Joint Awarding Body Guidance on
Internal Verification of NVQs

Joint Awarding Body Guidance on Internal Verification of NVQs

1. Introduction

1.1 This Guidance has been produced by the joint Awarding Body steering group of the DfEE national project "Additional Verification of NVQs in TEC funded programmes". It has been developed in consultation with QCA and supplements the guide "Internal Verification of NVQs", (QCA: March 1998).

1.2 The results from the project research have raised issues surrounding Internal Verification and given cause for concern that there may be a lack of clarity as regards what actually constitutes good and poor practice (over and above the requirements of the current Internal Verification unit (D 34*). The Awarding Bodies are committed to ensuring that NVQs retain value and credibility nationally. The key to this is to ensure valid and reliable assessment. Such is the importance of the Internal Verifier role in achieving and maintaining this that the Awarding Bodies involved in the project are jointly issuing this guidance. Details of the Awarding Bodies involved in the development of this guidance are included at Appendix A.

1.3 The Figures in this document offer exemplar pro-formas for use as part of an Internal Verification process. They are not intended as a coherent or necessarily comprehensive system but rather to provide examples of key documentation. Centres may wish to adapt some or all of these forms to suit their particular needs, or simply to compare their existing systems.

1.4 This guidance should be read in conjunction with other guidance from the Awarding Bodies, standards setting bodies and the guidance and criteria issued by the Regulatory Bodies.

2. The Role of the Internal Verifier

2.1 The Additional Verification of NVQs in TEC funded programmes project has flagged up a number of key issues relating to Internal Verification of NVQs, which appear to exist across various types of Centres and are not specific to one or two occupational sectors. In particular the Awarding Bodies are concerned that the role of the Internal Verifier is significantly under-developed and in many cases poorly understood. As a consequence assessment practice sometimes lacks rigour and the standard required to achieve an NVQ across the country can be significantly variable.

2.2 The Internal Verifier is at the heart of Quality Assurance in NVQs, both within the national framework and within the quality and management systems of each approved Centre. The role, in terms of managing assessment so that it consistently meets national standards**, is central to maintaining public confidence in each and every NVQ issued. As such the Internal Verifier is a key factor in managing "risk", such as ensuring that when certification is claimed for a candidate it reliably marks the achievement of national standards.

* The Employment NTO are currently undertaking a review of the D units. References to the D units include any subsequent qualifications required by QCA and the other Regulatory Bodies for people undertaking assessor and verifier roles.

** Where standards are mentioned this includes National Occupational Standards contained within the NVQ.

2.3 There are three main aspects of the Internal Verifier role: -

- verifying assessment
- developing and supporting assessors
- managing quality of NVQ delivery

Each of these key areas is discussed below with examples of issues/concerns arising from the work undertaken in the project and ideas/guidance on accepted best practice.

3. Verifying Assessment

3.1 The first and perhaps most obvious of the Internal Verifier duties.

> **Aims:**
> 1. To ensure consistent and reliable assessment and Internal Verification decisions.
> 2. To monitor the quality of assessment and highlight problems, trends and development needs of assessors.

3.2 Verifying assessment is concerned with maintaining the quality of assessment for all candidates. In most Centres this forms the core part of the Internal Verifier's duties, and is by far the most time consuming. There are three strands to verifying assessment: -

- sampling assessments **(section 4)**
- monitoring assessment practice **(section 5)**
- standardising assessment judgements **(section 6)**

3.3 Issues/concerns

The project has found that, typically, Internal Verifiers focus on the first strand and little time or attention is given to the other two. In some instances the full scope of the Internal Verifier's role is poorly understood and Centres have failed to allow sufficient time or resources to facilitate anything other than portfolio sampling.

3.4 When poor practice was identified in the project it included:-

Sampling assessments

- "end loaded" sampling
- fixed date sampling (regardless of throughput)
- flat rate (%) sampling (regardless of circumstances)
- no sampling strategy or rationale in place
- second assessing
- unsatisfactory/inadequate records/reports

Monitoring assessment practice

- lack of feedback to assessors
- unsatisfactory records/reports
- no monitoring of assessors in action
- not used as development tool

Standardising assessment judgements

- no standardisation between assessors
- no standardisation across programmes

3.5 Although different Centres will have different needs, there are a number of guiding principles which enhance the quality of Internal Verification, and in particular the task of sampling. **The Awarding Bodies recommend the following as good practice in sampling assessments.**

4. Sampling Assessments

4.1 The following section contains ideas and guidance in response to questions most frequently asked about the sampling process.

Q: What exactly is "sampling" ?
A: Sampling assessments should involve reviewing the quality of Assessors' judgements at both interim and summative stages.

Interim sampling: It is important that the Internal Verifier "dips in to" the assessment process undertaken with the candidate at different stages in that process. This includes reviewing candidate work perhaps (a) before decisions have been made on any unit and (b) looking at portfolios with one or two completed units. It will entail checking the progress review report given to candidates by Assessors, this will enable the Internal Verifier to evaluate the quality of formative guidance on assessment and the effectiveness of assessment planning.

Interim verification will enable the Internal Verifier to pick up problems at an early stage and so avoid the situation of turning down final decisions. It will also highlight individual Assessor needs for support or training which in turn may be used to develop the assessment team as a whole. Similarly it provides an opportunity to identify and so share good practice within the Centre, particularly where one or more of the Assessors has wider experience (see section 6 "Standardising Assessment Judgements").

Summative sampling: Correct summative sampling should entail reviewing the quality of the assessment decision by evaluating **how** the Assessor has reached that decision. The Internal Verifier must be able to follow an audit trail which clearly demonstrates that the Assessor has checked that the evidence presented - whatever its format - meets the "rules of evidence". This includes evidence collated via a portfolio, computer aided compilation, video/audio tape or evidence identified via alternative assessment. Evidence must have been confirmed **by the Assessor** as:

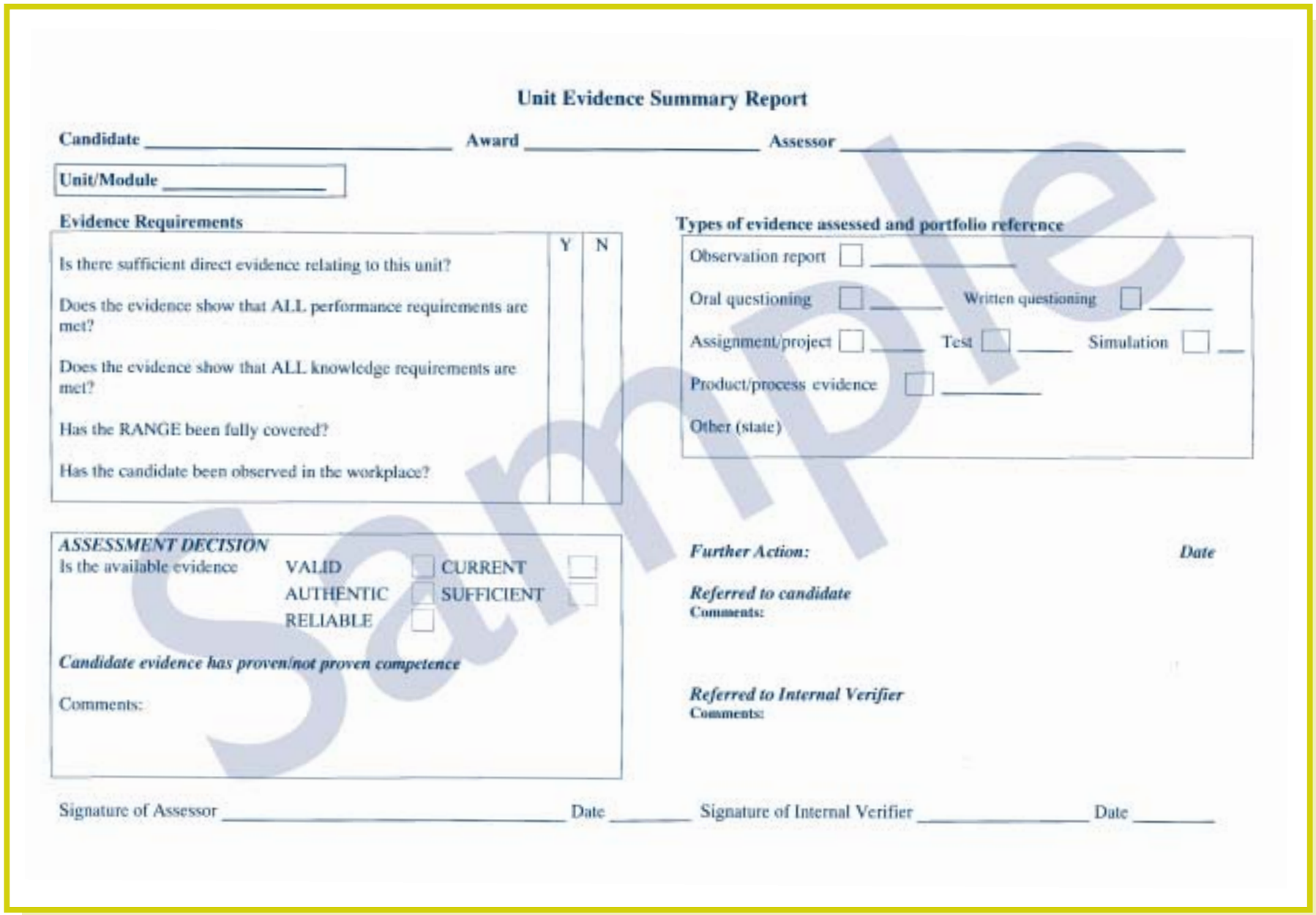
- ✓ valid - relevant to the standards for which competence is claimed
- ✓ authentic - produced by the candidate
- ✓ reliable - accurately reflects the level of performance which has been consistently demonstrated by the candidate
- ✓ current - sufficiently recent to be confident the same level of skill/understanding/knowledge exists at the time of claim
- ✓ sufficient - meets in full ALL the requirements of the standards

The project found instances of poor practice where "sampling" was interpreted as exclusively reviewing summative assessment decisions on portfolio evidence. Too often this was left until the candidate had completed most if not all of the award i.e. it is **"end-loaded"**. Equally often the process was regarded as either adding a second signatory "for the records" to a "signing off" sheet, or re-assessing the evidence. This is not an appropriate use of internal verifier resources.

It is not satisfactory to guess, or **assume**, any aspect of the "rules of evidence". The process must be transparent to anyone with appropriate expertise who looks at the evidence and assessment records. Relying on personal knowledge of the Assessor to assume he/she "must have seen everything" or "will have asked the candidate the appropriate questions to test knowledge" is not good practice. Similarly where the candidate has relied on witness testimony or work generated products, it must be clear to the Internal Verifier that the Assessor has taken steps to satisfy him/herself of authenticity. This should include validating signatures of witnesses as well as evidence.

Clearly, the critical factor here is the quality of **assessment records and reports**. The DfEE project has identified this as a significant weakness in many Centres. Typically, both observation of assessment (when used) and assessment of evidence are rendered almost meaningless as evidence because of poor recording. Vague, generalised comments such as "worked well" or "satisfactory" or "met the standards" lack the detail required to establish an audit trail to the standards, and require "a leap of faith" by anyone then trying to follow and verify the assessment process. This is a poor use of assessor time and impossible to verify. It is important that assessment records, whatever the format, address these points. An example of a unit evidence summary report is given at Figure 1 .

A lack of adequate **evidence referencing** is also a cause for concern since it raises queries in the External Verifier's mind firstly as to how well the Assessor and Internal Verifier understand the standards, and secondly the validity of the Internal Verification process undertaken. The best approach to evidence referencing is to "keep it simple" and there are a number of pro-formas widely available, an example is given at Figure 2. Whilst it is imperative that candidates should not be prevented from achieving NVQ accreditation simply because they cannot reference evidence (however presented), there is a balance to be struck. Both Assessors and Internal Verifiers must also consider whether the NVQ being claimed includes competences related to referencing or organising evidence/information e.g. candidates undertaking Customer Service or Administration NVQs need to demonstrate the ability to file and retrieve information; Management NVQ candidates need to gather and present information to aid decision making. It may therefore be a significant indication of lack of competence if the portfolio is badly organised/referenced and the candidate clearly has little understanding of the NVQ requirements. However, if there is no such skill described in the NVQ then candidates should not be disadvantaged because they struggle to cross-reference. In this case, the Assessors' records and reports must clearly indicate the basis for their decision i.e. where the evidence is to support each unit. **It is not acceptable that the Internal Verifier (and then the External Verifier) should have to search extensively to find evidence which supports the Assessors decision(s).**



Unit Evidence Summary Report

Candidate _____ **Award** _____ **Assessor** _____

Unit/Module _____

Evidence Requirements

	Y	N
Is there sufficient direct evidence relating to this unit?		
Does the evidence show that ALL performance requirements are met?		
Does the evidence show that ALL knowledge requirements are met?		
Has the RANGE been fully covered?		
Has the candidate been observed in the workplace?		

Types of evidence assessed and portfolio reference

Observation report ☐ _____

Oral questioning ☐ _____ Written questioning ☐ _____

Assignment/project ☐ _____ Test ☐ _____ Simulation ☐ __

Product/process evidence ☐ _____

Other (state)

ASSESSMENT DECISION

Is the available evidence VALID ☐ CURRENT ☐
AUTHENTIC ☐ SUFFICIENT ☐
RELIABLE ☐

Candidate evidence has proven/not proven competence

Comments:

Further Action: ***Date***

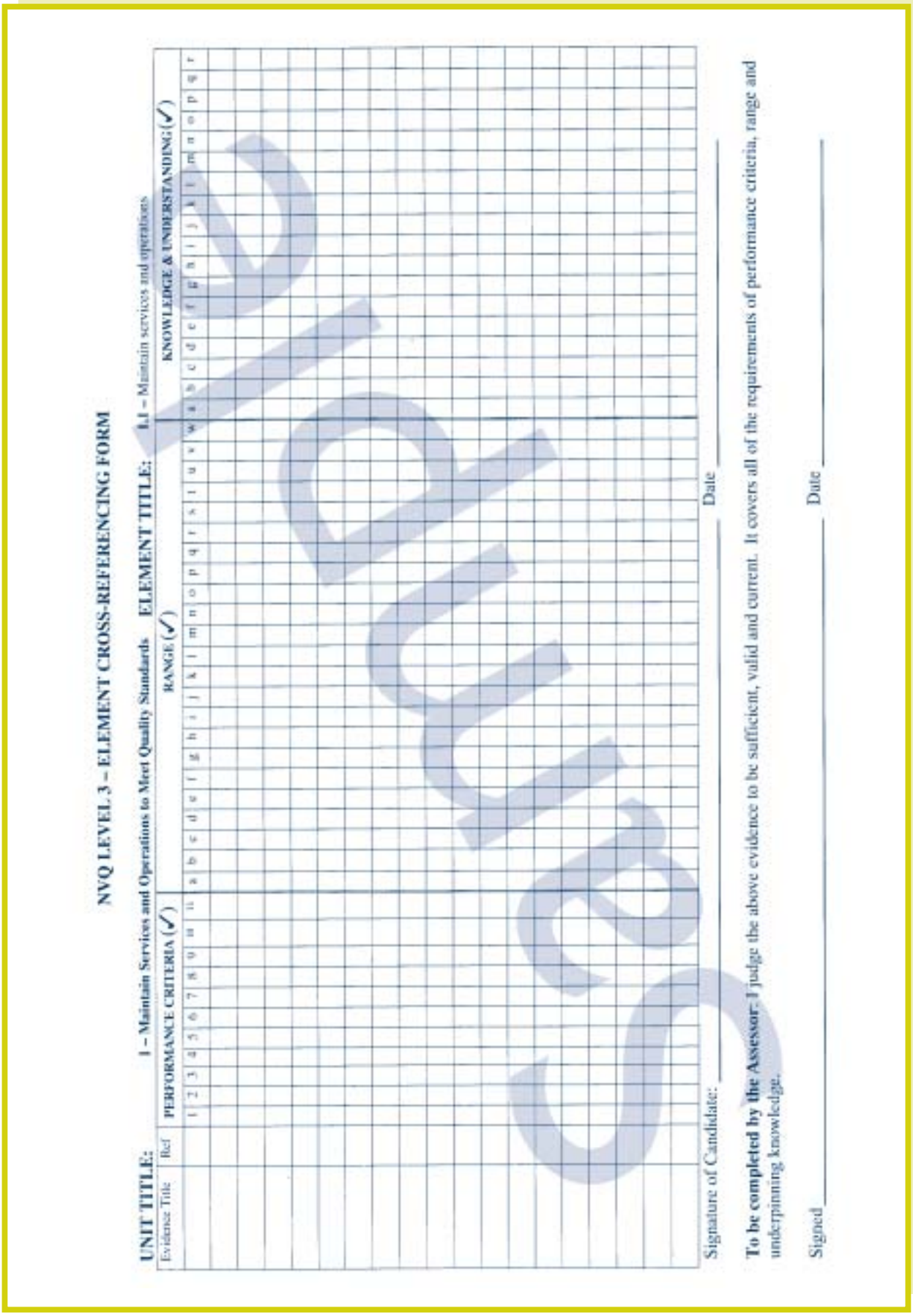
Referred to candidate
Comments:

Referred to Internal Verifier
Comments:

Signature of Assessor _____ Date _____ Signature of Internal Verifier _____ Date _____

Figure 1

Figure 2



NVQ LEVEL 3 – ELEMENT CROSS-REFERENCING FORM

UNIT TITLE: 1 – Maintain Services and Operations to Meet Quality Standards **ELEMENT TITLE:** 1.1 – Maintain services and operations

Evidence Title	Ref	PERFORMANCE CRITERIA (✓)												RANGE (✓)																		KNOWLEDGE & UNDERSTANDING (✓)																	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11		a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	w	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r

Signature of Candidate: _____ Date _____

To be completed by the Assessor. I judge the above evidence to be sufficient, valid and current. It covers all of the requirements of performance criteria, range and underpinning knowledge.

Signed _____ Date _____

Q: What if evidence is not in a file/portfolio ?

A: Over recent years, often driven by a desire to reduce the amount of paper involved, there has been increasing use of **alternative** ways to present evidence. These include computer-aided portfolios, video/audio taped interviews, "walk and talk" assessment. Again, the key to effective internal verification is to ensure firstly that assessment records clearly link the evidence to the standards and secondly demonstrate that the Assessor has considered the rules of evidence. E.g. what checks has he/she made on the disk based evidence submitted to ensure that this is authentic ? Does the record of the "walk and talk" assessment clearly note the source and location of evidence seen - so that it can be verified ?

The Internal Verifier must record and report on all sampling undertaken in sufficient detail to be able to justify the decision made. An example of an internal verifier report , including feedback to the Assessor is given at Figure 3.

Verification Sampling Strategy

4.2 Underpinning all the above is the validity of the verification sample. Guidance on designing a sampling strategy was included in "Internal Verification of NVQs" (QCA: March 1998) and it is worth re-iterating the key points and adding one or two.

4.3 It is rarely a good use of Internal Verifier resources to maintain **100% checks** on assessment decisions; it implies a lack of confidence in both Assessor practice/expertise and the verification strategy. Quite often, Centres maintaining such a regime are simply adding a "second signature" to each and every portfolio at summative stage rather than carrying out effective verification. This becomes increasingly difficult to maintain and the overall management of quality suffers.

4.4 The **sampling strategy** for each Centre will vary according to the needs of the Centre and the particular NVQ programme, but in ***all*** cases must be agreed with the External Verifier. In defining the strategy all the following should be taken into account: -

- **size of sample** needed to ensure reliability
- **assessment methods** used by Centre (this may vary between awards)
- **Assessors** - number, experience, workload and location
- range (if any) of **assessment sites, satellites**
- **candidate cohorts** e.g. full-time/part time, different employees, different programme start dates - particularly where enrolments are at set times
- the **NVQ(s)** - particularly if **new/revised**
- **all units and particularly focusing on any problem unit(s)**

Figure 3

INTERNAL VERIFICATION SAMPLING REPORT

Name of Candidate:
Name of Assessor:
NVQ Programme/Level/Unit or Type of Evidence Sampled

Was competence demonstrated by:					
Real Work		APL			
Simulation		Questioning			
				YES	NO
Was the candidate observed directly by an assessor?					
Was knowledge and understanding assessed?					
Is work product evidence available?					
Has the candidate supplied sufficient job/personal details?					
Are the Candidates Assessment Records being completed on an ongoing basis?					
Has the assessor confirmed authenticity, sufficiency, accuracy, consistency and validity?					
Interim/Summative Sample Report?					
I confirm that all criteria on which to base a judgement of candidate's competence has/has not been met and all evidence requirements are satisfied/not satisfied for the units sampled.					

ACTION POINTS/FEEDBACK

Internal Verifier Signature:	Date:
Assessor Signature:	Date:

I confirm that all action points, as above have now been completed and the evidence requirements satisfied.

Internal Verifier Signature:	Date:
Assessor Signature:	Date:

To help monitor the overall sampling strategy it is strongly recommended that the Internal Verifier maintains a "overall Sampling Plan". An example is given at Figure 4.

4.5 The following section gives guidance/answers to questions often raised about verification strategies or rationales.

Q: What is an appropriate verification sample size?

A: Deciding on the most appropriate size of sample can be difficult, especially if the Centre assessment team is new to NVQ delivery. The "acid test" is ***whether or not the sample presents a sufficiently accurate picture of the quality of assessment in the Centre to be confident that those decisions not sampled also meet national standards***

It is important that the Internal Verifier looks at **assessment decisions of all the team in any given period** (possibly on a calendar basis, or by candidate cohort). Once the other sampling factors are taken into account, the sample size will almost decide itself. It is critical that the process follows this route rather than the other way round i.e. deciding on a set sample size and trying to "fit" a strategy round this. It is crucial that the sampling process is not determined by any rule of thumb such as 10% or a square root.

Q: Does it matter what type of assessment methods are sampled?

A: The Internal Verifier must sample the **full range of assessment methods** used for any one NVQ e.g. direct observation of performance, professional discussion/Q & A, assessment of portfolio evidence - products, APL, witness testimony, personal reports, assessment of simulated exercises. The range and frequency of use of particular assessment methods may vary depending on the level of NVQ and the NVQ skills involved, e.g. a level 2 in Sports Activity Leadership or Early Years Care and Education may draw heavily on observation of the candidates' performance, whereas a level 4 in Administration or Management may primarily use products from the workplace and witness testimony. Ideally, both should include some type of summative interview with the candidate to probe knowledge and understanding not explicitly demonstrated in the evidence. It is likely that most portfolios will contain a mixture of evidence, and therefore assessment activity and decisions. The internal verification sample must take this into account, and to do this *it is clearly imperative that the Internal Verifier knows the NVQ thoroughly and the likely range of assessment methods and evidence sources that could be used.*

N.B. See section 6 "Standardising Assessment Judgements"

Q: Which Assessors should be included in the sample ?

A: All the Assessors should be included in the sample, but a number of other factors must be considered.

Experience: If Assessors are qualified and experienced it may not be necessary to look at more than one or two decisions per candidate, and only one or two candidates (depending on candidate numbers). If Assessors are inexperienced (e.g. gained the Assessor award less than 12 months ago), or new to a particular NVQ, the Internal Verifier may need to sample substantially **more of their decisions for the first 6-12 months**. The objective would be to ensure that the Internal Verifier reviews the new assessor's decisions on all units in any NVQ. This is particularly important where there are "problem" units e.g. where evidence specifications require very specific evidence, or the standards are often misinterpreted.

Figure 4

Sampling Plan

Qualification/Level ______________________

IV Name ______________________ **Plan period: from** ______________ **to** ______________

Assessment Site/Location	Assessor name	Candidate name	IV date Planned	Actual	Unit	Assessment Decision or observation of performance	IV Report No	IV signature on date of internal verification

Workload: The Internal Verifier needs to look at the workload of each Assessor so that the total sample also fairly reflects the numbers of decisions being made by individual Assessors. Increasing ratios of candidates to Assessors may also indicate assessment problems, which require the attention of the Internal Verifier; it can also lead to diminishing quality of assessment. In these cases, sampling should be increased.

"Specialist" Assessors: Some Assessors may only assess certain units in an NVQ e.g. specialist units on First Aid or energy management. In some Centres there is a division of Assessor duties with some Assessors carrying out observations, whilst others look at all types of evidence - (as reflected in the Assessor units (currently D32 and D33). This can be a highly effective use of assessment time and expertise. In these cases, once the Internal Verifier is satisfied that an Assessor's judgements are consistent, it is reasonable to reduce the number of their decisions included in the overall sample.

Location: The location and type of Assessor is also a factor in deciding the sampling strategy. In some Centres (particularly Training Providers), assessment is widely dispersed, both in terms of geographical location and type of employer at which the candidates are based. Some Centres have **satellite centres** i.e. organisations who link to the main Approved Centre to facilitate access to certain NVQs, but who may have varying approaches to assessment. Other Centres (often Colleges) are linked through **franchise agreements** to organisations which may have highly varied functions. The internal verification sample must capture a picture of assessment across the full range of assessment sites. In effect the strategy should be repeated for all assessment sites. If these arrangements are complex, then the strategy needs to be carefully thought through, and certainly discussed with the External Verifier who can offer advice about the frequency of sampling across the assessment sites.

Some Assessors, often in Training Providers, are **peripatetic** and visit across a number of assessment sites. Other Assessors may be workplace based. Sometimes this aligns to specialist knowledge, sometimes to access. Internal Verifiers must look at the pattern of assessment and take this into account in their sample.

Standards: The sample also needs to take into account the standards themselves. In many of the longer/more established awards, there is a lack of clarity - most frequently in the criteria or the evidence specifications - which, unless fully discussed by the assessment team, inevitably leads to confusion and differing assessment decisions. Clearly, therefore, it is imperative that both Assessors and the Internal Verifier (a) know the standards well, and (b) agree their interpretation of aspects such as evidence specifications, range and knowledge and understanding requirements.

Equally, there may be differences required in assessment when standards are revised. This can be particularly difficult for Assessors during the transitional phase, since they may be assessing candidates simultaneously on both sets of standards. It is important that the Internal Verifier is fully aware of these areas of potential confusion and includes these in the sample.

NB : See section 6 "Standardising Assessment Judgements"

Access and other assessment problems: Some NVQs contain units which describe competences which are difficult to assess e.g. for confidentiality reasons (counselling, patient care), safety considerations (using hazardous machinery, appliances, materials), infrequent occurrence (emergency evacuations, injuries). This can lead to poor practice in that Assessors, faced with the pressure to "sign off" candidates may be tempted to compromise their evidence requirements or use assessment methods which are less than satisfactory.

example

A mandatory unit (P1) in the level 2 Early Years Care and Education NVQ requires candidates to interact and share information with children's parents. The preferred source of evidence would clearly be direct observation of performance or witness testimony. However, most managers of nurseries do not allow candidates to have access to parents. Assessors often need help to negotiate with managers or to identify alternative evidence that is suitably rigorous.

The Internal Verifier must specifically ensure that they sample any problem units, across all Assessors so that standards are complied with for all candidates. Internal Verifiers should also ensure that issues such as these are discussed fully with the assessment team and difficulties resolved at an early stage.

An example of a pro-forma for sampling individual Assessor decisions is given at Figure 5.

5. Monitoring Assessment Practice

5.1 The second strand to verifying assessment is to monitor assessment practice.

Aims:

1. To ensure that national standards of assessment (as currently defined in D32/33) are adhered to by all Assessors
2. To identify problems or areas where Assessors require advice/development
3. To ensure that candidates are aware of and satisfied with the assessment process

Monitoring assessment includes the Internal Verifier literally **observing Assessors** in action, looking at how they conduct an assessment and giving them feedback on their performance. It also includes reviewing the internal verification records completed with each Assessor and evaluating all aspects of their performance as recorded in the internal verification records. As a guide to good practice in carrying out monitoring, the standards set out in the Assessor units are an essential reference.

Figure 5

Internal Verifier Report on Assessment Decisions

Assessor Name: _____ Registration No: _____
Candidate Name: _____ Registration No: _____
Internal Verifier _____ Registration No: _____

Candidate Assessment for Unit(s): _____

Feedback to Assessor

ASSESSMENT METHOD(S) KEY:

OB = Observation PJ = Project CB = College Based
Q = Questions PD = Product WB = Work Based
WT = Witness Testimony S = Simulation

Circle as appropriate

Unit	Element		Valid	Authentic	Sufficient	Relevan	Current	Assessor Decisions correct? YES	NO
		OB PJ Q CB PD WT S WB							
		OB PJ Q CB PD WT S WB							
		OB PJ Q CB PD WT S WB							
		OB PJ Q CB PD WT S WB							
		OB PJ Q CB PD WT S WB							
		OB PJ Q CB PD WT S WB							

Assessor's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Internal Verifier's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Action taken by Assessor

Action Completed:

Assessor's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Internal Verifier's Signature: _____ Date: _____

5.2 **Issues /concerns**

- Significant lack of monitoring assessment
- Poor recording of monitoring
- Little or no use made of results of monitoring to improve standard of assessment

5.3 The Internal Verifier should aim to monitor all the Assessors within a given period of **6-12 months depending on the size and level of activity of the assessment team**. He/she also needs to select different assessment methods to monitor, the most obvious being observation of candidate performance, professional or guided discussions and simulated exercises. When selecting the monitoring sample the Internal Verifier must be aware of safety, confidentiality, security and any additional organisational requirements which could be affected by their presence. These items should be discussed with the Assessor before arranging to monitor them.

5.4 The quality and accuracy of assessment plans as well as assessor records/reports should be included in the review. The Internal Verifier should also look at the individual Assessor's assessing and interpersonal skills, with a view to noting any areas which would benefit from advice or further training/development. Internal Verifiers must also note any problematic areas (e.g. within the NVQ) which could create difficulties for other Assessors.

5.5 Following the monitoring exercise, it is important that constructive and positive feedback - including praise - is given to enable the Assessor to develop. The discussion should be held in private and should not be related to the candidate or other Assessors. The Internal Verifier should keep a record of this and ensure that it forms part of the Assessor's Individual Development Plan (see paragraph 7.8). An example of an Assessor's Training Needs Analysis form is given at Figure 6.

5.6 Monitoring also creates an opportunity to liaise with candidates to ensure that their assessment needs are being properly met. In particular Internal Verifiers should check that the candidate: -

- knows which NVQ they are working towards, and has a copy of the standards
- understands the assessment process
- knows what progress they have made towards achievement
- is aware of their right to unit certification
- understands their role in evidence generation, collection and cross-referencing
- has confidence in their Assessor
- understands the appeals process
- has no unmet current learning needs

An example of an interview pro-forma is given at Figure 7.

TRAINING NEEDS ANALYSIS FOR ASSESSORS

ASSESSOR:
INTERNAL VERIFIER:
How long have you worked for the organisation?
How many candidates have you assessed/or are you assessing? What levels?
Describe briefly the main purpose of your job?
List in order of importance the main tasks of your job.
Give brief details of any qualifications you have.

List the skills, knowledge, abilities, experience necessary to do your job effectively.
What in your opinion are your present training needs?
Can you identify any area of training for the future?
Have you attended training on anti-discriminatory practice? Any other comments:-

I certify this is a true record of the discussion and do not object if this information is discussed with a) centre training manager; b) awarding body external verifier

Signed:- ..... (Assessor)

Date:- .....

Signed:- ..... (Internal Verifier)

Date:- .....

Figure 6

Figure 7

Internal Verification – Candidate Interview Record

Candidate:	NVQ/level:
Assessor:	Internal Verifier:

When did you begin the programme?	
How were you introduced to the programme? What topics were covered in your induction?	
Was any of your prior experience considered/used towards the qualification?	
Did anyone find out about any training you needed?	
Did you have any training whilst working towards your qualification? If so, what?	
Who gave you the training? Where and when was it carried out?	
Was equal opportunity law and policy explained to you? Did you understand it?	
Was the process of getting your qualification explained to you? If so, what do you understand this process to be?	
Did you draw up a plan to achieve the qualification with your assessor/supervisor?	
Does your assessor/supervisor involve you in planning assessments in advance?	

Figure 7

When, where and how does assessment take place?	
What types of evidence have you collected so far?	
Do you understand what aspects of your NVQ the evidence covers?	
How soon after you started was your first assessment?	
Who assesses your evidence? Does anyone else see your portfolio?	
How often do you see your assessor? Do you feel this is often enough? If not, how often would you like him/her to visit?	
Does your assessor give you feedback after assessment? Is this feedback in written form?	
What units have you completed so far? Have you signed any documentation to confirm completion?	
What kind of help and guidance have you received to put your portfolio together?	
Do you think the qualification will help you in your work now and in the future?	

I agree that the contents of this form may be shared with my assessor. Candidate signature: Date:	Internal verifier signature: Date:

5.7 Some Centres have a designated manager or Senior or Coordinating Internal Verifier with overall responsibility for the assessment and verification team. This is particularly useful for large Centres or those dealing with a wide range of occupational areas. It helps to ensure that decisions made in one programme area or site are consistent with those made in another. In this case, the routine of observing assessment practice must be extended to include observation of Internal Verifiers.

5.8 The Internal Verifier must keep records of all the monitoring of assessment (and verification, where applicable) practice undertaken. A number of useful pro-formas are available to assist in the process. An example is given at Figure 8.

6. Standardising Assessment Judgements

6.1 The third strand to verifying assessment is to standardise assessment judgements.

Aims:

1. To ensure that each Assessor consistently makes valid decisions
2. To ensure that all Assessors make the same decision on the same evidence base
3. To ensure that all candidates are assessed fairly

6.2 Issues/concerns

The project has raised the following issues/concerns about the effectiveness of this aspect of internal verification:-

- negligible use of standardation exercises within Centres
- poorly conducted standardisation

Figure 8

INTERNAL VERIFIERS REPORT ON ASSESSOR PERFORMANCE

Assessor: _____

Candidate: _____

Internal Verifier: _____

NVQ: _____

Unit(s): _____

CHECKLIST	YES	NO	EXAMPLES
1. Candidate put at ease			
2. Assessment procedure explained and negotiated			
3. Candidate encouraged to relate evidence to standards			
4. Relevant questions asked			
5. Evidence requirements met			
6. Clear, evaluative feedback provided			
7. All possible sources of evidence have been considered			
8. Further action agreed with candidate where appropriate			
9. Necessary assessment documentation completed			

Assessment activity observed

Candidate _____ Date _____

Assessor _____ Date _____

Internal Verifier _____ Date _____

6.3 Standardisation (sometimes referred to as benchmarking or moderating) is an important part of Internal Verifier duties. In many Centres visited in the project, this aspect of the Internal Verifier role was substantially underdeveloped, often relying on informal contact between Internal Verifiers and their assessment team to ensure a common standard of decision making. And although team meetings were held these were frequently poorly attended and concentrated on relaying information and/or tracking candidate progress. These issues are clearly important but it is critical, **particularly for Centres with a number of dispersed, peripatetic or inexperienced Assessors** that standardisation exercises are undertaken with all the Assessors on a regular basis.

6.4 The simplest means of completing a standardisation review is to collate copies of evidence presented for unit accreditation and ask each Assessor to make a decision based on what is in front of them. It is also helpful to ask them to note any queries they may have e.g. further information needed or authentication of a piece of evidence. This enables the Internal Verifier to check that Assessors are asking the right questions when looking at portfolio evidence as well as arriving at the correct decisions i.e. that the **process as well as the judgement is sound**.

The following examples should provide ideas for Internal Verifiers to carry out such an exercise.

Example A
Select a "problem" unit from a qualification, which many of the team assess and ask each to bring along two examples of completed units they have signed off. The units are then passed around the group and each Assessor completes an assessment feedback form as if they are assessing a unit and providing feedback to a candidate. Discussion follows. Sheets are collected and evaluated by the Internal Verifier and feedback given to individual Assessors, confidentially, at a later date.

Example B
Concentrate at one session on particular types/sources of evidence and how they are assessed, including the recording of the assessment. For example, each Assessor could bring a number of witness testimonies from their candidates', or examine observation records. The group then share constructive criticism about items tabled (which may be made anonymous for the purpose of the exercise).

Example C
If, on the introduction of new standards, there is a unit(s) in the new qualification which appears to be similar to a unit(s) from the old standards, take the evidence brought forward for the old unit by a number of candidates. As a team, then evaluate the evidence against the new standards. Aim to highlight the different requirements between old and new standards.

Example D
Enable Assessors to share with colleagues an "alternative" form of evidence, which most have not encountered or are unfamiliar with, by presenting the evidence to the team and forming a consensus view of its acceptability or otherwise against the standards.

These exercises should be repeated at intervals to ensure that messages are reinforced.

6.5 Where a Centre has a Senior or Coordinating Internal Verifier, benchmarking or standardisation exercises must be extended to include the Internal Verifiers, so that consistency of verification judgements is monitored across all team members.

7. Developing and Supporting Assessors

7.1 The second duty for the Internal Verifier is to guide, support and ensure the continuing professional development (including occupational updating) of his/her team of Assessors. This is likely to be critical at certain stages: -

- when an Assessor is new - to the team, to the Centre, to NVQs
- when standards change or guidance is revised
- following External Verifier visits or other inspections (ALI, OFSTED, ESTYN, QCA, ACCAC)

7.2 **Issues/concern**

The following issues/concerns have been noted during the project :-

- unstructured induction
- "standard" materials not held/seen by many Assessors
- little or no development of Assessors - professionally or vocationally
- few development plans in place
- lack of information/guidance/feedback from Internal Verifiers
- little or no mentoring of new Assessors

7.3 New Assessors should receive an appropriate level of **induction**. This depends on their previous experience, both of NVQs generally and/or a particular suite of awards. As with candidate induction the process is more effective if it is coherent and structured and it may help to have a checklist or pack. An example is given at Figure 9.

7.4 The Internal Verifier must ensure that all Assessors in the Centre have:-

- copies of all national standards they are to assess
- the Common Accord/ QCA NVQ Code of Practice
- NCVQ & QCA Guidance on Assessing NVQs (QCA, March 1998)
- a set of all assessment tools (e.g. observation records, underpinning knowledge questions), report forms, guidance notes used by the Centre
- copies of the Centre's Appeals Procedures, Equal Opportunities Policy and other relevant organisational procedures e.g. Quality Manual, Health and Safety Policy, Emergency Evacuation Procedures
- information about available candidate and Assessor support resources/equipment/facilities e.g. video, interview room, library
- information about the Awarding Body and the External Verifier
- information about their candidates including

  - existing achievement/accreditation
  - special learning or assessment needs including adaptations
  - workplace details including supervisor/manager
  - any other relevant information e.g. any time constraints

- contact point for advice from Internal Verifier or another (named) Assessor

Figure 9

NVQ Assessor Induction Programme

Assessor _____ Date started _____

	Signed by Assessor	Date completed
1. Initial contact made by the Internal Verifier		
2. Production of sample signature and certificates		
3. Received centre procedures and assessment guidance		
4. Centre documentation and procedures explained and understood		
5. Received centre assessment and verification documentation		
6. Internal quality assurance procedures explained		
7. Received the centre organisation chart		
8. NVQ equal opportunities policy and monitoring procedures explained and understood		
9. Received NVQ appeals procedure which was explained and understood		
10. Aware of NVQ resources available		
11. Received personal copy of NVQ standards		
12. Received NTO guidance on occupational competence and CPD		

Internal verifier signature _____ Date _____

7.5 The Internal Verifier must also check **and hold on file** the following information for each Assessor :-

- personal profile or C.V. demonstrating occupational competence at an appropriate level and current/recent relevant industrial or commercial experience
- their original assessor (D32 and/or D33) certificates or **validated** copies

It is good practice to maintain a "Centre File" with this information.

7.6 If an Assessor has not yet achieved D32/D33 it is important that the Internal Verifier agrees a **realistic target date for them to achieve certification** and a Personal Action Plan is drawn up. In the interim period **all their assessment decisions must be validated by a qualified Assessor. This must not be the Internal Verifier for that decision.** It is good practice to establish a mentor/buddy system for newly appointed Assessors; this should not be the internal verifier.

7.7 The Internal Verifier must also increase the level of sampling and of monitoring assessment practice for **newly appointed Assessors - with or without certification**. This ensures that the new Assessor has additional access to support and enables the Internal Verifier to identify any training/development needs. If the newly appointed Assessor is experienced e.g. he/she may have worked in other Centres, this period of additional sampling may be quite short. Whatever the level of experience, the incoming Assessor will value additional support whilst they become familiar with the Centres systems. Similarly there should be a mentoring process for newly appointed Internal Verifiers.

7.8 The External Verifier will expect to see evidence that the Internal Verifier has identified and addressed **learning and development needs** for each Assessor. To do this a system of continuous professional development must be in place and be maintained. This may include specific training e.g. guided discussion techniques, alternative assessment methods, updating on Awarding Body/standard setting body requirements. It may also include opportunities to update vocational knowledge or even secondment into industry.

7.9 Where the Centre has a large team, including a number of Internal Verifiers, it is beneficial to appoint a Senior or Coordinating Internal Verifier. With this model, the Senior Internal Verifier would also monitor performance and maintain development plans for the other Internal Verifiers.

8. Managing the Quality of NVQ Delivery

8.1 The third and final duty for the Internal Verifier is to manage the quality of NVQ delivery. Clearly this is an ongoing responsibility and the systems and processes described in preceding sections are designed to maintain quality of assessment. However, the Internal Verifier also has a wider management role: -

Aims:

1. To ensure assessment resources - including personnel- are effectively managed and planned
2. To provide a quality assurance role
3. To provide a link between the Awarding Body, QCA and other Regulatory Bodies.

8.2 Issues/concerns

In many Centres there is insufficient time allocated to the Internal Verifier to properly manage assessment resources. These include equipment, training facilities, candidate support and learning materials and Assessors. Too often he/she is expected to juggle resources on a day-to-day basis rather than plan ahead. As a result Assessor workloads are poorly judged and often allocated on an ad hoc basis. It is good practice to ensure that there is a formal system in place for allocating Assessors to candidates and to set out performance requirements for the Assessor e.g. frequency of reviews, assessment reports, attendance at team meetings etc. An example of an allocation form is given at Figure 10 .

8.3 The Internal Verifier should have a full role in **managing the assessment team**. To do this effectively the Internal Verifier must have accurate and meaningful information on a number of key points - candidate needs, location, and current workloads of Assessors. An essential part of this should be a systematic evaluation on entry of each candidate's additional or special learning/development needs, including technical aids or physical adaptations (e.g. large print materials, I.T. equipment) extra support, "unsocial " hours assessment etc. An example of a simple pro-forma for recording such an initial resourcing assessment is given at Figure 11. Thereafter, the Internal Verifier should have up to date information on individual candidate progress as well as an overall picture of potential new candidates, average timescales for different awards, and Assessor availability both current and projected. The Internal Verifier should be able to call meetings of the assessment team, and have the support of management to require attendance.

8.4 **Management of resources** should also include forward planning to ensure that candidates will continue to have access to assessment and appropriate materials/equipment/facilities 6, 12 or even 24 months along the line. This has budgetary and staffing implications and it is clear that in many Centres, Internal Verifiers are not regarded as sufficiently "senior" within their organisation to influence financial and personnel planning. The Awarding Bodies are concerned that this may adversely affect candidates. Centres should ensure that, when seeking approval to deliver NVQs they provide scope for appropriate input from their Internal Verifier(s) so that continuing access is assured.

8.5 The Internal Verifier clearly has a **key role in assuring and ensuring quality** standards in the delivery and assessment of NVQs. As such their duties and responsibilities should be included as an integral part of the organisations quality procedures and manuals. Internal Verifiers should be in a position to report directly to the senior management of the organisation on all aspects of the Centre's NVQ programmes. Internal Verifiers should also have explicit responsibility for carrying out self-assessment of the Centre's performance against the requirements of the Common Accord/ QCA NVQ Code of Practice on a regular basis. A summary checklist to assist in an initial self-assessment of the Centre's internal verification system is included at Figure 12.

8.6 Finally, the Internal Verifier acts as a **link between the Centre and the Awarding Body, QCA and other Regulatory Bodies**. Internal Verifiers must ensure that they have up to date information/guidance issued by relevant bodies - Awarding Body, standards setting bodies, industry and professional bodies - and that this information is passed on to all the Assessors.

Figure 10

Dear .....

Allocation of assessor to candidate

I am pleased to inform you that you have been allocated the following NVQ candidate.

Name .....

Work placement .....

Telephone number (work) .....

Home address .....

Telephone number (home) .....

NVQ title .....

Level .....Optional units .....

I suggest that you arrange an orientation visit within the next three weeks. Please complete an assessment report form and return to me. The main purpose of the visit will be:

- For you to meet the candidate and check they have a full set of relevant standards/ evidence requirement sheets, including optional units.
- For you to find out as much as possible about the candidate's work setting.
- Check that the candidate fully understands the process of assessment which should be candidate led as much as possible with the candidate identifying different sources of evidence. Check too that the candidate is in the process of completing their portfolio.
- To work out an outline timetable for assessment visits. This plan should not be rigid and should be reviewed regularly.
- Please complete NVQ Candidate Review sheets and return to me at the end of each month. Inform me of assessment dates so a sampling visit can be arranged.
- If you have any problems please do not hesitate to get in touch at any time.

Yours sincerely

Internal Verifier

Figure 11

Initial Assessment Resourcing Profile

Candidate name	
Award to aim for	

Occupational background/area of expertise

Relevant qualifications held

Tick (✓) if yes

☐ Skill Scan completed

Particular assessment requirements identified

☐ Physical impairment
☐ Sensory impairment
☐ Learning difficulty
☐ Lacking confidence
☐ Language barrier

Other (specify)
Eg time available/shift work

Requirements identified

☐ Physical aids
☐ Mechanical aids
☐ Technical aids
☐ Extra time for assessments
☐ Specially devised/adapted assessments
☐ Additional learning/training needs

Signature of candidate _____ Date _____
Signature of assessor _____ Date _____

8.7 The External Verifier's first "port of call" is the Internal Verifier, and he/she will be expected to have a **range of information to hand**: -

- numbers of current registered candidates per NVQ/level
- candidate Centre enrolment and Awarding Body registration details*
- Assessor details - specifically C.V.s, Assessor qualifications (D units), development plans, workloads
- candidate progress reviews and achievements, special assessment requirements
- assessment records and plans
- candidate support resources available
- assessment sites
- satellite, franchise arrangements
- internal verification sampling strategy
- internal verifier records including feedback to Assessors, discussions with candidates
- records of claims for certification
- candidate evidence files/portfolios

8.8 Creating and maintaining good information channels is particularly important following an External Verifier visit where an **Action Plan** has been agreed. In some Centres any Action Points are agreed with a "programme co-coordinator" or "scheme manager"; and often the Internal Verifier, Senior or Coordinating Internal Verifier takes this role. It is important that Action Points raised by the External Verifier are acted upon **within the timescale specified**. Failure to do so will result in a quality issue being noted on the Centre files, and **may lead to access to certification being blocked**.

8.9 Because of the security implications, it is extremely important that no claims for certification are made without the "clearance" of the Internal Verifier for the award. **It is not acceptable for any claim for certification to be made by an Internal Verifier who does not hold the appropriate qualification (currently D34)**.

8.10 Of equal importance is the need to maintain security of candidate files and their assessment records. Candidate evidence files/portfolios for candidates who have been certificated in between External Verifier visits must be kept intact until the next External Verifier visit so that they can be examined or produced for inspection purposes if needed. Assessor records must be retained for at least 3 years and be made available for the purposes of external verification and to allow for any appeals to be progressed and resolved.

* In larger Centres some of this information may be administered separately. However, the Internal Verifier should hold copies.

Figure 12

INTERNAL VERIFICATION
SELF-ASSESSMENT CHECK LIST

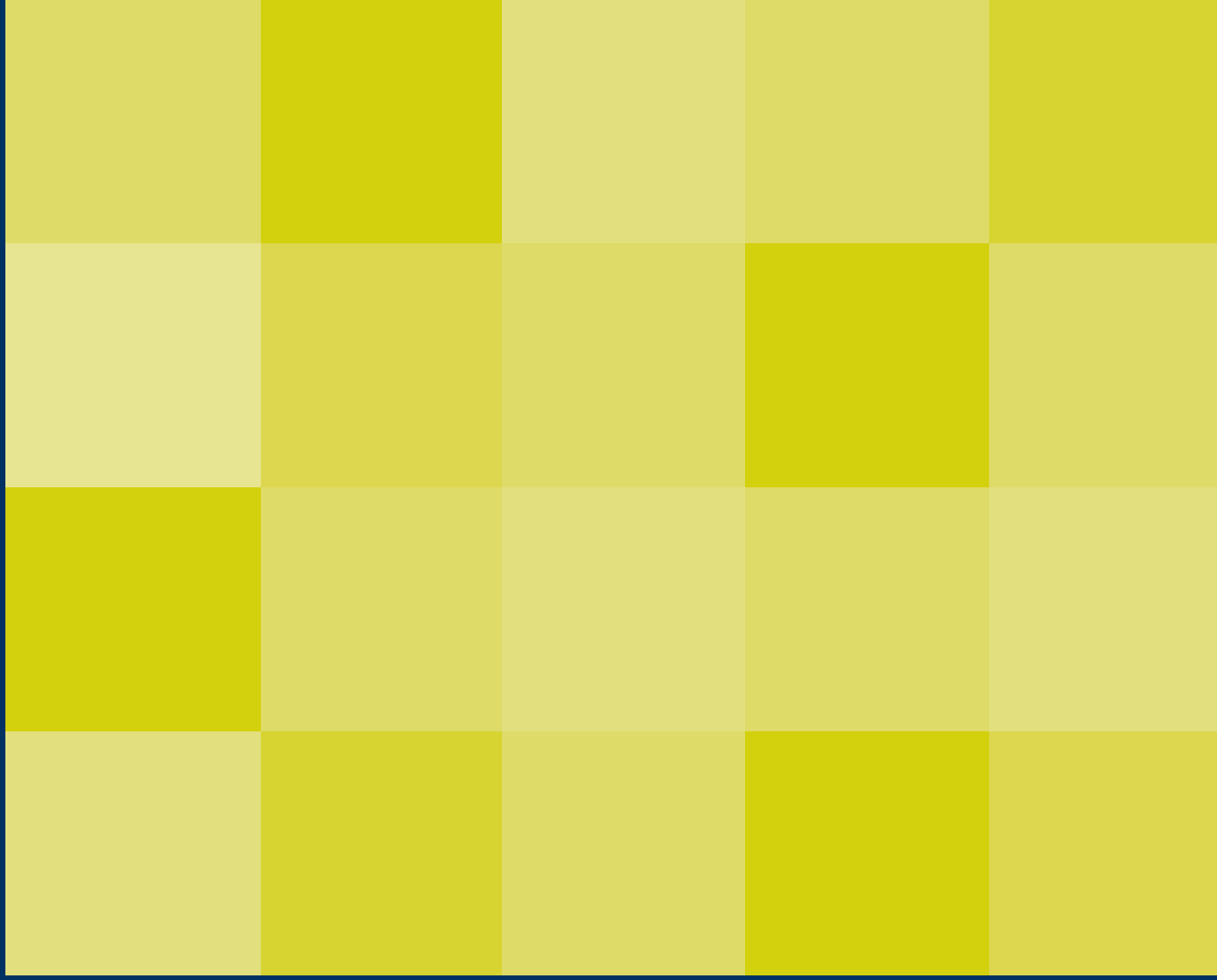
Ref	Key Indicator	Met	Action
1	Internal Verifier C.V.s are checked and validated to ensure occupational background ***at an appropriate level*** in the particular sector as required by the Awarding Body and NTO (copy D unit certificates held)		
2	A system of professional updating is in place for all Internal Verifiers and records kept		
3	Newly appointed Internal Verifiers are monitored on a regular basis to ensure their understanding of the standards is thorough		
4	**Training/development is carried out to address identified needs of all Internal Verifiers and development plans kept**		
5	All Internal Verifiers have a clear understanding of their role in quality assurance		
6	**There is an explicit system in place which ensures that validation of summative decisions is made by qualified Internal Verifiers *who have not made the assessment decisions***		
7	**All** claims for certification are validated by an **qualified** Internal Verifier		
8	There is a system in place for trainee Internal Verifiers to work with/shadow qualified verifiers		
9	Trainee Internal Verifiers have **clear** target dates to achieve D34 and their progress towards achievement is monitored		
10	**A written sampling strategy is maintained by all the Internal Verifiers for each programme**		
11	A clear and feasible rationale exists for sampling		
12	The strategy ensures that **all assessors** are included, all Units and a range of assessment methods (appropriate to the NVQ) are covered		
13	Sampling is ongoing, not end-loaded		
14	The system responds to particular problems or needs identified by the Internal Verifier		
15	Records of sampling, including **monitoring assessment practice**, are maintained		
16	**A named officer takes responsibility for ensuring that each programme has sufficient Internal Verifiers to fully support the Assessors**		

Figure 12

Ref	Key Indicator	Met	Action
17	The ratio of Assessors to Internal Verifiers is appropriate for the award/level/situation		
18	Assessor C.V.s are checked and validated to ensure occupational competence ***at an appropriate level*** in the particular sector as required by the Awarding Body and NTO (copy D unit certificates validated and held on file)		
19	A system of professional updating is in place for all Assessors and Personal Development Plans kept		
20	Trainee Assessors have **clear** and realistic target dates to achieve D32/33 and their progress towards achievement is monitored		
21	Newly appointed Assessors to the Centre are monitored on a regular basis to ensure consistency with the assessment team		
22	All summative decisions are made by **qualified** Assessors		
23	Internal Verifiers positively encourage Assessors to discuss assessment issues and meet with them on a regular basis		
24	**All Assessors are monitored and given the type and level of support which is suited to their needs**		
25	**Assessors are given informal and formal feedback which is constructive and relevant**		
26	**Assessment time and resource implications have been specifically considered and reviewed at regular intervals**		
27	The senior Internal Verifier has access to required resources to maintain quality of the NVQ programmes		
28	The senior Internal Verifier has sufficient management status to influence decisions regarding NVQ delivery and implementation, including resource allocation		
29	**All the Internal Verifiers have sufficient time, agreed with senior management, to devote to their NVQ responsibilities**		
30	**The senior Internal Verifier regularly carries out self-assessment of the Centre's performance against the requirements of the QCA NVQ Code of Practice**		

Appendix A - List of Awarding Bodies issuing this guidance

Association of Accounting Technicians
Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education
City & Guilds
Edexcel Foundation
EMTA Awards Ltd
London Chamber of Commerce and Industry Examinations Board
The Institute of the Motor Industry
Oxford Cambridge & RSA Examinations
Qualifications for Industry Ltd



department for
education and skills
creating opportunity, releasing potential, achieving excellence

PP80D2/43926/0801/34