



# A Guide to Internal Quality Assurance

This guide sets out the requirements for internal quality assurance and the different methods of assurance that are commonly used in the delivery of SFEDI Awards qualifications and the do's and don'ts of how to conduct them

## The Role of the Internal Quality Assurer

Often seen as an extension of the Awarding Organisation's monitoring team, the Internal Quality Assurer (IQA) has a vital role. They maintain and monitor the delivery and certification process and is the main contact between the centre and Awarding Organisation.

A strong and experienced IQA should lead to a delivery and certification system that maintains the integrity of the qualification, provides a quality learning experience to the learner and continually looks at methods to improve delivery and share best practice.

Often when issues are found within the delivery and certification of qualifications within a centre, regardless of whether at learner or Assessor level, it can be traced back to a quality assurance system that does not have sufficient planning, oversight and impartiality to carry out its function.

The Internal Quality Assurance function exists to:

- ✓ Develop and follow internal policies, procedures and documentation for the carrying out and maintenance of quality systems in line with Awarding Organisation requirements
- ✓ Ensure all Assessors hold and maintain the required qualifications and occupational expertise to deliver the qualifications and units they have been assigned to
- ✓ Provide support to Assessors in relation to procedures and policies for the delivery of the qualifications and units they are assigned to
- ✓ Identify training needs and provide ongoing training to Assessors to continually improve the standard of qualification and unit delivery
- ✓ Co-ordinate the timely registration and certification claims for learners
- ✓ Maintain appropriate records of quality assurance, assessment, registration and certification activities in line with Awarding Organisation requirements
- ✓ Ensure sampling plans take into account the ratio of learners per Assessor per qualification to meet the quality assurance requirements to cover all units delivered within a 12-month period
- ✓ Facilitate standardisation activities to support the continuous improvement of qualification and unit delivery
- ✓ Ensure all assessment documentation, maintained by Assessors, is complete, up-to-date and legible
- ✓ Ensure conflicts of interest are identified and addressed, including not allowing the quality assurance of own assessment work or cross quality assurance where two people quality assure each others work
- ✓ Conduct observations of Assessors conducting the assessment process
- ✓ Conduct learner interviews to monitor and analyse the quality of the assessment process and learner journey
- ✓ Provide the required information to the Awarding Organisation to aid and facilitate monitoring activities as required
- ✓ Impart information and feedback resulting from monitoring activities and ensure all actions are addressed by the indicated timescales

## Inducting New Assessors

A detailed and supportive induction is important to ensure that Assessors understand the role they are completing. Although the IQA may not be responsible for the training of Assessors within the centre, part of the IQA role is to ensure that an appropriate induction has taken place and that training needs are identified and addressed.

The induction programme should ensure the Assessors' understanding of:

- ✓ How to conduct competence-based assessment
- ✓ The requirements of the qualification(s) the Assessor will be delivering
- ✓ The centre's quality assurance policy and procedures
- ✓ The assessment records and documentation to be used
- ✓ The requirements of the Awarding Organisation and the Regulator

It is important that during the induction process Assessors are informed of the importance of the assessment process: **plan, judge and feedback**, as this will underpin the activities leading to the completion of a qualification. They ask Assessors to:

### Plan

Prior to carrying out an assessment thorough planning should be completed to identify the assessment methods to be used to provide the learner with the best opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and behaviours in order to meet the requirements of the qualification.

Assessors will plan to collect two types of evidence performance evidence designed to demonstrate what the learner is able to do and knowledge evidence designed to demonstrate what the learner knows and understands.

On occasions, as indicated later in this guide, performance evidence can also demonstrate knowledge and understanding but knowledge evidence does not normally demonstrate performance.

Plans should include:

- ✓ The location and time that assessment will take place
- ✓ Ensure that the evidence produced will meet the needs of being authentic, valid, reliable, current and sufficient
- ✓ Identify any mandatory assessment methods
- ✓ Identify the qualification requirements that will be met by the planned assessments

The learner should be included within the planning process so that they are aware of what is required of them and how it matches to the requirements of the qualification.

Plans should be documented and agreed upon by both the Assessor and learner so that they can be reviewed and updated at a later date.

There are occasions when naturally occurring evidence presents itself and this should not be discounted on the basis that it has not been preplanned. It should be used where appropriate to

evidence the requirements of the qualification. This should not form a replacement of well planned evidence and should be seen as a source of complimentary evidence.

## Judge

Once evidence has been generated it must be judged against the requirements of the qualification. This should be the agreed opinion of the Assessor and learner of the extent the evidence meets the requirements of the qualification.

It should index the evidence against the requirements of the qualification clearly showing the claims to competence that have been made. The most appropriate method of indexing the evidence against the requirements of the qualification are decided upon during the approval process of the centre but usually a 'matrix' style indexing is used.

When judging evidence, the Assessor should ensure it is:

- ✓ **Authentic** – is it the work of the learner?
- ✓ **Valid** – is the evidence relevant to the qualification requirements?
- ✓ **Reliable** – if a different Assessor completed the assessment would they reach the same decision?
- ✓ **Current** – does the evidence show the learner meets the qualification requirements at the time of the assessment? Especially important when using Recognised Prior Learning (RPL)
- ✓ **Sufficient** – does the evidence meet the requirements of the qualification

## Feedback

Feedback must be provided to the learner for each assessment carried out and recorded on the assessment documentation and should feed into both assessment planning and the completion of progress reviews. The feedback should provide the learner with information relating to:

- ✓ Whether the planned assessment has been completed
- ✓ The quality of the assessment completed
- ✓ What has been covered within the standards
- ✓ What is required to be completed to move the qualification forward

## Sampling Strategies

In order to provide SFEDI Awards qualifications, a centre must have effective quality assurance processes in place stretching from the initial approval of the centre, through to the approval to deliver qualifications and the certification for completed qualifications.

A sampling strategy is an important part of the quality assurance process which must be in place and implemented by those who are carrying out the IQA role.



It should include:

- ✓ A set of internal quality assurance procedures either in written form
- ✓ Sample planning based on the principles of 'CAMERA'
- ✓ Interim sampling
- ✓ Summative sampling
- ✓ Monitoring of assessor practice (including observations)
- ✓ Standardisation activities
- ✓ Administration procedures supporting the registration and certification process

Two forms of sampling are carried out to ensure that quality assurance is maintained. These are:

## **Interim Sampling**

Dipping into the assessment process whilst the learner is at different stages. It is normally carried out at three different stages; early in the programme, before any units or substantive work has been signed off or when one or two units or pieces of substantive work have been completed.

This ensures that the assessment of the learner is proceeding satisfactorily following the principles of plan, judge and feedback.

## **Summative Sampling**

Involves the IQA reviewing the quality of the assessment decisions by the Assessor. The IQA should be able to follow an audit trail, which clearly demonstrates that the Assessor has checked evidence is:

- ✓ **Authentic** – is it the work of the learner?
- ✓ **Valid** – is the evidence relevant to the qualification requirements?
- ✓ **Reliable** – if a different Assessor completed the assessment would they reach the same decision?
- ✓ **Current** – does the evidence show the learner meets the qualification requirements at the time of the assessment? Especially important when using Recognised Prior Learning (RPL)
- ✓ **Sufficient** – does the evidence meet the requirements of the qualification

The IQA must record and report all sampling undertaken in sufficient detail to be able to justify the decision made and reports should be signed by both the Assessor and IQA.

Sampling plans should ensure that over a period of 12 months the sampling activities cover all:

- ✓ Learners
- ✓ Assessors
- ✓ Methods of assessment
- ✓ Specific qualification requirements
- ✓ Evidence or Elements
- ✓ Records
- ✓ Assessment sites
- ✓ Assessor workloads and any adverse effects as a result of these

and a plan for all planned learner samples should be maintained for all samples planned and conducted showing:

- ✓ Learner name
- ✓ Qualification Title
- ✓ Registration number
- ✓ Start date
- ✓ Planned end date
- ✓ Planned interim sampling updated to show actual sampling undertaken including unit number and type of assessments sampled
- ✓ Planned summative sampling updated to show actual sampling undertaken including unit number and type of assessments sampled

Different rates for sampling should be adopted dependent on the experience of the Assessor delivering the qualification or unit they have been assigned to, for example:

Category	Required Activities
Newly qualified Assessors or Assessors new to the centre or those Assessors who are continually falling short of the standard required	100% sampling rate
	Assessor observation every 3-months
Assessors who are in need of development but often meet the standard required	50% sampling rate
	Assessor observation every 6-months
Assessors who are experienced with the qualification or unit they have been assigned to and continually meet the standard required	25% sampling rate
	Assessor observation every 12-months

The rates above may be subject to change for instance:

- ✓ Where a qualification is new to the centre the first 2 cohorts could be sampled at a 100% rate unless otherwise authorised by the Awarding Organisation
- ✓ Where the sampling strategy of the Awarding Organisation overrides that of the centre due to the risk rating or actions resulting from monitoring activities
- ✓ Where a contractual requirement requires additional sampling to take place (N.B. this will not override the requirements of the previous two instances where this sampling rate would require a lesser sampling rate to be adopted)

Once sampling has been completed it is important that the IQA provides constructive feedback to the Assessor so as to identify and address any issues and to promote continuous development of the assessment process going forward.

The IQA should:

- ✓ 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

Claims for certification can only be made by an Internal Quality Assurer holding the appropriate qualification or directive from the Awarding Organisation.

## Standardisation

Standardisation (sometimes referred to as benchmarking or moderating) is an important part of the duties of the IQA.

Regular meetings should be held to conduct standardisation exercises, usually on a quarterly basis, such as:

- ✓ To cover feedback from Awarding Organisation monitoring activities, assessment good practice and interpretation of standards and qualification specifications
- ✓ To cover feedback from learners as to satisfaction levels of both assessment practice and sessions attended
- ✓ Exercises using real learners' evidence to be used in order to standardise the assessment decision process

Minutes of meetings should be produced and copies kept for viewing during external monitoring activities.

## Assessor Observations

The IQA completes observations of delivery and assessment to ensure the management of the quality of the programme. There are two common types of observation:

- ✓ Direct observation of the Assessor in action and giving feedback on performance
- ✓ Direct observation of an Assessor's planning and review activities with learners

These observations are conducted, following sampling strategy requirements and clear evidence of the conducting of these should be maintained for viewing by the Awarding Organisation during monitoring activities.

Evidence of the enactment of any associated actions should be recorded and kept within the quality assurance folder for viewing by the Awarding Organisation during monitoring activities.

## Learner Questionnaires

The IQA completes questionnaires to gather feedback to ensure the management of the quality of the programme. These are conducted, following sampling strategy requirements, so that each qualification is subject to learner questionnaires being conducted every 6-months.

The results of the questionnaires will be analysed and improvement plans developed and enacted in order to promote the continued improvement of the delivery and certification of qualifications and units within the centre.

Copies of the analysis of results and resulting improvement plans should be kept within the quality assurance folder for viewing by the Awarding Organisation during monitoring activities.

## Dealing with External Quality Assurance Arrangements

As the main link between the centre and Awarding Organisation, the IQA manages and maintains the provisions of qualifications within the centre.

For external monitoring activities, the Internal Quality Assurer is required to have the following information readily available:

- ✓ Centre file containing all documents
- ✓ Numbers of current registered learners per qualification/unit
- ✓ IQA and Assessor details – especially CVs, up to date CPD records and current caseloads
- ✓ Copies of relevant staff certificates
- ✓ Assessment records and plans
- ✓ IQA sampling strategy
- ✓ IQA records including feedback to Assessors, Assessor observations and learner interviews
- ✓ Learner evidence records and documentary evidence
- ✓ Records of claims for certification

The IQA will be responsible for ensuring that all action points raised through Awarding Organisation monitoring activities are addressed within the specified timescale(s).



## Continuous Professional Development

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is a structured learning process that aids in the updating of an individual's knowledge to ensure competence to practice taking on board new knowledge, skills and practical experience.

As to who should undertake CPD activities, the short answer is everyone who is involved in the delivery and quality assurance of SFEDI Awards qualifications.

The process of CPD is important to support the quality of the learning journey provided to SFEDI Awards learners within our approved network of training providers.

As the name suggests, CPD is an ongoing process with individuals carrying out activities throughout the year.

Records of these activities should be updated at a minimum of once every 6 months but for individuals who carry out multiple activities within the year it may prove beneficial to update the records more frequently to ensure that all relevant information has been recorded.

CPD covers a multitude of subjects and specialisms and so definitive lists of what should be completed aren't appropriate.

An individual should consider the subject matters contained within the qualification(s) they have responsibility for as this will provide guidance on the types of subjects and specialisms to include when participating in the CPD process

It is not just about the subjects being delivered within the qualification(s), CPD should take a more holistic approach to include assessment and quality assurance practices so that not only is the knowledge of the subject being delivered up to date, the individual is continually improving their skills and abilities as a delivered and/or quality assurer.

Examples of potential CPD activities could include:

- ✓ Shadowing other quality assurance staff
- ✓ Observing a visiting expert
- ✓ Carrying out action research
- ✓ Standardisation meeting activities
- ✓ Contributing to or reading professional publications
- ✓ Attendance at conference and training days
- ✓ Peer to peer mentoring and support
- ✓ Undertaking relevant qualifications
- ✓ Delivery across a wide range of types of customers

The following information should be recorded for CPD activities that have been undertaken

- ✓ Date activity took place
- ✓ Description of the activity
- ✓ How the activity has helped to further develop knowledge, skills and abilities
- ✓ How the development will be implemented in supporting the delivery of SFEDI Awards qualifications
- ✓ Details of any further activities that are required

CPD records will be viewed as part of the Standard and Additional Monitoring activities completed by SFEDI Awards.

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