

# Quality Assurance Handbook

2018/19

**Core Skills Scotland**

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## Introduction

This handbook is your guide to quality assurance processes for Core Skills Scotland. It contains all the information you need about verification of learner work for Core Skills Scotland. These processes are vital to ensuring that standards are upheld and maintained to an equally high level in all centres. Adhering to the processes set out in this handbook ensures your centre will be able to claim certificates for your learners.

Our provision is designed specifically to allow you flexibility and choice around delivery that is convenient for you. The key advantages are:

- our provision is available all year round; learners can enter and exit the programme at any time throughout the year
- certification is released following successful standards verification which you can complete at any time in the year
- sampling will be undertaken by your Standards Verifier during a visit. Your Standards Verifier will work with you to arrange a convenient time for the visit to take place to ensure the maximum benefit is gained from it.

If you have any questions you can contact our Customer Service team - details can be found at [www.edexcel.com/contactus](http://www.edexcel.com/contactus) - or email us at [fsassessment@pearson.com](mailto:fsassessment@pearson.com)

## Who is this handbook for?

This handbook is for Examination Officers, Quality Nominees, Programme Managers, Assessors, Internal Verifiers and Lead Internal Verifiers in centres. Information relating to registrations, entries and certification for these programmes is available in the *Information Manual* which can be accessed via our website [www.edexcel.com](http://www.edexcel.com) and on the specific homepage for each qualification.

## Access to this handbook and related information

The Programme Managers, Assessors, Internal Verifiers and Lead Internal Verifiers for the above mentioned qualifications need to be made aware of this document which is available on the homepage for each qualification.

## Access to the Information Manual and policy documents

The Examinations Officer should have access to the *Information Manual*, which contains information relating to administrative arrangements for these programmes. All centre staff need to comply with these administrative requirements.

## What is new for 2018–19?

Standards verification for Core Skills Scotland takes place during a standards verification visit. All centres receive at least one centre visit per year. Please refer to the 'Standards verification' section of this handbook for further information.

During the visit the Standards Verifier is required to observe at least one live assessment taking place and interview the candidate.

Direct Claim Status is valid for all centres for 12 months from the date of the last standards verification visit. Please refer to the 'Direct Claim Status' section of this handbook for further information.

## Core Skills Scotland qualification standards

Core Skills Scotland unit specifications and assessment support packs can be found at <http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-core-skills.html>

## Assessment, internal verification and standardization

### The Assessor role

An Assessor is anyone responsible for the assessment of learners Core Skills Scotland.

As an Assessor, you should:

- ensure that you have read and understood the programme specifications and the requirements of all units being assessed
- design assessment activities which guide your learners to produce evidence that meets the Core Skills Scotland unit content and any associated guidance
- assess the work submitted by learners, checking authenticity and sufficiency of evidence produced against the relevant criteria
- accurately record all assessment decisions through the annotation of learners' work cross-referenced to the Core Skills Scotland standards
- maintain assessment records against the Core Skills Scotland standards for each learner
- provide feedback to learners, identifying which standards have been achieved and giving opportunities for improvement
- follow up any advice from the Lead Internal Verifier and Internal Verifier.

## The Internal Verifier role

Internal Verifiers are at the heart of quality assurance and they ensure that assessments across your centre consistently meet national standards. Therefore, Internal Verifiers must be competent in the assessment of the Core Skills and levels you offer.

The Internal Verifier is a centre/team-based role. Internal Verifiers must verify a selection of candidate work per Skill and level for all Assessors across all centre sub-sites, where applicable.

Internal Verifiers are responsible and accountable for:

- regularly sampling assessment decisions made by all Assessors across all Skills and levels within the centre, in order to monitor and ensure consistency in the interpretation and application of standards
- advising the Assessors on interpretation of the Core Skills Scotland standards
- monitoring and supporting the work of Assessors within the centre
- maintaining up-to-date records of internal verification and sampling activity, and ensuring that these are available for standards verification
- facilitating appropriate staff development for Assessors and standardisation meetings where there is more than one Assessor for each Skill and level
- ensuring any action points have been addressed
- providing the final endorsement of achievement.

**Please note:** an Internal Verifier cannot verify his or her own assessment decisions. Therefore it is good practice to have a number of Internal Verifiers within a centre. For centres with only one Assessor, a member of staff with sufficient knowledge of the qualification standards and processes can take on the role of the Internal Verifier.

## The Lead Internal Verifier role

A Lead Internal Verifier should be:

- the person within your centre who usually has responsibility for verifying and signing off the assessment outcomes for Core Skills Scotland qualification
- involved in assessment and delivery and have an understanding of Core Skills Scotland assessment.

**Please note:** If the Lead Internal Verifier changes in a centre, Direct Claim Status will not be removed.

The Lead Internal Verifier will be responsible for:

- communicating with your allocated Standards Verifier to arrange the standards verification schedule

- ensuring the centre has administrative, internal verification and internal standardisation processes in place to assure the quality of assessment
- authorising the internal verification form for each Skill and level, through a declaration to ensure that where certification claims are to be made:
  - all candidate work has been internally assessed
  - a sample of the candidate work has been internally verified according to the centre's internal verification strategy and meets the Core Skills Scotland qualification standards
  - both the candidate and the Assessor have signed authentication statements to confirm that the assessment evidence produced by each candidate is authentic
  - signing the declaration on the internal verification forms for EVERY internal verification prior to any claims being made
  - all claims for candidate work have been assessed and approved through the internal verification process, once Direct Claim Status has been awarded by the Standards Verifier
- ensuring that a clear internal verification sampling strategy is in place that meets the needs of your centre and includes the following as a guide:

Role	Activity
Assessors	Assess: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 100% of candidates' work</li> </ul>
Internal Verifiers	Verify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a selection of candidate work per Skill and level (recommended 25%)</li> <li>• all Assessors</li> <li>• across all centre sub-sites, where applicable</li> <li>• samples based on risk</li> </ul>
Lead Internal Verifier	Verify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a selection of candidate work per Skill and level (recommended 10%, combination of portfolios which were assessed and internally verified, and portfolios which were only assessed)</li> <li>• all Internal Verifiers</li> <li>• across all centre sub-sites, where applicable</li> <li>• samples based on risk</li> </ul>

Claims should only be made when the Lead Internal Verifier is in possession of a candidate's portfolio at the point of making the claim.

**Please note:** The Lead Internal Verifier should approve all claims and will be accountable for any incorrect claims.

## Internal standardisation

Internal standardisation is the process in which centres with more than one Assessor for a Skill at a level, arrive at agreement on the correct interpretation of the Core Skills Scotland standards. The internal standardisation should be carried out at the beginning of the programme. It is the Lead Internal Verifier's responsibility to carry out this activity and record the results.

## Internal verification

Internal verification is the process of checking that assessment is consistent, fair and reliable across Assessors and programme areas. You need to have a robust internal verification sampling strategy in place for each Skill at each level which:

- covers all Assessors
- covers all locations, if applicable
- is based on the management of risk.

When programme delivery is being planned, the internal verification strategy should be included. It should be carried out in a timely manner throughout the year. Effective internal verification will guide and support Assessors. Feedback from the Lead Internal Verifier will aid their continued professional development.

## Frequency of internal verification

You decide how often internal standardisation and internal verification should take place. However, procedures must be put in place to ensure that there is ongoing feedback to Assessors. Sufficient time should be provided to candidates to address issues with their portfolio of evidence. This should dictate the timings of the internal verification cycle.

Lead Internal Verifiers are not required to check assessment decisions for every piece of candidate work. Instead, they sample assessment decisions taken by each Assessor. They also sample assessment decisions across a range of programmes your centre offers. Standards Verifiers will not expect that all candidate work will have evidence of internal verification. When deciding what evidence to sample, Lead Internal Verifiers must ensure that:

- they sample a range of learner work per Skill and level
  - they confirm the assessment decisions of all Assessors and provide constructive feedback to them
  - they confirm the verification decisions of all Internal Verifiers and provide constructive feedback to them
- 
- evidence is sufficient and valid
  - sampling is properly recorded.

Internal Verifiers should sample the full range of evidence produced by learners, including:

- written materials
- practical demonstrations (verified by watching the Assessor assessing, by reading reports in portfolios, by discussion with candidates and by checking witness statements)
- practical group work, such as role play and exhibitions (verified by checking claims by each member of a group that requirements have been met, by checking authenticity and reliability of evidence, by checking reports in portfolios, by observing the Assessor assessing)
- ensuring all evidence produced has been authenticated
- oral/written questions (verified by checking that a record of questions asked and answered is logged in the portfolio).

## Internal verification forms

The Internal Verifier should complete an internal verification form for each Skill and level. These forms should be included with the learner work sampled by the Standards Verifier who will provide feedback, where appropriate, on the content of the forms. We offer an internal verification form template. However, you may use your own, providing the report includes feedback on:

- all Internal Verifiers and Assessors, across all centre sub-sites
- all Skills and levels achieved by the candidates sampled
- the number of portfolios sampled and list of candidates' names
- areas of good practice
- action points
- evidence of authentication
- validity and quality of assessment tasks
- assessment tasks, whether these are fit for purpose and the evidence provided has been accurately assessed to national standards
- assessment decisions and whether these are accurate and consistent.

The report must also contain a declaration by your Core Skills Scotland Lead Internal Verifier stating that the internal verification and standardisation has been managed to the required standards to maintain the integrity of the qualifications.

The Standards Verifier will review the internal verification forms and standardisation records relating to the sample and provide feedback on:

- the validity and quality of assessment tasks and whether they are fit for purpose and meet the required national standards
- the accuracy of assessment decisions
- particular aspects of the Skills and levels which are being misinterpreted.

## Multiple sites

If you deliver Core Skills Scotland across multiple sites you will be treated as one

centre with the same Lead Internal Verifier for standards verification purposes.

If you have sub-sites and wish to have separate verification, individual Internal Verifier may be appointed and the details of each site should be clearly indicated on the internal verification form.

If you are being verified as one site, you must note the following:

- the sample should be drawn from a range of programme areas and Assessors across all locations in application for Direct Claim Status
- all sub-sites must adhere to the centre internal verification sampling strategy
- the outcome given for each Skill and level applies to all locations.

## Authentication of learner evidence

It is a regulatory requirement for us to ensure that the candidate's work is authenticated. Both the candidate and the Assessor must confirm that the assessment evidence produced is authentic, i.e. it is the candidate's own work.

We provide assessment recording documents that include a clear statement on authenticity which both the Assessor and the learner must sign. You may use your own forms. A suitable statement, signed by both the candidate and Assessor would be:

'I confirm that the evidence in the portfolio is the candidate's own work. The candidate has met all the requirements for the portfolio.'

Assessors are required to:

- initial and date each complete piece of candidate work, including draft documents, evidence imported from the workplace and other external sources
- ensure that both the Assessor and the learner sign a statement of authenticity as specified above.

Standards Verifiers **will not** accept candidates' work for standards verification where this declaration has not been made.

## Standards verification

Standards Verifiers check that centres are assessing accurately and consistently to the

agreed standards. The sampling and review of the learner work will be carried out by a centre visit unless the sample size is less than 4 portfolios, in which case the verification will be completed by postal sampling. If standards verification is successful, Direct Claim Status will be awarded, or re-affirmed, for your centre.

### Direct Claim Status

To gain or retain Direct Claims Status for Core Skills Scotland qualification, all centres are required to have at least one Standards Verification visit per year.

The Standards Verifier will sample completed portfolios assessed as 'pass'. The Standards Verifier **cannot** accept samples of learner work which have not been fully and properly assessed with cross-referencing to the relevant Skills standards. You should only present completed assessments for standards verification and certificate claims.

The standards verification report form confirms that Direct Claims Status has been gained, retained or suspended. If the initial sample shows that standards are not being maintained, Direct Claim Status is not awarded. The Standards Verifier will propose corrective actions and a timeline for addressing them. A second sample will be requested to check that corrective actions have been completed. The required corrective actions indicated on the standards verification report form must be addressed before the second sample is seen by the Standards Verifier in order for the Direct Claim Status to be awarded.

Once you receive the completed standards verification report indicating that your application for Direct Claim Status has been successful for a particular Skill and level, portfolio claims may then be made for those candidates who have completed their work and successfully gone through internal verification.

**Important:** centres are required to retain all portfolios completed and certificated after 1 September 2018 until the Standards Verifier visit.

## Portfolio sampling

The number of portfolios sampled per Skill and level is linked to the number of registrations for that specific skill:

Number of learners per skill	Sampled per skill for Numeracy, Communication and ICT	Sampled per skill for Working with Others and Problem Solving
1 – 7	All	All
8 – 250	8	8
251+	10 and a supplementary sample of 5 per skills to be approved by the Team Leader	10 and a supplementary sample of 5 per skills to be approved by the Team Leader

- All Skills and levels are sampled separately.
- A minimum of 8 portfolios per skill across the levels being delivered by the centre needs to be successfully verified before Direct Claims Status can be awarded, unless your centre has fewer than 8 registered learners.
- Your Standards Verifier will contact you to arrange a standards verification visit and to agree the selection of candidate work based on the above sampling guidelines. Standards Verifiers may ask for more candidate work to be provided on the day of the visit if they cannot make a clear decision on the sample presented.

## Second sample

Where Direct Claims Status is not awarded for a skill/level because the standards have not been met. The second sample will consist of:

Number of learners per skill	Portfolios to be sampled per skill for Numeracy, Communication and ICT	Portfolios to be sampled per skill for Working with Others and Problem Solving
1 – 7	All	All
8 – 250	8 + 4	8 + 4
251+	10 + 5	10 + 5

Please note: The original portfolios + an additional sample as required all to the correct standard.

## Making arrangements for standards verification

A Standards Verifier will be allocated to each centre for the period of an academic year. An allocation of a Standards Verifier will be made 4-6 weeks after registrations for Core Skills Scotland qualification. The Standards Verifier will contact you to arrange the standards verification visit. You should allow at least four weeks for the standards verification visit. This allows your allocated Standards Verifier to manage his or her workload.

You should plan for standards verification as part of your overall programme delivery planning, considering the date of registrations and the dates on which assessments are completed. Where possible, a visit should be coordinated with the opportunity for the Standards Verifier to observe a live assessment and to interview a candidate.

Both the Standards Verifier and you should ensure that maximum benefit is gained from the visit. For each visit, you must ensure that:

- only final, assessed work is presented
- all work has a cover sheet/assessment record that has been authenticated
- all corresponding internal standardisation records and internal verification feedback reports are available.

## Standards verification process

Standards verification does not extend to providing training for your staff, although the process provides support and guidance through the content of the Standards Verification Reports.

The Standards Verifier will select the sample of work using the above sampling guidelines. All completed portfolios should be available on the day of the visit to enable the Standards Verifier to select their sample.

Standards Verifiers review the sample and make a comparison with the internal verification form in each case. Any differences are addressed, first by looking at the samples again to double check, then by discussing any issues with you. This discussion clarifies points so that a final decision can be made.

There are a number of generic areas which are also discussed during the visit.

These include:

- learners having clearly referenced work, which contains the relevant evidence – either original or first hand evidence, photocopies of evidence or clear references to where that evidence can be found
- records of internal verification being carried out in your centre
- witness statements/observed evidence documents, as well as the learner's details; these must state explicitly what activity has taken place, what the learner did and how he/she met the requirements of the standards; these must be signed by an appropriate person and should be supported by supplementary evidence, e.g. presentation notes, copies of slides, etc.
- electronic portfolios; you may produce evidence which is not paper-based, e.g. e- portfolios, evidence on DVD, audio tape, video tape, etc. You are required to have the relevant hardware available during the standards verification visit, e.g. computer, CD player, television with DVD player, etc. It is important that these forms of evidence are clearly authenticated by the learner and the Assessor.

## Standards verification report

On completion of the visit, the Standards Verifier completes a standards verification report, which clearly states whether or not Direct Claim Status has been achieved for a particular Skill and level.

Where issues arise with particular cohorts, programmes, levels or groups of learners, the Standards Verifier gives clear feedback and guidance in the standards verification report, stating what the issues are, how they should be addressed and what the next stage of the process is.

The standards verification report includes:

- centre details and details of each Skill and level sampled
- action points from the previous visit, if applicable
- the overall outcomes summarised across all Skills and levels sampled; these include comments on evidence of:
  - centre management systems
  - centre recognition criteria
  - learner support
  - assessment and verification
  - centre records
  - significant failings in delivery, if applicable
  - action points for the centre
  - general recommendations for the centre
  - areas of good practice action points for the Standards Verifier
  - a summary of the centre personnel seen during the visit
  - learners for limited certification release, if applicable

**Please note:** The standards verification report is submitted within 10 working days of the visit and you will not be able to make any claims until we have processed the report.

## Outcomes of standards verification

The Standards Verifier makes a decision on whether to award a Direct Claim Status.

If the decision is **Yes**:

- You are accredited for a particular Skill and level, because:
  - sufficient evidence has been produced, and
  - the Skill is being assessed accurately and consistently.
- No further standards verification is required
- Candidate portfolio evidence meets the standards.

**Please note:** If fewer than 8 portfolios have been assessed and verified for a particular Skill and level, limited certification is awarded for the named learners but **not** Direct Claims Status.

Centres are advised to wait 5 days after receiving confirmation of the programme approval on the Standards Verification Report before making any claims on Edexcel Online.

If the decision is **No**:

- You are **not** accredited for a particular Skill and level, because:

- sufficient evidence in the portfolio has not been produced, and/or
- the Skill and level is not being assessed accurately and consistently.

For your Direct Claim Status application to be successful you need to ensure that:

- actions identified by the Standards Verifier are carried out before Direct Claim Status is re-considered
- all candidates for the specific Skill and level have been successfully verified
- any issues are addressed and resolved before reapplying for Direct Claim Status.

Once you are approved for Direct Claim Status, your Lead Internal Verifier is permitted to authorise the claiming of portfolio achievement, provided that:

- all candidate work has been internally assessed
- a sample of the candidates' work has been sampled according to your centre's internal verification process and meets the standards
- assessment records are retained
- both the candidate and the Assessor have signed authentication statements to confirm that the assessment evidence produced by candidates is authentic.

## Confirmation of portfolio direct claims

On the first working day of each month we can email you a list of all portfolio direct claims you have made within the previous calendar month. You are advised to cross check this list against your own records to ensure all claims are accurately recorded.

To receive the monthly confirmation of direct claims, please email:

vqdeployment@pearson.com, giving your centre number and the email address of the person you would like to receive this confirmation.

## Remote postal sampling

There may be circumstances when it becomes necessary to carry out sampling remotely, for example where the total number of portfolios to be verified is 8 or fewer or to achieve Direct Claim Status following an unsuccessful first sample. In order to arrange a remote postal sample, centres should contact their allocated Standards Verifier who, in turn, will need to confirm the arrangement with us.

Once details of postal sampling have been agreed, you should ensure that you send authenticated copies of learner work when submitting remote samples and retain the original copies to ensure that learners are not disadvantaged through the loss of evidence during transit.

All parcels containing a sample of completed candidate work should be sent using a secure postal service which allows tracking of parcels. The tracking number should be retained until the Standards Verifier confirms receipt of the parcel.

The associated assessment records, internal verification records and declarations of authenticity must accompany all portfolios of evidence submitted for remote sampling.

## Retaining evidence

You are required to monitor assessment decisions over time. Therefore, you should retain the following documents for a minimum of three years, for all learners:

- any documents detailing internal verification feedback to Assessor relating to the particular sample
- records of internal verification meetings
- internal verification forms
- recording and tracking sheets
- copies of standards verification reports
- copies of learner work submitted to the Standards Verifier.

## Support available Standards and evidence requirements

Core Skills Scotland unit specifications and assessment support packs can be found at: [www.edexcel.com/coreskills](http://www.edexcel.com/coreskills)

## Documentation

We communicate with the Examinations Officer for administration and certification information. We do not issue any information directly to Programme Managers or Lead Internal Verifiers. However, a variety of qualification specifications, policy documents and information guides are produced to assist teaching teams.

## Websites

<http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-core-skills.html>

Our website pages are regularly updated with all the most current information and documents

### **[www.edexcelonline.com](http://www.edexcelonline.com)**

Edexcel Online is a web-based system that allows centre administrators to register, manage and certificate learners.

## Pearson teams

### Approvals team

UKapproval@pearson.com or gaining approval and approval queries

### Business Improvement and Regulation team

pqsmalpractice@pearson.com - for reporting cases of suspected malpractice

### Exams Officers team

examsofficers@pearson.com - for registrations and certifications issues, reporting of grades, amendments to names, grades entered incorrectly and reprinting of certificates

### Deployment team

vqdeployment@pearson.com - to find out your Standards Verifier details, to have a Standards Verifier allocated to your centre, to report difficulty contacting Standards Verifiers or difficulty accessing the Standards Verification Reports

### Assessment team

fsassessment@pearson.com - for issues with the specification, quality assurance and general assessment queries

### Quality Standards team

vocationalqualitystandards@pearson.com - for special requirements, quality issues and appeals against qualification and certification blocks

### Customer Services

We pledge to provide excellent service in all your dealings with us. We have a dedicated customer services team whose contact details can be found on our website: [www.edexcel.com/contactus](http://www.edexcel.com/contactus) and are able to answer your query or direct it to the appropriate team within Pearson.

### Standards Verifiers

One of the key responsibilities of the Standards Verifier is to advise and support centres on the delivery and assessment of Core Skills Scotland throughout the academic year. To find out who your allocated Standards Verifier is, you can check Edexcel Online or email [vqdeployment@pearson.com](mailto:vqdeployment@pearson.com)

### Curriculum Development Managers

Each centre has a Curriculum Development Manager who can provide general qualification advice and guidance across all qualifications. Your Curriculum Development Manager details can be obtained from your regional office.

