



Centre Guide to Quality Assurance

Pearson BTEC Qualifications for Essential
Skills Wales

2024-2025

Contents

Using this handbook	3
Essential Skills Wales (2015)	3
Available qualifications	3
Who are they suitable for?	3
What do they aim to achieve?	3
Awarding bodies	4
Quality Assurance Model	4
Sample Assessment Materials	5
Who is this handbook for?	5
Roles and Responsibilities	6
Head of Centre	6
Examinations Officer	6
Programme Manager	6
The Lead Internal Verifier	6
The Internal Verifier	8
The Assessor	9
Assessment and verification	10
Internal Standardisation task marking	10
Sampling Assessor marking	10
Recording the delivery and marking of Controlled Tasks	11
Multiple sites	11
Standards Verification	12
Direct Claim Status	12
Standard Verifier Sampling	13
Making arrangements for standards verification	15
Allocation of a Standards Verifier	16
When standards verification takes place	16
Outcomes of standards verification	16
Remote sampling	17
SharePoint	18
Retaining Evidence	19
Communicating with us	20
Pearson Essential Skills Wales homepage	20
Edexcel Online	20
Customer Services	20
Functional Skills Assessment Team	20

Using this handbook

This handbook is your guide to quality assurance processes for Essential Skills Wales. This QA Handbook is for the Essential Skills Wales (2015) suite of Qualifications.

Essential Skills Wales (2015)

Available qualifications

Our suite includes:

- Essential Application of Number Skills (EAoNS)
- Essential Communication Skills (ECommS)
- Essential Digital Literacy Skills (EDLS)
- Essential Employability Skills (EES)

Who are they suitable for?

Our Essential Skills Wales qualifications are suitable for Post 16 learners, and for Pre 16 learners in alternative provision, such as Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) and special schools at all levels. Essential Skills Wales qualifications are available at:

- Entry Levels 1-3
- Levels 1-3.

They can be taken as stand-alone qualifications, or as a key component of other qualifications, including BTEC and apprenticeships.

What do they aim to achieve?

Essential Skills qualifications will enable candidates to develop and demonstrate an understanding of and proficiency in the essential skills that employers and next-stage educators value and that candidates need for progression and effective performance in learning, work and life.

Awarding bodies

These qualifications, including all controlled tasks and confirmatory tests are a joint development between Pearson, Agored Cymru, City & Guilds and WJEC (CBAC).



Quality Assurance Model

This handbook contains all the information you need about verification of candidate work for Essential Skills Wales. 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 qualification 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 standards verification and a further remote sample. Your Standards Verifier will work with you to arrange a convenient time for standards verification 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 on the [Pearson Support Portal](#).

Sample Assessment Materials

The sample assessment materials, for use as practice Controlled Tasks and Confirmatory Tests can be found here:

Subject	Entry Levels 1-3	Levels 1-3
Essential Application of Number Skills	Not applicable	Controlled Task SAMs Confirmatory Tests Practice Papers
Essential Communication Skills	Not applicable	Controlled Task SAMs Confirmatory Tests SAMs
Essential Digital Literacy Skills	Controlled Task SAMs	Controlled Task SAMs No Confirmatory Tests
Essential Employability Skills	Entry Level 3 only: Controlled Task SAMs	Controlled Task SAMs No Confirmatory Tests

Who is this handbook for?

This handbook is for Examination Officers, Programme Managers, Lead Internal Verifiers, Internal Verifiers and Assessors in centres.

Information relating to registrations, entries and certification for these programmes is available in the Information Manual which can be accessed via our Entries and Information manual and on the specific homepage for each qualification.

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

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.

Essential Skills Wales specifications and assessment support packs can be found on the [Essential Skills Wales qualification pages](#).

Roles and Responsibilities

Head of Centre

We will send the information on allocations and any specific quality assurance related communications to the Head of Centre. The Head of Centre has no formal responsibility for Essential Skills Wales, but may wish to support internal communication and preparation for standards verification where appropriate.

Examinations Officer

We will send the Examination Officer details about the appointment of a Standards Verifier after you have registered learners for the qualification. We ask Examinations Officers to promptly pass information on to the Programme Manager so that effective arrangements are made for standards verification.

Programme Manager

A Lead Internal Verifier can also be the Programme Manager for Essential Skills Wales.

The Programme Manager is responsible for:

- the management of the qualification
- ensuring that all tutors/Assessors are familiar with the appropriate guidance documentation and assessment information

The Programme Manager must ensure that all tutors, Assessors and those undertaking internal verification have access to this handbook, quality standards policies, centre procedures and other guides and policy documents issued by us.

The Lead Internal Verifier

A Lead Internal Verifier should be:

- the person within your centre who has overall responsibility for verifying and signing off the assessment outcomes for Essential Skills Wales qualifications
- involved in assessment and delivery and have an understanding of Essential Skills Wales 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 including preparing all relevant assessments
- arranging for a suitable, quiet room for the Standards Verifier to use
- arranging the feedback to the teaching team following standards verification
- providing evidence that explains the quality assurance processes for safe certification and the internal verification processes that are in place.
- ensuring the centre has administrative, internal verification and internal standardisation processes in place to assure the quality of assessment
- ensuring that a clear internal verification sampling strategy is in place that meets the needs of the centre and includes the following as a guide:

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

- 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 the Essential Skills Wales mark schemes are correctly and consistently applied
 - both the candidate and the Assessor have signed the 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.

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

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

The Internal Verifier

Internal Verification is at the heart of quality assurance and must ensure that assessments across your centre consistently meet national standards. Therefore, Internal Verifiers must be competent in the assessment of the 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 subsites, 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, across all sites, in order to monitor and ensure consistency in the interpretation and application of mark schemes
- advising the Assessors on interpretation and application of the Essential Skills Wales mark schemes
- 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 and 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 Essential Skills Wales qualification and processes can take on the role of the Internal Verifier.

The Assessor

An Assessor is anyone responsible for the assessment of candidates for Essential Skills Wales.

As an Assessor, you should:

- be personally competent in the Essential Skill(s) being taught and assessed
- ensure that you have read and understood the programme specifications and the requirements of all units being assessed
- assess the work submitted by candidates against the relevant mark schemes, checking authenticity and sufficiency of evidence produced
- accurately record all assessment decisions through the annotation of candidates' work cross-referenced to the Essential Skills Wales standards
- maintain assessment records against the Essential Skills Wales standards for each candidate
- provide feedback to learners before carrying out the Structured Discussion for EDLS and EES
- follow up any advice from the Lead Internal Verifier.

Assessment and verification

There are three strands to assessment and verification:

- Standardising task marking
- Sampling Assessor marking
- Recording the delivery and marking of Controlled Tasks.

Internal Standardisation task marking

Standardisation must take place when there is more than one Assessor in a centre marking the same task or level. After the tasks have been completed and before any individual marking has taken place, the Assessors involved should trial mark a sample of completed Controlled Tasks. Any discrepancies between marks should be discussed and agreement reached on how the mark scheme should be applied. The Standards Verifier may want to view evidence of internal standardisation therefore centres must maintain records of this activity.

You may retain tasks securely for purposes of standardising new Assessors being inducted into a team where internal standardisation has already taken place.

Once agreement has been reached, the Assessors then individually mark the candidate work for which they are responsible.

Sampling Assessor marking

The Internal Verifier should sample across Assessors and Controlled Tasks to ensure that the Assessor is continuing to apply the correct standards agreed during internal standardisation. If the Assessor is not marking consistently, adjustment of marks will be necessary. This should be completed promptly.

Internal verification should be completed before learners are notified of their marks so the Internal Verifier must arrange to sample each Assessor as soon as possible after assessment decisions are made and clearly identify any remedial action required.

The Internal Verifier should provide effective feedback to Assessors and arrange appropriate development as necessary. Internal Verifiers will give actions on any improvements that can be made to the marking process.

There is no single correct level of verification. However, the process needs to take into account:

- the experience of the Assessor
- the size of the group of learners
- the range of marks being awarded
- any issues identified in previous samples
- whether the Assessor is new to the qualification.

We recommend that a minimum of two candidates per skill, per level are sampled for each Assessor.

Recording the delivery and marking of Controlled Tasks

You must maintain accurate records of Controlled Tasks undertaken, marks awarded and the verification process followed to show that the correct procedures are adhered to. This is necessary to:

- ensure that marking of all Assessors meets the national standards
- identify problems or areas where Assessors require advice/development
- ensure that candidates are aware of, and satisfied with, the marking process.

Internal Verifiers should maintain records of sampling Assessors and evaluating all aspects of their performance when conducting test marking and providing feedback.

Records should also cover the task administration to include the correct storage and transit of Controlled Tasks, and invigilation of tasks and tests

Multiple sites

If you deliver Essential Skills Wales across multiple sites you will be treated as one centre for the purpose of Standards Verification when you have the same Essential Skills Wales Lead Internal Verifier.

If you have sub-sites and wish to have separate verification, individual Essential Skills Wales Lead 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 essential skill and level applies to all locations.

Standards Verification

Standards verification for Essential Skills Wales takes place during a standards verification visit. All centres will be standards verified once per year. Centres and Standards verifiers are required to ensure that Digital Literacy Skills are, where possible, sampled during the visit. If the required sample size of Controlled Tasks is not reached during standards verification, your Standards Verifier will request a follow-up remote sample.

Standards verification will include checking that tasks have been delivered in line with the Instructions for Conducting Controlled Assessments for ESW, which can be found under **Centre guidance** on the [Essential Skills Wales qualification page](#).

Direct Claim Status

To gain Direct Claims Status for the Essential Skills Wales qualifications, you must follow annual standards verification process for the relevant qualification.

A Standards Verifier samples completed Controlled Tasks assessed as 'pass'. The Standards Verifier cannot accept samples of learner work which have not been fully and properly assessed with evidence of annotation on the mark schemes to show where the marks have been awarded. 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 provide action points and a timeline for addressing them. A second sample will be requested to check that corrective actions have been completed. The required action points 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.

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.

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

Claims should only be made for learners that have completed both the Controlled Task and the confirmatory instrument (Confirmatory Test or Structured Discussion). Direct Claim Status is valid for all centres for 12 months from the date of the last standards verification visit or remote sampling.

Important: centres are required to retain all Controlled Tasks completed and certificated after 1 September 2024 until the Standards Verifier visit.

Standard Verifier Sampling

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

Application of Number and Communication Skills Sampling Requirements

Number of registered learners per skill	Portfolios to be sampled per skill for Application of Number and Communication Entry 1 – Entry 3	Controlled Tasks to be sampled per skill for Application of Number and Communication Level 1 – Level 3
1 to 7	All	All
8 to 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 Controlled Tasks need to be successfully verified before Direct Claims Status can be awarded.

Your Standards Verifier will contact you to arrange a standards verification visit at a date convenient for both the centre and the Standards Verifier. The Standards Verifier will select the sample of work using the above sampling guidelines. All completed assessments should be available on the day of a visit to enable the Standards Verifier to select their sample.

In order for candidates to achieve Essential Application of Number Skills and Essential Communication Skills they will need to complete the Confirmatory Test which takes place after successful completion of the Controlled Task. The Confirmatory Test is an externally assessed component.

For the Speaking and Listening component of Essential Communication Skills it is recommended that it be visually recorded rather than just audio recorded. Centres are also required to complete an Assessment Record Form for each candidate, for each Speaking and Listening task. The completed Assessment Record Form needs to give examples of how each candidate has met the criterion.

Digital Literacy and Employability Skills Sampling Requirements

Number of registered learners per skill	Controlled Tasks to be sampled per skill for Employability and Digital Literacy Entry 1 – Entry 3 *Entry 3 only for Employability	Controlled Tasks to be sampled per skill for Employability and Digital Literacy Level 1 – Level 3
1 to 7	All	All
8 to 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 Controlled Tasks need to be successfully verified before Direct Claims Status can be awarded.

Your Standards Verifier will contact you to arrange a standards verification visit at a date convenient for both the centre and the Standards Verifier. The Standards Verifier will select the sample of work using the above sampling guidelines. All completed assessments should be available on the day of a visit to enable the Standards Verifier to select their sample.

In order for candidates to achieve Essential Digital Literacy Skills and Essential Employability Skills the candidates will need to complete the Structured Discussion which takes place after successful completion of the Controlled Task.

For the Structured Discussion component it is recommended that it be visually recorded rather than just audio recorded. Centres are also required to complete the Structured Discussion Record for each candidate, for the Structured Discussion for Employability and Digital Literacy Skills. The completed Structured Discussion Record needs to give examples of how each candidate has met the criterion.

A second sample will be requested where Direct Claims Status for Essential Skills Wales is not awarded for a skill/level because the standards have not been met. The second sample will be a remote sample.

Structured Discussion Sampling Requirements

Number of learners per skill	Portfolios/Controlled Tasks to be sampled per skill E1-E3	Number sampled per skill for Working with Others and Problem Solving
1 to 7	All	All
8 to 250	8 + 4	8 + 4
251+	10 + 5	10 + 5

Making arrangements for standards verification

Your Standards Verifier will be allocated to you once you have registered candidates for the Essential Skills Wales qualifications. They will then contact you to arrange the standards verification visit. It should take place when there is a range of skills and levels available to be sampled.

You should plan for standards verification as part of your overall planning, considering the date of registration and the dates on which tests are completed.

Where possible, a visit should be coordinated with an opportunity for the Standards Verifier to observe a Speaking and Listening assessment for Essential Communication Skills and/or a Structured Discussion for Essential Digital Literacy Skills or Essential Employability Skills. The visit should also be coordinated so that candidate work for Essential Digital Literacy Skills can be sampled.

You should allow at least four weeks before the visit takes place. This allows your allocated Standards Verifier to manage his or her workload.

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.

Allocation of a Standards Verifier

A Standards Verifier is allocated to each centre for the period of an academic year. An allocation will be made after learners are registered and usually takes place around November. However, if you need standards verification urgently or you have not heard from your Standards Verifier, you should contact us by using the [Pearson Support Portal](#).

The Standards Verifier will externally verify and report on the centre during the year and will also be able to provide advice on using tasks, assessment and quality assurance.

When standards verification takes place

The allocated Standards Verifier will externally verify the centre during the year. The date of the verification should be agreed between the centre and the Standards Verifier. It should take place when a range of levels and skills are available to be sampled.

Outcomes of standards verification

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

If the decision is **Yes**:

You are accredited for a particular skill and level, because:

- sufficient evidence has been produced
- the skill is being assessed accurately and consistently.

No further standards verification is required as the candidate evidence meets the standards.

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

Standards Verifiers will complete the Standards Verification Report and return it to the centre within 10 working days of the centre visit or the remote sample.

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 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 learners for the specific skill and level have been successfully assessed and internally verified
- any issues are addressed and resolved before reapplying for Direct Claim Status
- you have successfully undergone a second sample.

Once you are approved for Direct Claim Status, your Lead Internal Verifier is permitted to authorise the claiming of achievement for Controlled Tasks, 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.

Remote sampling

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

Once details of remote sampling have been agreed, you should ensure that you send authenticated copies of candidate 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 assessments should be sent using a secure postal service which allows tracking of parcels. The tracking number should be retained until the Standards Verifier confirms the receipt of the parcel.

Please note: No remote samples are to be sent using non-secure digital methods e.g. e-mail, Dropbox etc.

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

SharePoint

The requested learners' work must be sent to the Standards Verifier using a secure facility i.e. SharePoint. We encourage centres to use SharePoint to make the sharing of learner work between centres and SVs as easy and streamlined as possible. By using the SharePoint Portal we also ensure the security and data privacy of any candidates work that is shared. As a centre you will have a folder created for you.

Each centre only has access to their own folder and cannot see any other centres folders. When centres are ready for standards verification, centres can upload documents to their folder, which the SV will then be able to view and/or download. An email will be generated with information of how to access your centre folder.

You should notify your Standards Verifier of the email address/es of the person/s who will upload the sample, so that access rights can be granted.

Please note: if you have not received a SharePoint folder, contact your SV. Assessment materials must not be emailed.

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, including any video or audio recordings.

Communicating with us

Pearson communicates with centres by newsletter, telephone and email. To make sure we reach you, please ensure that you maintain accurate contact details on Edexcel Online. You can submit any queries to us using the [Pearson Support Portal](#). By using the Support Portal, you can get in touch with Functional Skills Assessment directly. We aim to respond to you within 5 working days.

Pearson Essential Skills Wales homepage

You can find all current information and documents on our [Pearson Essential Skills Wales qualification page](#). Our website pages are regularly updated with all the most current information and documents.

Edexcel Online

[Edexcel Online](#) - this web-based system allows centre administrators to register, manage and certificate learners.

Customer Services

We pledge to provide excellent service in all your dealings with us. Each centre will have a dedicated Accounts Specialist that will be their first point of contact for administration matters relating to learner registrations, exam entries, claiming certification.

Functional Skills Assessment Team

Our Functional Skills Assessment team is responsible for the production of papers, the assessment of externally assessed units and the administration of internally assessed units and can be contacted via the [Pearson Support Portal](#).

If you have a question, please contact **FS Assessment** or your **Vocational Quality Assurance Manager** via [The Pearson Support Portal](#).

In addition, you will find further information on our [Quality Assurance webpages](#).