

BTEC Higher Nationals Centre Guide to External Examination (UK) 2024-2025



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Summary of Changes

Welcome to the BTEC Higher Nationals Centre Guide to External Examination 2024–25.

As part of Pearson’s annual review of centre guidance and documentation, we have provided more information throughout this handbook concerning the external examination process.

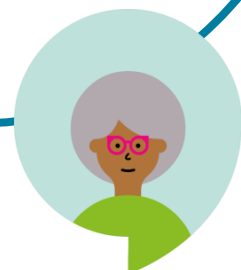
Any updates made for 2024/25 are highlighted in **yellow** and any changes during 2024/25 will be communicated additionally via the HEQ newsletter. Please sign up for the BTEC Higher Nationals monthly newsletter [here](#).

The guidance regarding the quality assurance approach for the new 2023 Higher Nationals in Art, Design and Media (UK only)



Questions?

If you have any questions regarding the quality assurance of BTEC Higher Nationals, please contact your External Examiner (EE), or Pearson’s Higher Nationals Assessment team via the [contact us](#) page of our website.



Introduction

This guide provides you with the information you need to be prepared for this process in 2024–2025.

External examination is how we check that you are operating appropriate quality assurance and maintaining national standards for our BTEC Higher Nationals programmes, including Pearson Higher Technical Qualifications for England (HTQs), where applicable. This document provides more information on the processes and support to help you prepare. It takes you through what you need to do, who's responsible at each stage, and gives additional advice and guidance around best practice.

We hope you find this guide useful, and we have aimed to cover all the relevant points to help you successfully deliver BTEC Higher Nationals.



**WE'RE HERE
TO HELP**

If you need more information or support at any stage, please visit the [contact us page](#) of our website so your question can be answered as quickly as possible by our teams. We're always ready to help with whatever query you may have.

What you need to do

1

Familiarise yourself with our processes and terms

If you are new to delivering BTEC Higher Nationals qualifications, you should start familiarising yourself with the term 'external examination', and how we quality assure the internal assessments that you undertake. Further guidance on the quality assurance process can be found [here](#).

2

Read this guide

This guide provides you with information regarding the external examination for BTEC Level 4 and 5 Higher Nationals (RQF) and Customised BTEC Level 4 and 5 Higher Nationals on Pearson's Self-Regulated Framework (SRF) and Pearson HTQs.

3

Read the associated quality assurance documentation

This guide should be read in conjunction with the [BTEC Higher Nationals Centre Guide to Quality Assurance and Assessment](#), which provides additional information and guidance regarding the delivery and assessment of our BTEC Higher Nationals qualifications (QCF, RQF and SRF). Centres registered with the Office for Students (OfS) must also comply with the [OfS Conditions of Registration](#). All our quality assurance documentation can be found in the [QA Hub](#) on HN Global. It is also good practice to familiarise yourself with our [vocational qualification policies](#).

4

Read the relevant qualification specification

You also need to read any specific instructions in the relevant qualification specification document which you can find on the Pearson Qualifications website [here](#). Working from our guidance documents will ensure that you have all of the correct conditions and requirements in place for each stage of the external examination process.

How we verify standards



We allocate an External Examiner (EE), who is a subject expert, to conduct sampling of assessment instruments and assessed student work in order to provide judgments and feedback. External Examiners support you in identifying good practice and areas for further development, giving you guidance on how you can improve your assessment.

If our External Examiner concludes that students have not demonstrated the national standards outlined in the specification through their work, you will agree actions that need to be completed before we will be able to issue certificates to your students. This will include providing a second sample of student work to show that you have responded to the External Examiner's feedback.



The [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) outlines expectations for the involvement of external expertise. You should ensure that External Examiner feedback to Assessors and students is part of your broader system of quality assurance and enhancement and that the External Examiner is informed about your organisational procedures, practices, and academic regulations.

If you are delivering a Higher Apprenticeship, the knowledge-based qualifications that make up the apprenticeship will follow the external examination quality assurance model outlined in this guide. However, you should read the information in this document in conjunction with the [Centre Guide to Quality Assurance for NVQs/SVQs and Competence-based qualifications](#).



Allocation of your External Examiner (EE)

We will begin allocating External Examiners (EEs) to all centres with active registrations each November. If a programme is no longer running but still has active registrations, you must either claim certificates or withdraw the students. To ensure that we allocate EEs to the correct programmes, please ensure that student registration information is accurate and up to date. For students who are no longer active on a programme, you must ensure that their registration is withdrawn from Edexcel Online (EOL). This will also ensure that centres are not invoiced for the **[annual student fee](#)** for students who are no longer studying.

Once programmes have been allocated, we will notify the Quality Nominee via email and the External Examiner will then get in touch to ask for contact details for the Programme Leader.



Roles and Responsibilities

Roles and responsibilities

It is important that you have a strong team in place at your centre in order to deliver and assess your BTEC Higher National programme effectively. Our website provides an overview of the main quality assurance responsibilities for each role **[here](#)**.

Arranging the remote visit

External examination usually takes place through an annual remote ‘visit’, although **actual visits may be put in place** to take into account varying programme start and end dates, certification requirements and where additional actions are required. If you feel you would benefit from an onsite visit, please do discuss this with your External Examiner.

The External Examiner will agree a date for the ‘visit’ with your Programme Leader and confirm in writing the programme(s) they have been appointed to. It is important that you identify any customised provision or units added through the Meeting Local Needs process, if you have it. You should also make the External Examiner aware of any UCAS students.



It is important to approach your ‘remote’ visit in the same way you would a ‘normal’ visit. **Please ensure you have provided your External Examiner with the items listed on their ‘remote’ visit plan.**

For HN programmes, the External Examiner will want to speak to your students to gauge their opinion on your assessment processes and access to resources. Therefore, the remote visit should be arranged on a day when students are available to speak with the External Examiner online. Where programmes have particularly large cohorts or operate across multiple sites, we may operate a ‘team approach’ to external examination. This means that one External Examiner will be allocated, but they will coordinate a team of External Examiners who will support them in conducting sampling. For multiple sites, the External Examiner may arrange to sample each site and may need to sample each group of students and talk to staff online. Where programmes operate to non-academic year timings sampling may be arranged to cover each completing cohort rather than a single annual sample.

Once a plan for the remote visit has been agreed, the External Examiner will confirm this in writing. The visit plan will detail exactly what is required to complete the sampling in a timely fashion.



All sampling activities should be completed by 30th July if certificates are required for mid-August. This is to ensure that students completing in the current academic year have their results in time for college and university admissions.

Preparing for your 'visit'

Before the 'visit', the External Examiner will request two assignment briefs and the associated internal verification documentation to review. They will then provide feedback to you in advance of their visit by completing an assignment feedback form and identify any actions for the assignment briefs. The assignment briefs, internal verification documentation and completed assignment feedback forms will also be sent to Pearson by the External Examiner.



Although you are not required to send assignment briefs to the External Examiner in advance of the visit, we strongly encourage the submission of two assignment briefs to the External Examiner, so that you receive early feedback and support.

In advance of the 'visit', the External Examiner will ask to see assessment plans and other assessment tracking documentation. This is so they can arrange a remote visit date for when sufficient student work has been completed across units for a certification decision to be reached.

The assessment plan and tracking documentation should identify the Assessors and Internal Verifiers, allowing the External Examiner visibility of who is delivering, assessing and internally verifying each unit on each pathway/programme. They will use this information to inform their sample.

The External Examiner may also ask to see timetables and centre management documents in advance of the remote visit, so that they can ensure their remote visit takes place on a day when students will be available to speak to online.

Your 'visit'

During or in advance of the 'visit', the External Examiner will need access to:

- All assignment briefs used to generate student evidence for each unit. The External Examiner will want to see the relationship between any tests and related assignments
- A list of students registered on the programme that the External Examiner can map against Pearson records
- All student work for units that have been assessed from which the External Examiner will select a sample
- Assessment records for all student work
- Internal verification documentation for all assignment briefs
- Internal verification documentation for all assessment decisions
- CVs for all staff with a list of the units that they have delivered and assessed
- Centre–devised programme specification
- Staff and student handbooks
- Higher education specific policies, including those on student appeals, malpractice, extenuating circumstances and resubmissions
- Minutes from the most recent Assessment Board.

Please note that this list is not exhaustive, and the External Examiner may request to see additional documentation and this will be detailed on your 'visit' plan

Ahead of the 'visit', the External Examiner will make arrangements to meet online with the relevant people at your centre to discuss the management and delivery of the programmes, and their understanding of the [OfS Conditions of Registration](#) (if applicable) and the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#).



The External Examiner will choose a group of **students to meet online with** who will be asked for their opinions on teaching, assessment and support, including the:

- Quality, variety and effectiveness of teaching methods
- Quality, quantity and variety of assessments
- Clarity of task descriptions and grading criteria, outcome coverage and skills development of assessments
- Quality and promptness of feedback and academic support
- Appropriateness of physical resources to support teaching and learning
- Effectiveness of the tutorial system in covering academic and pastoral care.
- Where required, the External Examiner will check student identity.

There is updated guidance below in relation to External Examiner interviews with students and how these are arranged below:



- Student interviews must only take place whilst the student is on site (i.e. centre or workplace) and never in their homes
- A member of centre staff who is not involved with the delivery and/or assessment of the programme should accompany the student for the duration of the interview for observation purposes only
- Centres will need to provide a centre email address to facilitate the interview, for example a Teams meeting could be arranged for a group of students, with the invite link being sent by the centre staff to the External Examiner, or by the External Examiner to centre staff
- Alternatively, the centre may have a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) that does not share personal email data.



Staff will be asked their views on the management of the programme(s) including:

- how they are kept informed about updates to Pearson policies, including changes to our assessment practices
- how often they meet as a programme team
- how they are given opportunities to develop to support the programme.

The External Examiner may make arrangements to virtually attend an Assessment Board meeting, but you must also provide the minutes from the most recent Assessment Board. External Examiners have the right to attend your Assessment Boards, although you cannot insist on their attendance. If an External Examiner attends an Assessment Board, it is in the capacity of an adviser and they have no power of veto. If an External Examiner feels that a wrong decision is being made, they can only register their disagreement with the decision in their External Examiner report.

Your External Examiner will also sample each programme you are delivering within the sector. Where possible, they will want to see work for whole units, more than one student per unit/Assessor and assessment decisions covering a range of grades.

The sample size will depend on the:

- Number of students and units delivered
- Number of Assessors and the size of the programme team
- Levels of units in the programmes.

Number of registrations	1-8	9-100	101+
Minimum number of			An additional 9
individual students sampled	All	9	per 100



The minimum sample will **always include no fewer than 3 units reviewed**. Student work is sampled across units; therefore, if you have 100 students, your External Examiner needs to see samples for 9 individual students across at least 3 units, not 9 individual students for each of the units.

The sample will always include mandatory core units, and your External Examiner will want to sample different units to those sampled in the previous academic year, unless recommendations or essential actions were previously identified for specific units.

Where units rely on students determining the brief (e.g. project units), the External Examiner may choose to look at several briefs during the visit.

There is no maximum sample size and the External Examiner may continue looking at evidence if initial sampling suggests that further investigation is required. However, Pearson will need to approve any additional visits required increase the sample size.



Report Part A



Report A will provide you with feedback on your management and delivery of higher-level programmes and may include essential actions or recommendations. Essential actions are mandatory but do not prevent your current students from being certificated.

If a team of External Examiners remotely visited your centre, this part of the report will be completed by the person allocated to your centre.

POINTS FROM YOUR PREVIOUS REPORT

The External Examiner will check the progress you have made against any recommendations or actions from your previous report and will highlight anything that has not been addressed.

MANAGEMENT OF ACADEMIC STANDARDS

During the remote visit, the External Examiner will be looking for **evidence that you have effective management procedures in place** that are supported by appropriate systems and regulations/policies. This will include arrangements for any programmes run on a collaborative basis in other institutions.

They will check the operation of your ongoing assessment meetings (such as team meetings, standardisation meetings, course review meetings and Assessment Boards), including:

- The scope of the minutes of previous meetings
- Organisation, conduct and administrative support for the meetings
- Decision-making processes and fairness and consistency of these decisions.

If an External Examiner does not attend an Assessment Board, they will still need to confirm that:

- Assessment Boards do take place at the centre
- There are appropriate regulations and rules of operation covering their conduct
- Minutes of Assessment Boards have been received and recommendations have been discussed with the Programme Leader or Chair of the Assessment Board.
- The External Examiner will also review your regulations to ensure you have procedures in place for managing the activities listed below, and provide feedback on how your regulations relate to Pearson requirements. Centres will also need to be aware of the [OfS Conditions of Registration](#) (where applicable) and the expectations in the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#):

- Assessment Boards
- Extenuating circumstances

- Group assessment guidelines
- Late submission of student work
- Recognition of prior learning (RPL), including exemptions
- Resubmissions and repeat units (including adherence to the different rules for both QCF and RQF Higher Nationals)
- Risk assessment and health and safety
- Student plagiarism, staff malpractice and maladministration
- Student recruitment, including the obligation to ensure that all applicants meet the English language requirements as stated in the qualification specification and the [BTEC HN Centre Guide to Quality Assurance and Assessment](#)
- Student support, especially for students with additional learning needs.

Information about these policies must be available for your students, and your External Examiner will review the evidence of how regulations have been applied.

The External Examiner will also review the management of the programme(s) to ascertain if there is a designated Course Manager/Coordinator, if the programme team meets regularly, and if minutes and action points from these meetings are recorded, kept and actioned.

The External Examiner will also confirm whether a student handbook and centre–devised specification have been produced, that are both available to the students and that meet Pearson requirements.

EFFECTIVENESS OF ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS

Your External Examiner will confirm whether the **assessment instruments are appropriate for the level of qualification** and that their **design and nature permit the aims and learning objectives of each programme to be met**.

They will consider whether:

- The assignment outcomes and related assessment criteria are clearly stated, and assessment tasks are matched to the outcomes/assessment criteria and level
- There is a variety of assessment tasks which relate fully to the unit content
- There is clear guidance to students on the content/scope of tasks and the grading
- The assessments are appropriate to the student profile, level and mode of study
- Assessments promote learning, allowing students to develop skills as opposed to rote learning/accumulation of facts
- There are both formative and summative assessments
- There are opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own learning and have some freedom of choice for completion
- There is a unit assessment plan detailing coverage of all assessment criteria and grading opportunities
- There are sufficient assessments for each unit and the workload is realistic
- There is equality of opportunity for all students, including those with particular requirements, to achieve the stated outcomes and associated grading criteria.

MAINTENANCE AND AUDIT OF RECORDS

Your External Examiner will check that your **assessment records are accurate, up-to-date and stored securely**. They will also confirm that your **process for maintaining and auditing assessment records is secure and effective**.

The EE will review the system(s) used for providing feedback to students (the formative and summative assessment process and associated records) and for recording and tracking achievement (online and/or offline tracking at unit- and programme-level); confirming the types of checks and audits that are in place.

REGISTRATION AND CERTIFICATION CLAIMS

As part of the remote visit, the External Examiner will check that you have a process for ensuring that **student registration and certification information is accurate and monitored effectively**. This means registering students onto the correct programme by **15th November for students following the traditional academic year** and **within one month of the enrolment date for any students following a non-academic year route** and making any amendments, transfers or withdrawals in a timely manner.

The programme team should have a good working relationship with the exams office to ensure that your student registration details accurately reflect your own records. The External Examiner will confirm that you have adequate procedures for:

- Checking the accuracy of student registrations
- Ensuring that timely and accurate certification claims are checked and verified against assessment records
- Checking a sample of certificates received against assessment records, prior to issue to students
- Investigating and reporting all inaccurate, early/late and fraudulent registrations or certification claims, via your senior management, to us.

STUDENT SUPPORT AND REVIEW

As part of the remote visit, the External Examiner will speak to staff and students, reviewing the support given to students. They will provide comments on:

- Your assessment process and assessment feedback to students
- The quality of teaching and the expertise, experience, and qualifications of staff
- Opportunities available for students to undertake independent learning and how these are integrated into the programme
- Opportunities for staff to develop, to better support your students
- Availability of learning resources, computer facilities and specialist software required for the programme
- Tutorial and pastoral support
- The student voice and opportunities students are offered to give feedback on their programme; for example, through end of module evaluations, cross-centre questionnaires, focus groups, or student representation on committees
- Any concerns your programme team have

AREAS OF GOOD PRACTICE

Any areas of particularly good practice mentioned in other sections of the report will be highlighted.

Report B



Report B will provide you with feedback on your sampled student work. If a team of External Examiners visited, the allocated External Examiner will collate the sample evidence for Report B and complete the final report. For multiple sites, feedback from the visits will be collated into a single report.

Essential actions will be identified where your assessment does not meet national standards for any of the students sampled. **Essential actions in Report B will prevent certification for current students on the programme.**



FAIRNESS AND CONSISTENCY OF GRADING / VALIDITY AND STANDARDISATION OF ASSESSMENT ACROSS ASSESSORS

- Are all assessment criteria associated with an outcome being assessed and is there sufficient coverage of unit content?
- Are the grading decisions for units correct and consistent with a range of Pass, Merit and Distinction grades within a unit?
- Is it clear what grades have been awarded and has this been clearly communicated with the students?
- Have reassessment and repeat unit rules been followed correctly? If they have not, this will constitute an incorrect assessment decision and certification will not be released.



EVIDENCE OF INTERNAL VERIFICATION

- Is there a documented assessment strategy giving details of internal verification/internal quality assurance expectations? Is this being followed?
- Is there evidence that assignment briefs have been internally verified on an annual basis?
- Is there any indication that assessment decisions have been internally verified?
- Do internal verification records show the names of Internal Verifiers and students?
- Has the Internal Verifier included any written feedback/comments for authors of assessment briefs/Assessors?



QUALITY OF FEEDBACK TO STUDENTS

- Is there written feedback to students indicating errors or omissions?
- Is the feedback sufficient to enable students to correct errors and develop learning skills in future assignments?
- Does the feedback indicate why a grade has been awarded?
- Is there a formal procedure for reaching agreement if Internal Verifiers and Assessors disagree about a grade?
- If student feedback could be improved, this will result in a recommendation but will not affect certification.

For each piece of student work sampled, the External Examiner will judge whether:

- The student has achieved the aims of the learning objectives and the targeted criteria at the appropriate level
- The student displays knowledge and understanding; key (transferable) skills; higher level cognitive skills such as evaluation, analysis, literature searching etc.; and subject specific skills including practical/professional skills
- There is a range of Pass, Merit and Distinction grades
- There is a variety of responses/topics/literature sources in students' answers. If not, whether any similarities suggest evidence of excessive staff guidance or plagiarism
- There is progression of higher-level skills/subject specific skills/employment skills between assessed work for HNC and HND students
- The student has authenticated their work by signing a declaration of authenticity
 - **For some students sampled, the External Examiner will speak to the student regarding their work and to determine if they meet the stated English language requirements.**

Students must authenticate the evidence that they provide for assessment. They do this by signing a declaration stating that it is their own work when they submit it. For practical or performance tasks observed by the Assessor, this is not necessary. If during external examination, the External Examiner raises concerns about the authenticity of evidence, or student declarations of authenticity are not available, you will be given a set timeframe to produce these. If any concerns are not resolved, or declarations are not produced, within the timeframe given, **the External Examiner will not release certification for the relevant programme(s).**

Please note that some anti-plagiarism software is unable to read text that has been placed inside text boxes. Therefore, student work that makes heavy use of text boxes should be returned to the student, so the text boxes can be removed. **The External Examiner will not release certification for a programme if they find use of text boxes within**

students' work. The JCQ guidance regarding Artificial Intelligence can be found [here](#).



Any evidence of plagiarism in student work will result in an Essential Action and

Outcomes of external examination

Your external examination reports will be available on Edexcel Online (EOL) within 10 working days of your visit. At both centre and programme level you should give full and serious consideration to the comments, actions and recommendations contained in external examination reports, as expected in the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#). The actions taken as a result of reports, or the reasons for not following recommendations, should be formally recorded and circulated to those concerned.

You should ensure that student representatives are given the opportunity to be fully involved in this process, enabling them to understand all the issues raised and your response. At centre level, the general issues and themes arising from the reports should be reviewed. The report is split into Report A (management and delivery) and Report B (assessment sampling), which allows you to share the detail of Report A without compromising the confidentiality of the students sampled.



RELEASE

- You have provided a full sample and the External Examiner has confirmed you have adequate quality assurance procedures in place, and you are documenting assessment correctly.
- The External Examiner has **agreed that student evidence is valid, authentic and sufficient, and you are assessing students to the national standard**. However, they may identify actions or recommendations on how to improve on current practice.
- **Certification is released, programme by programme**, and a further sample is not required.



NOT YET FULLY SAMPLED (NYFS)

- The External Examiner has not seen sufficient evidence in order to release certification for the programme.
- **Certification is not released, and a second sample will be requested.**



CERTIFICATION PENDING – CENTRE ACTION REQUIRED

You have provided a full sample, **but the External Examiner has identified one of more essential actions that need to be addressed before we can release certification**. These may include:

- Students have not been assessed to the national standard
- Assessment and/or internal verification has not been documented correctly on one or more of the programmes in the sector
- Plagiarised work was found in the student sample.

This means that certification is not released, and a second sample will be requested. The External Examiner will give initial feedback on the day of the visit, so you should be prepared for the outcomes of the report.

The external examination report is able to release certification separately for each programme within a sector. Therefore, if the External Examiner does not release one or more programmes within the report, this does not automatically affect certification of the other programmes.

Submitting a second sample

You will need to submit a second sample if your first sample did not result in a release of certification or if further sampling is required in order for certification to be released (NYFS). The External Examiner will get in touch to agree a timescale and to confirm the format for your second sample once you have accessed the original report. **The second sample will also be typically conducted remotely.**

Your second sample will include:

- The elements of the first sample that prevented the release of certification, including all additional work completed by students to address any gaps identified during the visit
- Evidence that amendments have been made to address the issues highlighted in the external examination report, such as revised grades for the whole cohort for the unit(s) affected
- Work for additional students so that the External Examiner can check that standards are being reapplied consistently across a programme.

Once your second sample has been reviewed, your External Examiner will submit a second report within 10 working days.



RELEASE (2)

- The External Examiner has **agreed that you are now assessing students to the national standard** for all programmes but may offer recommendations on how to improve on current practice. Your quality assurance procedures will also have been confirmed as adequate.
- **Certification is released and no further sampling is required for the academic year.**



CERTIFICATION PENDING – PRINCIPAL STANDARDS SUPPORT

- The External Examiner **still does not agree that you are assessing to national standards** for one or more programmes.
- At this point the External Examiner will refer the issue to the Pearson Higher National Assessment & Quality team to agree a remedial action plan. It is likely to include support from the Senior External Examiner for the sector. Once the action plan is complete certification can take place.

Appealing the outcome of external examination

We have a formal appeals process to address any concerns you may have about the outcome of the external examination process. This can be found in the [enquiries and appeals about Pearson vocational qualifications policy](#).

Timeline



SEPTEMBER – OCTOBER

Academic year delivery begins



NOVEMBER

Allocation of your External Examiner (EE)



NOVEMBER – MARCH

Two assignment briefs sent to your External Examiner (EE) for review



NOVEMBER – FEBRUARY

Contact made with your External Examiner (EE)



MAY – JULY

Sampling completed by 30th July

AUGUST

Students receive qualification



Glossary

Conditions of Registration (Office for Students)	For centres in England registered with the Office for Students, the quality and standards of their higher education courses must meet a minimum set of requirements or conditions . A centre is assessed when it first registers with the OfS, and once it is registered, the OfS monitors the centre to ensure it meets the conditions on an ongoing basis.
Contracting & Allocations ("VQ Deployment")	The Deployment team issues contracts to External Examiners (EEs) each year and releases centre allocations for HN programmes. The main reasons for which a centre will contact the team are if they cannot see an EE allocation and will need certificates, they want to request a rationalisation of their EEs, or they are no longer running a programme. The team can be contacted here .
Edexcel Online (EOL)	This is a multifunctional system for centres. Access is password protected and is managed by your examinations officers/team. Screens show programmes and students within a centre, allow for new registrations or withdrawals. Registrations and withdrawals will be done through this portal. External Examiner and Centre Quality Reviewer allocations and consequent standards and Quality Management Review status can be viewed here. EOL can be accessed at www.edexcelonline.com .
Exams Officers	Our Exams Officers team provides support to the exams officers/team at your centre with a range of queries and issues, such as those relating to administration. The team also sends weekly communications and conduct face-to-face and online training sessions to help your Exams Officers navigate through Pearson's systems. They can be contacted here .
External Examiner (EE)	The External Examiner (EE) is a subject assessment specialist appointed by the awarding body to conduct external examination. This verifies that centre management of programmes and assessment decisions meet national standards. External examination is conducted by an annual visit. This year the annual visit will be completed as a "remote visit".
HN Assessment	The HN Assessment team is responsible for the quality assurance of BTEC Higher Nationals qualifications. The Assessment team manages External Examiners (EEs) and are your main point of contact for quality assurance and assessment concerns and queries. They can be contacted here .

Internal Verification (IV)	This is a centre/team-based process. Your Internal Verifiers check the quality of assignments before delivery to students and verify the accuracy of assessment decisions to meet national standards. You should have an internal verification plan to manage the process.
Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual)	The regulator of qualifications, exams and tests in England. Qualifications Wales has responsibility for education in Wales, and the Department for Education (Northern Ireland) has responsibility for education in Northern Ireland.
Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)	This is the independent body responsible for monitoring and advising on standards and quality for UK higher education, this includes UK qualifications delivered outside the UK. As such Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals meet the quality standards prescribed by the QAA.
QAA Quality Code	The QAA has developed a Quality Code in liaison with the higher education sector and it is maintained and published on the sector's behalf, by the QAA. It sets out the Expectations that all providers of UK higher education are expected to meet.
Office for Students (OfS)	The Office for Students (OfS) is an independent public body. The OfS are not part of central Government, but report to Parliament through the Department for Education (DfE). The OfS was established by the Higher Education and Research Act 2017, which also sets out our powers and general duties.
Quality Nominee (QN)	This is the person nominated by the centre who acts as main contact for BTEC. Centres can also appoint a HE Contact on EOL who can act as a main contact for HE programmes.
PQS Malpractice	This team manages incidences of student and staff malpractice within Pearson qualifications. For internally assessed units, you do not need to inform us of student malpractice. If you suspect a staff member of malpractice, you must report this to pqsmalpractice@pearson.com , so that our Investigations team can review the situation and advise you.
RQF	Regulated Qualification Framework; the current framework on which all current HNs are part of.

Higher Nationals Centre Guide to External Examination for the new 2023 Higher Nationals in Art, Design and Media (UK only)

The following guidance is for centres delivering the new 2023 BTEC Higher National specifications in:

- Animation Industry
- Fashion and Textiles
- Film and Television
- Fine Art
- Game Development
- Graphic Design
- Interior Design
- Journalism
- Photography
- Product Design
- Sound Media
- Visual Effects
- Web Design

Please note, if you have students registered on the previous RQF HN specifications, these will be sampled separately during this transitional year.

The new assessment model for the 2023 specifications follows a single module per level, each consisting of two units:

Level 4 HNC Module A: Process & Practice	Level 5 HND Module B: Professional Creative Practice
Unit A1: Concept & Development	Unit B1: Personal Professional Development
Unit A2: Creative Project	Unit B2: Professional Project

In order to ensure that both units per module are sampled, and to allow for early support and guidance, your External Examiner will complete sampling at two points during the year:

First sample

At the first sample point, your External Examiner will review your programme management, meet with staff and students, and sample assessment for Unit A1 (and Unit B1, where relevant).

They will need to speak to students, so it is important that you agree a date and time when a group of students will be available in the centre. Please note the current Pearson

safeguarding guidance for meeting with students:

- Student meetings must only take place whilst the student is on site (i.e. centre or workplace) and never in their homes
- A member of centre staff who is not involved with the delivery and/or assessment of the programme should accompany the student for the duration of the meeting, for observation purposes only
- For online meetings, centres will need to facilitate this. For example, a Teams meeting could be arranged by a member of staff with invites sent to me and the students.

Ahead of the first sample, your External Examiner will send you a sampling plan detailing:

- the documentation needed
- when by
- the people they would like to speak with.

A copy of your assessment plan is also required to confirm when units will be completed and sampling can take place.

Your External Examiner will work with you to agree the timings and sharing the necessary documents, speaking to staff and students, and presenting feedback to you so that the process can be as smooth and timely as possible.

Please note, the outcome of the first report will be '**Not Yet Fully Sampled**', in order to facilitate the second sample. Certification cannot be released until the second sample is successfully completed.

Second Sample

The second sample will be conducted remotely. Your External Examiner will sample assessment for Unit A2 (and Unit B2 where relevant). If there were any actions or recommendations from the first report, they will also review these. The outcome of the second report will be *either*:

Certification Released

- You have provided a full sample and the External Examiner has confirmed you have adequate quality assurance procedures in place, and you are documenting assessment correctly
- The External Examiner has agreed that student evidence is valid, authentic and sufficient, and you are assessing students to the national standard. However, they may identify actions or recommendations on how to improve on current practice
- Certification is released, programme by programme, and a further sample is not required.

Or

Certification Pending – Centre Action Required

You have provided a full sample, but the External Examiner has identified one or more essential actions that need to be addressed before we can release certification. These may include:

- Students have not been assessed to the national standard
- Assessment and/or internal verification has not been documented correctly on one or more of the programmes in the sector
- Plagiarised work was found in the student sample.

This means that certification is not released, and a further sample will be requested. The External Examiner will give initial feedback as soon as they have completed their review, so you should be prepared for the outcomes of the report.

The external examination report is able to release certification separately for each programme within a sector. Therefore, if the External Examiner does not release one or more programmes within the report, this does not automatically affect certification of the other programmes.



Pearson