

Internal Quality Assurance Process

This is a process by which a centre ensures that the qualifications they are delivering are done so in accordance with Gateway Qualifications requirements.

It is a process by which the centre regularly samples and evaluates its assessment practices and decisions and acts on the findings to ensure consistency and fairness. It involves two key processes which are carried out by one or more Internal Quality Assurer (IQA);

- Internal quality assurance
- Standardisation

The Role of the Internal Quality Assurer (IQA)

The role of the Internal Quality Assurer is to ensure that:

- Assessment setting and marking is appropriate, consistent, fair and transparent and does not discriminate against any learner.
- Tutors/Assessors receive on-going advice and support, for example in contextualising assessments.
- Learners clearly understand assessment requirements and are given opportunities to achieve against the assessment criteria.
- Learners' work is presented in a manner that enables effective internal and external quality assurance to take place.
- Evidence of learner achievement is clearly mapped to the assessment criteria.
- Certification claims are valid, reliable and consistent.

Internal Quality Assurance arrangements must include as a minimum:

- An identified individual responsible for co-ordinating the internal quality assurance process.
- A planned structure for internal quality assurance that incorporates all of a centres provision.
- An agreed and published annual timetable for internal quality assurance, including, sampling, standardisation and meeting dates.
- Clear and documented roles and responsibilities for all those involved in the process.
- Sampling of assessed work.
- Full and clear records of feedback and action plans.
- Regular evaluation of the IQA process.

Internal Quality Assurance Activities

The following activities must take place during an IQA cycle. The length of this cycle will vary according to the centres provision. In many cases this will be based on an academic year, however some centres will operate a 'rolling' basis with a succession of short courses.

Planning for Internal Quality Assurance

A plan of the proposed IQA activity must be developed before the cycle begins. This must indicate what will happen, when it will happen, who is to be involved and how it is to be recorded.

Induction and updating for Tutors/Assessors

All new tutors/assessors must be introduced to the centres provision, processes and practice. It is essential that they:

- Have all the relevant units, assessment materials and other course documents.
- Clearly understand the assessment requirements and procedures.
- Have information about and access to training opportunities and support materials, both within the centre and as provided by the awarding organisation.

All tutors/assessors must know who is managing the IQA process and who will actually carry out the IQA of the work that they will be assessing. They need to know what is in the IQA plan and about any issues relevant to their work, as well as any issues that may have arisen from previous internal or external quality assurance activities.

Planning and managing assessment

It is essential that assessment is carried out in a structured way, both for the benefit of the learners and in order that effective IQA can take place.

The IQA will therefore need to work with tutors/assessors before a course begins to ensure that:

- Assessment tasks allow learners to meet all the necessary assessment criteria.
- Wherever possible a range of different types of assessment are used.
- Where more than one tutor/assessor works with a learner group, the assessment tasks form a coherent whole across the course in terms of content, style and timescale.
- Where more than one learner group is following the same course the assessment tasks are either the same for each group or, if the diversity of the groups requires differing tasks, they are consistent with each other in terms of fairness to the learners.
- Learners are made aware at the beginning of the course what the assessment requirements will be.
- A process is in place that incorporates constructive individual feedback to learners on their assessed work.

Over the duration of the course, the IQA will need to ensure that assessments are being carried out as planned. This will involve holding regular IQA meetings with tutors/assessors.

The IQA will also need to meet with the learners at some point during their course to ensure that their experience of assessment is positive. In particular, it is important that they:

- Understand the assessment requirements.
- Are receiving clear and constructive feedback on their assessed work.
- Are making good progress towards meeting all the required assessment criteria.

The timing of a meeting with learners should be appropriate to their particular course and group. It should be far enough into the course for some meaningful assessment to have taken place, but early enough for any issues to be addressed before the learners' chances of achievement are compromised.