetings with the assessment team, in order to develop a common understanding of the assessment process.

2.5 Frequency and volume of internal verification activity

Awarding body requirements

Internal verifiers should ensure that awarding body requirements are met. The frequency and volume of internal verification activity is dependent upon the duration and intensity of the course, as well as the number of candidates being assessed. As a guide, the sample of assessment decisions which are internally verified is usually between 20 and 40%.

New qualifications / and newly appointed assessors

When undertaking a new qualification, or where assessors are newly appointed, centres may wish to ensure that between 50 - 100% of assessment decisions are internally verified, in order to have confidence that judgements are consistent and assessments are appropriate.

2.6 Meeting external quality improvement requirements

The internal verifier must:

- identify how internal assessments will be checked externally and the information needed for this purpose
- plan, collect and analyse information on internal assessment decisions
- agree the timing and nature of external verification arrangements
- give supporting background information to external verifiers about the assessment process
- explain any issues raised by external verifiers and give them supporting information as necessary
- raise concerns and disagreements about external audit decisions in a clear and constructive way
- refer any questions or concerns, which could not be dealt with internally, to the awarding body
- give assessors feedback on external verification decisions
- ensure that external verification decisions are included in internal reviews of procedures.

2.7 Recording verification activity

Recording documentation

Recording mechanisms should provide evidence that internal verification has been carried out regularly and systematically and should show that it has occurred across candidates, units and assessors.

Evaluation of procedures

It is good practice to evaluate the reporting procedures regularly to ensure that the recording mechanisms are fit for their purpose and that the information recorded is appropriate and useful.

Currency and security

Records of all assessment and verification activity must be kept both current and secure and be made available only to appropriate personnel and for external verification purposes. The assignments are test material and must be held securely prior to and after the use. The candidates or staff must not at any time remove assignment papers from the centre, even after completion. None other than the appointed person should attempt to access the live assignments from the awarding body websites.

Claiming certification

Following final verification activity, it is the responsibility of the internal verifier to liaise with the lead IQA and the certification team to ensure that all candidate certification has been claimed accurately and signed.

2.8 External verification visits

Liaison with external verifier

The internal verifier should liaise with the Lead IQA or Quality Director who will maintain contact with the external verifier appointed by the awarding body to arrange an appropriate number of visits to the Centre.

Awarding body requirements

All necessary information, portfolios of evidence, candidate records and internal verification records must be made available to the external verifier and awarding body requirements must be met before, during and after the visit.

Issues and concerns

Any issues or concerns that have been raised by candidates, assessors or other Centre staff that have not been satisfactorily resolved, should be raised with the External Verifier prior to the meeting, in order that these can be accommodated into the visit plan.

2.9 Equal opportunities

Assessors and IVs should bear in mind the requirements of a multi-racial and multi-cultural society. In addition, situations or tasks which explicitly or implicitly encourage sexual, racial or cultural stereotyping or discrimination must be avoided. External verifiers will require

evidence of the equal opportunity policy of a centre and that it is being implemented, regularly reviewed and updated (where necessary)

Appendix 1 - Assessment /IV process map



Appendix 2 - CANDIDATE ACADEMIC APPEALS PROCEDURE

Grounds for appeal

Assessment decisions for all courses are based on criteria published by the awarding bodies. As a candidate you have the right to appeal against any assessment decision if you believe that the decision is unfair or unreasonable.

Awareness if the Appeals process

Your tutor will explain the appeals process at the start of the course.

Stage 1: Informal Appeal

- 1.●.1 If you are unhappy with an assessment decision you should always discuss it first with your assessor. You should be prepared to explain why you think you have met the required assessment criteria and you should be prepared to listen to your assessor's reasons.
- 1.●.2 In exceptional circumstances, if you feel very unhappy about discussing the issue with your assessor, you may raise it instead with the course director or your personal tutor.
- 1.●.3 If you are still unhappy with the assessment decision, you may proceed to Stage 2, the formal written appeal.

Stage 2: Formal Written Appeal

- 2.1 If you decide to make a formal appeal, you must appeal in writing within 10 working days of getting the original assessment decision.
- 2.2 The written appeal will be sent to the Internet Verifier responsible for the course.
- 2.3.1 The Internet Verifier will discuss the issue with the assessor concerned, evaluate the evidence and give a judgement
- 2.3.2 The Internet Verifier will notify you of the decision, and the reason for the decision, in writing, and will give a copy to the assessor and to the course director.

Stage 3: Appeal Panel

- 3.1 If you are still unhappy after the Internet Verifier's decision, you may make a final appeal to the college's Appeals panel. Membership of the appeals panel is determined by the Senior Leadership Team, but will normally consist of the Director and two members of the staff previously unconcerned with the matter.
- 3.2 To make an appeal you must apply in writing to the Senior Leadership Team within 10 working days of receiving the Internet Verifier's decision.
- 3.3 The Appeals Panel will consider the evidence and give a judgement. Their decision will be final and binding. You will be notified in writing of the decision, and the reason for the decision.

Stage 4: Appeal to Awarding body

If you are still dissatisfied with your grading you may appeal externally to the awarding body. Details will be available from tutor at the beginning of the course.

Candidate Appeal: To be completed by candidate

Candidate Name:

Assessor Name:

Qualification title:

Unit/Module Title:

Candidate's reason for appeal: Please use the space below to summarise the grounds on which you are making this appeal (you may attach any relevant documentation)

Candidate Signature: _____ Date: _____

Candidate Appeal: To be completed by Internal verifier/ Appeals Panel

Candidate Name:

Assessor Name:

Qualification title:

Unit/Module Title:

Internal verifier's report

This appeal is upheld/Denied (Please delete as appropriate)

Revised grade (where applicable)

Actions to be taken:

Internal verifier's signature:

Date:

Candidate sent a copy of this report on

Copy to assessor and director