GUIDANCE ON INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE OF QUALIFICATIONS

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2 THE ROLE OF THE IQA

The Internal Quality Assurer (IQA) is the driver of quality assurance in qualifications, both within national frameworks and within the quality and management systems of each approved centre. The role, in terms of managing assessment so that it consistently meets national standards*, is central to maintaining public confidence in each and every qualification issued. Therefore internal quality assurance is a key factor in managing 'risk' and ensuring that when certificates are claimed for learners the requirements of the national standards have been reliably met. *'Qualifications unit and/or qualification achievement sheet and certification request (Proforma 2)*

It is in everyone's interest for the delivery of training, assessment and quality assurance of qualifications to be of the highest quality.

At City & Guilds we are committed to supporting centres to improve levels of quality. In line with this we view internal quality assurance as being fundamental to ensuring the quality of all vocational learning and qualifications.

High quality learning, assessment and quality assurance are required to get the most out of all qualifications. There are tangible benefits for all from this approach as it means:
- Improved learner experience
- Raised learner achievement rates
- Increased learner retention rates
- More cost effective programmes
- Regulatory requirements are met
- Support for other planning and monitoring processes such as self-assessment

To achieve this - quality and quality assurance must be included from the planning stage of programmes of learning – as they are integral to the programmes themselves.

Quality and quality assurance measures need to be built into all processes in the 'learner journey' – these include the:

- Recruitment process
- Induction process
- Initial assessment
- Learning plans
- Teaching
- Facilitating learning
- Reviews of progress
- Assessment processes
- Achievement
- Progression planning

Internal quality assurance

All centres must have effective quality assurance systems to ensure optimum delivery and assessment of qualifications.

Quality assurance includes initial centre approval, qualification approval and the centre's own internal procedures for monitoring quality. Centres are responsible for internal quality assurance while City & Guilds is responsible for external quality assurance.

For all qualifications centres must develop a sampling strategy and plan which must be implemented by all those undertaking the internal quality assurance role. Centres with experience of offering N/SVQs will find that their internal verification process can be adapted to establish an internal quality assurance system.

The internal quality assurance system needs to contain:

- A set of written internal quality assurance procedures
- Sample planning based on the principles of 'CAMERA'   See page 12 for info on CAMERA
- Effective communication
- Interim sampling   this is mid point sampling
- Summative sampling
- Monitoring of assessor practice (including observation)   observation of delivery is also usually required
- Standardisation activities
- Sound administration
- Records of the above

There are four main aspects to the Internal Quality Assurer (IQA) role:

- Plan, operate and evaluate internal assessment and quality assurance systems
- Support and develop tutors and/or assessors
- Monitor and improve the quality of assessment practice
- Apply policies, procedures and legislation to meet external/regulatory requirements

Each of these key areas are discussed in this document guidance on accepted best practice.

3 PLAN, OPERATE AND EVALUATE INTERNAL ASSESSMENT AND QUALITY SYSTEMS

This is a primary focus for the IQA which entails ensuring that the centre's internal processes demonstrably meet external regulators' requirements. This includes having the following in place:

- Written procedures or a strategy for internal quality assurance *(Proforma 13)*
- Quality assurance systems that are 'fit for purpose' and *do* actually monitor the quality of the learner journey
- Quality assurance where sampling is planned for and carried out throughout the learner journey and not just at the end of assessment
- Learning and training that is delivered models 'best practice' and meets all requirements – and that this is monitored
- An objective system for recruiting and selecting assessors
- Assessment practice that is in line with the relevant current NOS for assessment
- Tutors and assessors who are regularly observed carrying out their roles
- Team members (including assessors) who are supported, get feedback on their practice and investment in their development.
- Record keeping that is maintained as required
- IQA practice which is in line with the current NOS for internal quality assurance
- CPD being maintained by all members of the team year on year
- Effective communication with City & Guilds
- An appeals system that is accessible, transparent and understood
- Standardisation activities that develop consistency between assessors
- Systems to promote year on year continuous improvement

Management of resources should also include forward planning to guarantee that resources ensure access to assessment, internal quality assurance and appropriate materials/equipment/facilities continue to be available for the duration of the programme or qualification. When seeking approval to deliver qualifications centres must ensure that the IQA has a channel for feeding communication into the organisation's management systems. This will assist in ensuring that appropriate decisions concerning resources are made.

The IQA should also have a full and accountable role in managing the qualification delivery team and this must include responsibility for tutors and assessors. To do this effectively the IQA must have accurate and meaningful information on a number of key points such as learner needs, location and current workloads of team members.

An essential part of this should be the use of a systematic initial assessment process that identifies any additional or special learning/development needs that learners may have. These may include the need for:

- Technical aids
- Physical adaptations (eg large print materials, ICT equipment)
- Extra support
- Training and/or assessment taking place in 'unsocial' hours etc.

Thereafter, the IQA should maintain up-to-date information on:

- Individual learner progress

- An overall picture of potential new learners
- Average timescales for the achievement of different qualifications
- Tutor and assessor availability (both current and projected).

The IQA should monitor learner progress against initial equal opportunities information provided by the learner. Where it is found that learners are not progressing as expected, a plan and then a record of actions taken to support the learners should be made.

The IQA must be able to call meetings of the tutor and assessor team, and have the support of management to require attendance.

The IQA clearly has a key role ensuring quality in the delivery and assessment of qualifications. As such, their duties and responsibilities should be included as an integral part of the organisation's quality procedures and manuals. The IQA should also have the responsibility for carrying out self-assessment of the centre's performance against the requirements of Ofqual 'The General Conditions of Recognition, City & Guilds Centre Manual, City and Guilds Our Quality Assurance requirements.

The IQA must ensure that they have up-to-date information and guidance issued by relevant bodies – awarding organisations, standard setting bodies, industry and professional bodies – and that this information is passed on to all team members. In relation to disseminating this information it is good practice to:

- Issue relevant documents to team members
- Provide website addresses where relevant information can be found
- Ensure that team members are registered to receive appropriate updates
- Record information relating to accessing up to date information in the minutes of meetings

Planning

The IQA is responsible for creating sampling plans for the qualification outlining what will be monitored is analysed and recorded in detail. This plan could be in a range of formats - it might be recorded on paper or be held electronically, it may consist of a range of documents or be entirely on one.

The most important features are that the plan must be a representative sample based on sound principles and take into consideration the risk factors in the centre or in the qualification team.

Typical risk factors that would be taken into consideration when initially planning the sample would be areas such as:

- The number of learners in the cohort or qualification
- Numbers of tutors and assessors
- Centre model – such a multi sites, satellites or one site
- Experience and confidence of tutors and assessors
- Changes to the qualifications
- Known problem areas/units/learning outcomes

When the above has been taken into account then the IQA will use the principles in 'CAMERA' to ensure that the sample is representative. This means that the sample plan must include something from all types of:

- Candidates/Learners
- Assessors
- Methods of assessment
- Evidence
- Records
- Assessment sites

If a risk management approach is taken and the sample planned according to the principles in 'CAMERA' then what is found as a result is likely to be representative of the whole and should give an accurate picture of what is happening in the delivery and assessment of the qualifications.

The information found by carrying out a sample can then form the basis of what the IQA does with the team, how they may adapt systems and will inform how they can support and develop team members to improve their practice.

Internal quality assurance sampling

The IQA must record and report on all sampling and monitoring undertaken in sufficient detail to justify their decisions. Underpinning all IQA activity is the validity of the internal quality assurance sample. It is not a good use of IQA resources to maintain 100% checks on assessment decisions: it implies a lack of confidence in both assessment practice and the internal quality assurance strategy. The assessment process must be left to assessors following feedback by the IQA. Quite often, centres maintaining 100% checks are simply adding a second signature to each and every learner's work at the summative stage rather than carrying out effective internal quality assurance.

Referencing

The audit trail must be clear and accessible to all. Poor referencing that is difficult to follow can raise queries as to how well assessors and IQAs understand the requirements and the validity of the internal quality assurance process undertaken. The best approach to referencing is to 'keep it simple'.

Whilst it is imperative that learners should not be prevented from achieving qualifications simply because they cannot reference evidence, a balanced approach should be taken.. Both assessors and the IQA must also consider whether the qualifications being claimed include a requirement to reference or organise evidence (eg customer service or administration qualifications demand the ability to file and retrieve information; learners undertaking management qualifications need to gather and present information to aid decision making). It may therefore indicate a development need if their work is badly organised. However, if there is no such skill required in the qualifications then learners should not be disadvantaged because they struggle to reference work. In this case, assessor records and reports must clearly indicate the basis for their decision, ie where the evidence is to support each unit. It is not acceptable for the IQA (and then the external quality assurer) to have to search extensively to find what has been assessed and what criteria are being claimed with it.

An IQA sampling strategy which involves reviewing the quality of assessor judgements at both interim and summative stages is a key part of this process.

IQA reporting

The IQA report must be completed for every IQA activity. A copy of the report should be given to each tutor or assessor. Learners should not be given copies of IQA report forms as they are written to address tutor or assessor practice and may therefore contain comments that might undermine learner confidence in team members.

- The IQA must ensure that their written feedback to team members is recorded on the IQA report form. The feedback must be directed to each person and should address their practice. The IQA should avoid generalised statements such as 'Well done to both of you. Lots of hard work undertaken'.
- Precise, focused comments on the work sampled support tutor/assessor development and evidence the rigour of internal quality assurance activity.
- The IQA is required to check some part of the unit(s) identified in the sampling plan. The IQA should indicate the actual items of work or evidence sampled by initialling and dating what has been reviewed.
- The IQA must record the unit and learning outcomes sampled on the report form to ensure that an auditable system exists in the centre records.
- Depending on the experience and qualifications of tutors and assessors, the IQA may be reviewing more than one unit during an internal quality assurance session, and should indicate all the units considered on the report form.
- In addition to the sampling of work or evidence the IQA will also record (by ticking as appropriate) the method of assessment used, the assessment focus and whether the evidence is valid, authentic, reliable, current and sufficient, and that there is evidence of consistent practice.
- The IQA will also note whether the records have been signed and dated by tutors (where required) and assessors and authenticated by learners.
- Where necessary the IQA will check that assessments are countersigned and that the appropriate records are being made on the countersigning report form.
- If a standardisation issue is identified, the IQA will need to record and discuss this at the IQA meeting with tutors and assessors.
- On action plans for tutors and assessors, the IQA will record what action is required by when and, at a later date, whether the action was completed.
- When observation of tutor or assessor practice is undertaken during the internal quality assurance, the outcomes should be recorded on *suitable paperwork*

- On completion of the portfolio/qualification, the *IQA final portfolio report (precertification)* should be completed.
- Occasionally the IQA may have serious concerns which need to be brought to the attention of the Quality Assurance Co-ordinator and/or centre management group.

- Unit achievement should be recorded on the Q*ualifications tracker*, and passed to the centre administrator in order that they can update the centre learner database.

   - Full certification requests should also be recorded (usually an email to exams)

- On completion of qualifications or periods of assessment, all original IQA records must stored with the learner assessment records for the period required by the regulator.

- Learners who leave or withdraw from assessment, prior to the achievement of their full qualification, are entitled to have achieved units certificated. The IQA must ensure that the same process identified for unit and qualification completion is followed, to ensure certification takes place and the necessary records are retained by the centre.

- Learners may have their completed portfolios and other work returned after the EQA activity following the claim but must be advised to keep them intact and safe for a period of three years.

Interim sampling

In order to enable the IQA to evaluate the quality of formative guidance given to learners it is vital that the IQA participates in the process at different stages in their work. This might include reviewing learner work:

- early on in the programme
- before decisions have been made on any unit and
- sampling evidence when one or two of the units or requirements are completed.

It will also include checking progress review reports given to learners by tutors and assessors.

Interim internal quality assurance enables the IQA to pick up problems at an early stage and so avoid the situation of disagreeing with tutor practice or assessment judgements. It can also highlight individual needs for support or development which in turn may be used to develop the 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 team members have wider experience.

Summative sampling

Summative sampling includes reviewing the quality of the learning completed and assessment judgements taken in their entirety. The IQA must be able to follow an audit trail which clearly demonstrates that tutors and assessors have covered all the requirements and checked that all work presented – whatever its format – meets the rules of evidence.

Evidence must be confirmed by assessors as:

- **V**alid   –   relevant to the standards for which competence is claimed
- **A**uthentic   –   produced by the learners
- **C**urrent   –   sufficiently recent for assessors to be confident that the learner still has that same level of skills or knowledge
- **R**eliable   -   genuinely representative of the learner's knowledge and skills
- **S**ufficient   –   meets in full all the requirements of the standards.

The sampling strategy for each centre will vary according to the needs of the centre and the particular qualifications or programme, but in all cases must be agreed with the external quality assurer. In defining the strategy all the following should be taken into account.

Factors	IQA needs to select a representative sample of:
Candidates	A selection of all candidates (gender, age, ethnicity etc.)
Assessors	Experience and qualifications, workload, occupational experience
Methods of assessment	Questioning, observation, testimony, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), use of simulation, product evidence, assignments, projects and tests
Evidence	All types of evidence
Records	Plans, reports from tutors, assessors, correct assessment practices, IQA records, learner and assessment records

Assessment locations	Workplace assessments, college, other assessment locations

Sampling plan

To help monitor the overall sampling strategy all centres must produce and maintain sampling plans which will be implemented by the IQA.

This section gives guidance about internal quality assurance strategies or rationales. Deciding on the most appropriate size of internal quality assurance sample can be difficult, especially if the centre team is new to qualification delivery. Ultimately, the sample must represent a sufficiently accurate picture of the quality of delivery and assessment for the centre to be confident that what has not been sampled also meets the required standards.

It is important that the IQA looks at the decisions of the entire team in any given period (possibly on a calendar basis, or by learner cohort). Once the other sampling factors are taken into account, the sample size will almost decide itself. It is essential that the process follows this route rather than deciding on a set sample size and trying to fit a strategy to it.

The IQA must sample the full range of delivery and assessment methods used for any qualification eg

- Learning delivery
- Observation of performance
- Use of witness testimony
- Professional discussion
- Oral and written questioning
- Assessment of learner work
- RPL
- Examination of work products
- Reflective accounts
- Candidate reports
- Assessments of projects
- Assessment of case studies
- Assessment of simulated activities

The range and frequency of use of particular assessment methods may vary depending on the level and requirements contained in the qualifications. For example, a level 2 Award in Sports Activity Leadership or Health and Social Care may draw heavily on observation of learners' performance, whereas a level 4 Diploma in Administration may include assignments, products from the workplace and witness testimony. The internal quality assurance sample must take all this into account, and it is crucial therefore that the IQA must know the qualifications thoroughly and be fully aware of which learning and assessment methods are acceptable for use.

All tutors and assessors should be included in the sample, but a number of other factors must be considered when the sample is selected. For example;

Experience

If tutors and assessors are qualified and experienced it may not be necessary to look at more than one or two decisions per learner and in some portfolios, not all learners. If tutors and assessors have less than 12 months' experience, are new to either the centre or a particular qualification or are out of practice, the IQA will need to sample substantially **more of their decisions for the first 6 – 12 months**. This ensures that the IQA reviews activity and decisions in all units in any qualification. This is particularly important where there are 'problem' units. These might be where specifications require very particular work or evidence or where the standards are often misinterpreted.

Workload

The IQA needs to look at the workload of each tutor/assessor so that the total sample also fairly reflects the amount of work and number of decisions being made by individuals. Increasing the ratio of learners to tutors and assessors needs to be carefully planned and managed as it can result in an increase in problems. Sampling may need to be increased where workloads have been raised to ensure that quality is not compromised.

Specialist assessors

Some tutors and assessors may only work with certain units in a qualification such as specialist units on first aid or health and safety. In some centres there is a division of duties with some staff delivering learning sessions, others carry out observations, whilst others assess only specific parts of the qualification. This can be a highly effective use of time and expertise. However the IQA must then ensure that all delivery and assessment requirements are being fully met and that assessment judgements are consistent. Once this is established then it is reasonable to reduce the amount of sampling that takes place.

Location

The location, method of delivery and type of tutor/assessors are also factors in deciding the sampling strategy. In some centres, learning delivery and assessments carried out are widely dispersed, both in terms of geographical location of learners and where staff members are based. Some centres have satellite centres (organisations which link to the main centre to facilitate access to certain qualifications, but who may have varying approaches to assessment). Other centres are linked through franchise agreements and partnerships with organisations which may have highly varied functions.

The internal quality assurance sample must capture a picture of learning delivery and assessment across the whole centre. The strategy for IQA should be consistent across all sites. If these arrangements are complex, then the strategy needs to be carefully thought through. It is a good idea to discuss it with the external quality assurer who can offer advice about the frequency of sampling across locations.

Some team members are peripatetic and visit across a number of locations. Others may be workplace-based or located in one main site such as a college. The IQA must look at the pattern of learning delivery and assessment and take this into account in their sample.

Requirements of qualifications

The sample also needs to take into account the requirements in the qualifications themselves. It is imperative that tutors, assessors and IQAs know the specified requirements well and agree the interpretation of areas where outcomes are not prescribed such as expected length of assignment answers, where content is not prescribed in assignment answers, what must be included in any outcome from assessment etc.

In addition, there may be changes to requirements when qualifications are revised. This can be particularly difficult for tutors and assessors during the transitional phase, since they will often be working with learners on both sets of standards simultaneously. It is important that the IQA is fully aware of any areas of potential confusion and includes these in the sample. Equally, it is important for the IQA to be aware of the last registration and certification dates for each qualification.

Access and other assessment problems

Some qualifications contain units which include requirements that are difficult to assess. This may be for confidentiality reasons (counselling, patient care), safety considerations (using hazardous machinery, appliances and materials) or infrequent occurrence (emergency evacuations, injuries). In these situations it is important that all required learning is covered and that assessors do not compromise or use assessment methods which are not acceptable. The IQA must specifically ensure that they sample any problem units, across all assessors, so that requirements are consistently complied with for all learners. The IQA should also ensure that issues such as these are discussed fully with the whole qualification team at an early stage.

4 SUPPORT AND DEVELOP TUTORS AND ASSESSORS

The second duty of the IQA is to guide, support and ensure the continuing professional development (CPD) of team members. This CPD must include occupational updating in line with relevant regulatory and professional requirements and ensuring that good practice is maintained in relation to facilitating learning and assessment. There are a number of points where this is particularly pertinent:
* When assessors are new – to the team, to the centre, to the qualifications
* When programmes or qualifications change or guidance is revised
* Following external quality assurance activities or other inspections.

New tutors and assessors should complete an induction process. What it contains will depend on their previous experience, both of qualifications generally and/or a particular suite of qualifications. As with the learner induction the process is more effective if it is coherent and structured. It is good practice for centres to have an induction programme or pack which contains relevant data and plans for what a new team member will experience and undertake in their induction.

The IQA must ensure that all tutors and assessors in the centre have access to:
* Copies of the qualification handbook or set of requirements for the qualifications they are delivering
* Centre Manual
* Quality Assurance Requirements
* Ofqual 'The General Conditions of Recognition'
* Directory pages of relevant qualifications
* Copies of qualification updates/ Alerts
* A set of all required tools eg course outlines, assignment/assessment requirements, observation records, questions, mapping documents, report forms, guidance notes used by the centre
* Copies of the centre's appeals procedures, equal opportunities and diversity policy and other relevant organisational procedures eg quality manual, health and safety policy, emergency evacuation procedures, lone worker safety policy etc.
* Information about available support resources for learners and team members

- Information about the awarding organisation and the external quality assurer
- Information about their learners including:
    - existing achievements
    - special learning or assessment needs, required and permissible adaptations etc
    - workplace contact details of supervisors/managers
    - contact point for advice from IQA or experienced senior team member

The IQA must also check and hold on file (which can be electronic or on paper but it must be accessible and available for examination at all times) the following information for team members:

- Personal profiles or CVs demonstrating skills, knowledge, experience and competence (where required) at an appropriate level
- Original assessor certificates (TAQA assessment units/ D32/ D33/ A1/A2). When the originals have been viewed by an external quality assurer then copies signed by the EQA can be maintained in place of originals.
- CPD records that demonstrate that all team members have completed development activities required by the relevant assessment strategies.

Where assessors need to achieve an assessor qualification but have not yet completed it is important that the IQA agrees realistic target dates for them to achieve the required qualification and that they draw up personal action plans. In the interim period, decisions taken by unqualified assessors must be checked, authenticated and countersigned by a qualified assessor. This person is known as the countersigner. If the countersigner is also an IQA they must not be the same person who then carries out the internal quality assurance activity.

Where there are new tutors or assessors in the team then the IQA must increase the amount of sampling and monitoring that takes place - whether or not they are qualified. This additional monitoring and support should take place earlier in the qualification process than would usually be the case. This ensures that new tutors and assessors have access to additional support and enables the IQA to identify any training and development needs that they may have. If a newly appointed tutor or assessor has experience, this period of additional sampling may be quite short. However whatever the level of experience, the incoming tutors and assessors will value additional support whilst they become familiar with the centre's systems. Similarly there should be a mentoring process for newly appointed IQAs.

The external quality assurer will expect to see evidence that the IQA has identified and addressed learning and development needs of all tutors and assessors. To do this a systematic process has to be in place to identify continuing professional development requirements. Once identified, the development needs must be transferred on to a development plan and include details of what might resolve the need and with timescales outlined. This plan may include specific training eg guided discussion techniques, alternative assessment methods, updating on awarding organisation/standard setting body requirements. It may also include opportunities to update vocational knowledge, individual research, webinars, taking part in standardisation etc

It is the responsibility of the IQA to monitor the tutors and assessors completion of the planned CPD activities. This should be completed as part of the ongoing support provided by the IQA to team members. During support meetings the IQA will review and update the content of the CPD plans accordingly. By the end of a year all team members should have completed the activities listed on the plan and so met the CPD requirements of the qualifications - and satisfied their own development needs. Also on an ongoing basis throughout the year, every team member should transfer the detail of what activities they have completed on to their CPD records. CPD plans and records will be requested by the EQA as part of every sample.

Where the centre has a large team, including a number of IQAs, it is helpful to appoint a LeadIQA There are many benefits to this model. Among the most obvious are that the Lead IQA is able to:

- Support, guide and develop other IQAs
- Monitor internal quality assurance practice
- Manage the workload of the IQA team
- Sample IQA plans to ensure standardisation
- Maintain CPD plans and records for the other IQAs
- Organise standardisation activities between IQAs
- Ensure no duplication between IQAs

IQAs also support assessors by standardising assessment judgements. This is to ensure that:
- Assessors consistently make valid decisions
- Given the same work or evidence assessors make the same decisions
- All learners are assessed fairly.

Standardisation
Standardisation is an important part of the IQA duties. In some centres, this aspect of the IQA role has been substantially underdeveloped, often relying on informal contact between the IQA and the qualification delivery team to ensure a common standard of decision making. Also, although team meetings may be held, these often focus on relaying information and tracking learner progress. Information giving and tracking are clearly important but it is crucial, particularly for centres with a number of dispersed, peripatetic, part time, contracted or inexperienced assessors that standardisation activities are undertaken with all team members on a regular basis. All standardisation activities should be included on relevant agendas and recorded in sufficient detail so that third parties such as the EQA can fully appreciate what has been carried out and the outcome.

The simplest means of completing a standardisation activity with assessors is to copy pieces of work or evidence presented (say for one Learning Outcome or one Element) and ask assessors to take an assessment decision based on what they have in front of them. It is also helpful to ask them to record what actions they would give the learner resulting from the assessment . In addition it is helpful to ask them to record what feedback they would give the learner if they were the genuine assessor of the work. This enables the IQA to check that assessors are:
- Asking the right questions
- Forward planning with learners
- Taking accurate assessment decisions
- Providing suitably detailed and specific feedback
- Fully recording the outcome of the assessment process

Standardising in learning starts when the content of the programme is agreed between team members and the IQA. The IQA would expect regular data from the tutor on attendance, progress, how interested topics were to learners etc and therefore be able to make comparisons between sessions or programmes delivered by different people. In addition they would observe tutors delivering learning and - having observed everyone in the team – be able to guide individual's work to improve consistency.

In addition the IQA could organise standardisation activities which may include

- ✓ Assessing each other's candidates
- ✓ Judging evidence together
- ✓ Working through the standards together
- ✓ Agree on assessment decisions How frequent and what type of standardisation activities are most appropriate should depend on a range of considerations such as:

- Feedback from the EQA or IQA sampling and monitoring of practice
- Any new requirements in the qualifications
- Changes within the qualification delivery team
- Outcomes of external audits
- Previous standardisation activities and findings
- The need for continuous improvement.

5 MONITOR AND IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF ASSESSMENT PRACTICE

The third responsibility of the IQA is to monitor and improve the quality of assessment practice. However ensuring the quality of the entire learner journey means that someone must ensure the quality of the entire process - this includes the learning delivered and the validity, safety and reliability of assessment practice. Where possible this should include the IQA carrying out observations of both learning delivery and assessment practice.

The aims of this part of the role are to:
- Ensure that high standards of learning delivery are maintained
- Ensure that the national standards for are adhered to by all assessors
- Identify problems or areas where tutors and assessors require advice or development
- Ensure that learners are aware of, and satisfied with, the assessment process.

Monitoring assessment practice to identify areas for improvement involves the IQA in a range of activities including:
- Evaluating assessor expertise
- Evaluating the planning and preparation of the assessment process
- Determining whether assessment methods are 'fit for purpose'
- Ensuring assessment decisions are carried out effectively
- Comparing assessment decisions
- Giving feedback
- Carrying out standardisation

Very often this means literally observing assessors in action, looking at how they conduct the assessment process and giving them feedback on their performance. It also includes reviewing the internal quality assurance records completed with all assessors and evaluating every aspect of their performance as recorded in the internal quality assurance records.

The quality and accuracy of programme plans, session plans and assessment plans as well as records should be included in the sample. The IQA should observe the individual tutor and

assessor's assessment and interpersonal skills, with a view to noting any areas which would benefit from advice or further development. The IQA must also note any problematic areas (eg within the qualifications) which could create difficulties for other tutors and assessors. Identifying such trends and areas for development is a crucial part of improving the practice of tutors and assessors.

Following the monitoring exercise, it is important that constructive and positive feedback is given to enable team members to develop. The discussions should be held in private and should not be relayed to the learners or other team members. The IQA should keep a record of this and ensure that it forms part of the tutor and assessor's individual development plan.

Monitoring also creates an opportunity to liaise with learners to ensure that their learning and assessment needs are being properly met.
In particular the IQA should check that learners:
- Know which qualifications they are working towards, and have a copy of the standards
- Are aware of the roles of everyone involved
- Understand the programme of learning that they are following
- Understand the assessment process
- Know who besides the assessor contributes towards the assessment process, eg witnesses
- Know when their progress will next be reviewed
- Know what progress they have made towards achievement
- Are aware of their rights to access unit certification
- Understand their role in completing work as planned, generating evidence and completing referencing
- Have confidence in their tutor and assessor
- Understand the appeals process
- Have no current unmet learning needs.

Monitoring the processes.

It is extremely important that the quality of the entire learning delivery and assessment process is monitored. Therefore the IQA needs to consider how and when they will monitor all material that is used by team members throughout the programme – and over a suitable period of time. This might include monitoring the quality of:
- Attendance records
- Programme outlines
- Session plans
- Handouts
- Slides or other audio visual material
- Online learning
- Guidance given
- Reviews
- Marking/assessment
- Assessment plans
- Feedback records

Sometimes monitoring these documents first can give an insight into areas of other sampling that might prove very useful. For example if attendance is poor on a particular session, the next area to monitor might be to look at all the sessions that are better attended, any work learners have submitted and then to contact a sample of them and carry out interviews. This type of sampling can yield interesting rewards for an IQA who wants to look in depth at what is happening on a

programme or qualification. The outcome can sometimes result in one to one discussions with a tutor or assessor or possibly a meeting where all team members discuss and standardise approaches, methods and share good practice.

Monitoring practice by sampling learner work and portfolio evidence

Traditionally this has been the sampling method carried out by most IQAs. Many IQAs – particularly in large centres – only carry out this method. It involves the IQA in looking through learner work and ensuring the assessor's judgements are fair, valid, reliable and safe. It then requires the IQA to give feedback to the tutors/assessors

In some qualifications learner work could be the completion of assignments, case studies the taking of tests, exams, skills tests etc. This work may be stored in a range of different ways. The requirements of the qualification must be followed and the IQA must include sampling this work in their sample plan. In addition to the IQA sample they may need to arrange for moderation to take place or alternatively blind or second marking to be completed. If it is an area where team members have less experience then this should form the focus of the initial sampling carried out.

Competence based qualifications a 'portfolio' is often the main source of evidence of competence and is the basis on which the assessment decisions are taken. A portfolio may be stored on paper or electronically.

A 'portfolio' of evidence may be stored in one place such as in a file or folder or it might be comprised of evidence that is found in a number of locations – ie it has been left in its usual place in the work environment, The evidence must however, be linked by the audit trail provided through the assessment and quality assurance records so that it can be identified, located and sampled.

In sampling portfolio evidence that is left 'in situ' there are some practical implications for the IQA to consider:
- If evidence is left in its usual location then the internal quality assurer will have to sample it in its usual location. This will require QA staff to plan for and carry out visits to other premises as part of their sampling
- The QA audit trail still has to be clear, trackable through the evidence and the planned sampling must be carried out as required by the qualification
- It is crucial that the evidence is kept safely in its usual location and is readily available for sampling whenever the internal quality assurance sampling takes place. It is the responsibility of the IQA to put in place arrangements to ensure this.
- The evidence must also ensure that the records provide an audit trail are readily accessible to the External Quality Assurer (EQA). It is not acceptable for an EQA to be searching for evidence or records.

When deciding what to monitor or sample the IQA can use a range of techniques and will select one of more of these techniques, identifying the ones that best suit the activity being monitored.

There is a range of sampling techniques that an IQA can use. These include:
- Observation of tutors and assessors
- Sampling product evidence
- Sampling records
- Discussions with candidates
- Discussion with witnesses

Feedback to tutors and assessors

Whatever is being sampled, monitored or carried out by the IQA one of the most important features is the quality of the feedback given to tutors and assessors as a result of the activity. All feedback needs to be detailed, specific and designed to improve practice. It should be delivered in both written and verbal format. IQAs should always:

- Produce written feedback
- Aim feedback at tutors/assessors – not learners
- Be honest
- Ensure comments are constructive and positive

- Start by asking the tutor/assessor what they thought themselves about their work
- Be factual
- Talk through each point of the feedback
- Give clear details of what was found/seen
- Specify what was done well and what needs to be done differently
- Seek to improve practice over the long term
- Agree next steps and timescales for change
- Record the process in detail

In addition where the sampling or monitoring identifies development needs these should then be entered on to the tutor or assessor's CPD development plan.

6 APPLY POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND LEGISLATION TO MEET EXTERNAL/REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

All IQAs are required to implement the policies and procedures of their own organisation and those of the awarding organisation. This may be in relation to areas such as secure transport and storage of learner work, maintaining confidentiality, implementing the requirements for data protection etc. In addition IQAs are responsible for ensuring that all team members carry out their responsibilities in relation to legislation. In particular this includes requirements for: health, safety and welfare and equality issues including bi-lingualism. IQAs should check that all requirements continue to be met as part of the ongoing monitoring carried out in the centre. The IQA also has a supporting role by creating and maintaining complete and up to date records of information is a particularly important function. When the centre is inspected, audited or monitored by an external agency, the following range of information will need to be made available:

The written IQA procedures

- Numbers of current registered learners per qualification and level
- Learner centre enrolment and awarding organisation registration details
- Tutor and assessor details – specifically CVs, CPD records, assessor qualifications (D units, A1, V1 or relevant TAQA units), development plans and workloads
- Learner progress reviews and achievements, special assessment requirements and equal opportunities monitoring information
- Training programmes, assessment records, plans, reviews and tracking sheets
- Available learner support resources
- Details of learning and assessment sites
- Details of satellite, franchise or partnership arrangements
- The internal quality assurance sampling strategy
- IQA records including feedback to tutors, assessors, discussions with learners
- Records of claims for certification
- Learner work and/or portfolios
- Minutes of internal quality assurance meetings
  Records of standardisation activities
- Procedures for storage and retention of centre records.

Following activity by the external quality assurer there is a real need to promptly disseminate information. In some centres any action points are agreed with a programme co-ordinator or qualification manager then individual IQAs have responsibility to communicate pertinent parts of the external quality assurer's report to those tutors and assessors for whom they are responsible.

It is important that action points raised by the external quality assurer are acted upon within the timescales specified. Failure to do so may result in a high risk rating

Because of security implications, it is extremely important that no claims for certification are made without the clearance of the IQA for the qualification. It is not acceptable for any claim for certification to be made by an IQA who does not meet the requirements specified in the qualification strategy – this may include holding an appropriate qualification.

Of equal importance is the need to maintain security of learner work and their assessment records. Work and portfolios for learners who have been certificated in between external quality assurer activities must be kept intact until the next activity so that they can be examined if requested. Original assessment records must be retained for at least three years and be made available for external quality assurance and to allow for any appeals or complaints to be progressed and resolved.

CPD
In addition IQAs are responsible for ensuring that their own practice is maintained and that they undertake CPD as required by the qualifications that they internally quality assure and to meet changing requirements in their role. There is a range of ways that an IQA can maintain their CPD including:
- Reflective practice
- Requesting feedback
- Undertaking training courses
- Individual research
- Attending forums
- Completing related qualifications
- Shadowing another IQA
- Training as an EQA
- Standardisation activities
- Undertaking related reading
- Attending relevant meetings or conferences
- Being observed

As a way of keeping up to date and to be a role model of good practice IQAs must be familiar with requirements and best practice in:
- Assessment
- The vocational area they quality assure
- IQA practice