



# BTEC Centre Guide to International Standards Verification

2024 - 2025

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# Introduction

## Qualifications Covered

A subject specialist Standards Verifier/ External Examiner will be allocated to verify a sample of assessed BTEC learner work and support you in working to national standards.

### This guide covers the following qualifications:

BTEC (SRF & QCF) Entry to Level 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BTEC Level 2 (SRF)</li> <li>• BTEC Level 3 (QCF &amp; SRF)</li> <li>• BTEC (QCF) specialist qualifications at Entry Level to Level 3</li> </ul>
BTEC (QCF) Level 4 to 7 & Level 3 International Foundation Programme for Higher Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BTEC Level 3 International Foundation Programme for Higher Education in Business</li> <li>• BTEC Level 4 HNC and Level 5 HND</li> <li>• BTEC Level 3 and 4 Foundation Diploma in Art &amp; Design</li> <li>• BTEC Professional qualifications at levels 4 and above</li> </ul>
BTEC RQF Level 4 to 5	Please also refer to the Higher National Centre Guide to Quality assurance and Assessment on our <a href="#">website</a>

## Why we do it?

Standards verification is how we check that you are operating appropriate quality assurance and assessing to national standards. We undertake standards verification to ensure reliability of assessment across all BTEC centres and to:

- provide a thorough review of assessment and verification
- ensure that correct processes and procedures are being applied, consistent with qualifications at all levels
- encourage you to continue to deliver best practice in vocational assessment
- provide a detailed report on verification and assessment practice for the relevant programme sector

Standards verification helps ensure you have accurate assessment and verification records and that you are assessing learners appropriately, consistently, and fairly. The outcome of standards verification informs us whether your learners have achieved the required national standard for safe certification.

As part of our overarching quality assurance process, we scrutinise each centre's quality profile, considering factors such as:

- registration patterns
- claimed grades over time
- the results of other processes, such as the approval of other qualifications
- general issues highlighted in a particular sector

## When is standards verification required?

We allocate a Standards Verifier/ External Examiner to sample your programme(s) twice per year, between November and August. This will normally be conducted remotely but could also be conducted via a visit, if we feel you would benefit from additional support.

The Standards Verifier/ External Examiner will liaise with the Quality Nominee to arrange mutually convenient dates and times for the remote sampling/ visits as soon as possible after registration of your learners.

# The Standards Verification Process

We appoint a Standards Verifier/External Examiner to a Principal Subject Area. They will be a subject specialist and their primary focus is to ensure that you are assessing to national standards.

## Standards Verifier/External Examiner responsibilities

- Assessing learners to national standards as set out within the BTEC qualification specifications
- Maintaining effective mechanisms for the internal verification of BTEC programmes
- Demonstrating effective recording of assessment and internal verification
- Applying centre-wide processes and procedures effectively and consistently in your programme area

## How we do it

The Standards Verifiers/ External Verifiers will, upon allocation, contact your Quality Nominee to make an initial contact with your centre. The Quality Nominee must put the Standards Verifier/External Examiner in touch with the relevant Lead Internal Verifier.

The standards verifier will make a mandatory request to see the assessment plan for all registered learners, identifying:

- which Assessors are assessing which units and learners
- when assessment is planned to take place
- who are the Internal Verifiers and when internal verification is planned to take place

Please note: Only those learners registered on Edexcel Online will be sampled and therefore able to certificate at the end of the process.

After discussion with the Lead Internal Verifier, the Standards Verifier/External Examiner will confirm by email:

- the date of the sample
- the sample size
- which learners' portfolios will be sampled
- a sample plan

Over the period that the qualification is delivered, the Standards Verifier/External Examiner will sample across the units and all the Assessors. For example, a 12-unit qualification being delivered over 2 years, will require 4 visits (2 per year), before certificates can be released.

For short courses it may be appropriate that the Standards Verifier/External Examiner will be able to see sample of all the units and sample all Assessors at the first visit. In this case certificates would be released after the first visit.

You should track and record learners' achievement as they progress on the programme. This can be used to provide information when the sample is being selected.

The sample must include the full range of grades that you have awarded. If a range of grades is not available because of the achievement of the learners in the cohort, discuss this with your Standards Verifier/External Examiner

The rule is that certificates cannot be released until the ISV is satisfied that a valid number of units have been sampled and assessment decisions have been found to be accurate.

## Planning the visit

Planning for the visit is an important part of the standards verification process. Planning helps the Standards Verifier/External Examiner to use the time effectively and to provide you with support and guidance. Planning will also help you understand what will be required from you and other staff on the day.

Before each visit the Standards Verifier/External Examiner will send you a visit plan. They will copy in your Regional Development Manager who, if required, will be pleased to help you plan the visit.

See Appendix A for details to be considered in the planning.

Please bear in mind that if your Standards Verifier/External Examiner needs to fly from the UK, there may be a need for him/her to obtain a visa or other travel documents. Please build this time into the date agreed.

The plan will also detail the activities that will be undertaken. When the Standards Verifier/External Examiner visits you s/he will need to have the maximum amount of time possible to complete their planned activities.

You are asked not to provide hospitality or other activities beyond ensuring they have some refreshments during their visit.

Standards Verifiers/External Examiners are not contracted to attend press conferences, prize giving or similar activities. They are allocated to your centre to check that the assessment of the learners' work is to the required standard and not to act as a Pearson representative for public relations purposes.

Please note that a visit normally takes one full working day. However, if there are a high number of registrations at your centre or there is an urgent need for certification for a programme that has not yet been fully sampled then more than one day may be needed. In this case there will be an extra cost incurred.

## During the Sampling Activity

This is an important day. When the Standards Verifier/External Examiner arrives, or contacts you remotely, please confirm the visit plan that should already have been agreed.

The formal centre introductions should not take more than 15-20 minutes and the verification process should start as soon as possible.

The Standards Verifier/External Examiner is going to spend most of their time checking assessment practice and this needs to be undertaken in private. The Standards Verifier/External Examiner should be left alone to do this.

We know that your staff have their regular jobs to do, so please do not cancel classes. The visit plan should help make sure that appropriate people are available at the right time.

Lunch should take no more than one hour so that time is focused on the verification activity. It is recognised that you may want to use the lunch as an opportunity for your staff to meet the Standards Verifier/External Examiner.

Please do not to ask the Standards Verifier/External Examiner how the process is going. Kindly wait for everything to be completed. A final judgement will be announced at the feedback session at the end of the day.

Please ensure that meetings run to time. The day may be extended by mutual agreement if extra discussion time is required.

The Standards Verifier/External Examiner will review:

- the operation of the internal verification process
- a list of learners' names which will be compared to the names registered on Edexcel Online
- assignment briefs; learner work; assessment and internal verification records
  - assessment decisions for the learner work and related feedback
  - signed and dated declaration of authenticity by the learner and assessor
  - internal verification documents for the assignment briefs
  - internal verification documentation relating to the assessment decisions for learners sampled
  - where applicable, evidence of any resubmissions, including a full audit trail of the process
  - where applicable, evidence of any retakes, including a full audit trail of the process
- programme documentation; policies; programme review documentation
- physical resources e.g. library; computer facilities; laboratories, workshops
- staff CVs and the list of units they delivered and assessed (for levels 4, 5, 6 and 7 only)
- where applicable, evidence of any rerepeated units, including a full audit trail of the process (for levels 4 and 5 only)

For each sample there must be definitive evidence of assessed work covering targeted criteria. You must provide a complete sample which can be used to accurately judge your approach to assessment. If the materials are incomplete, inappropriate or appear not to be authentic, the Standards Verifier /External Examiner will not be able to complete sampling.



## Feedback

The feedback session is formal. It is important that the Standards Verifier/External Examiner is given the opportunity to present their findings and recommendations.

The feedback may require action points that need to be agreed with senior management, so it is recommended that at least one member of the senior management team is present at this meeting. The Standards Verifier/External Examiner will make the same points in their written report.

**Important please note:** Gifts should not be given to Standards Verifier/External Examiner. They are not expected. Your culture may provide small friendship gifts, such as booklets or photographs of your centre. A Standards Verifier/External Examiner can accept these if it is your culture to give them. Other gifts could be considered to impose a conflict of interest and as refusal to accept them may offend, we ask you not to offer gifts to Standards Verifier/External Examiner.

## Assessment of practical activities

Many units include practical activities where assessment is recorded through observation records. We advise you to use a form that clearly details the assessment and identifies the assessment and grading criteria achieved. We provide template forms on our [BTEC forms and guides](#) website.

The practical activity evidence may take a variety of forms such as photographs, video, and audio. When submitting recording materials please ensure such materials identify the following as part of the evidence:

- centre name and number,
- assessor name
- learner name and Pearson registration number
- unit title and number, assessment, and grading criteria attempted

Standards Verifiers/External Examiners need to be able to judge the validity of the assessment decisions so, in addition to observation record, the assessor will need to complete the BTEC assessment record.

Please see Appendix B for guidance on postal sampling of practical units.

## Large cohorts and multi-site centres

If you deliver programmes across additional sites, the Standards Verifier/External Verifier will communicate directly with the Quality Nominee at the main site.

The Standards Verifier/External Examiner will select the sample from learners across the sites.

- The Lead Internal Verifier will collate and check the sample to ensure that there is an appropriately sized sample from all the sites. Before certificates can be released, the assessment decisions of all Assessors at all sites will need to be sampled. This will confirm that all staff are making accurate assessment decisions.
- Outcomes of standards verification/external examination will apply to all the sites running the programme.
- Over time the Standards Verifier/External Examiner may request to visit other sites, rather than making the visit to the main site.

Where programmes have particularly large cohorts or operate across multiple sites, we may operate a 'team approach' to standards verification.

In such cases, the allocated Standards Verifier/External Verifier will coordinate a team of supporting Standards Verifiers/External Examiners who will assist in conducting sampling. The allocated Standards Verifier/ External Examiner will look at programme management and complete the appropriate part of the report.

The supporting Standards Verifiers/ External Examiners will make visit(s), conduct sampling of one or more units and provide judgements and commentary. The allocated Standards Verifier/ External Examiner will collate the sampling evidence for the assessment decisions part of the report and then complete the final report.

At the end of the visit the Standards Verifier/External Examiner will give verbal feedback to senior management and any other appropriate members of the programme team. The Standards Verifier/External Examiner will not normally provide a full report on the day but will summarise his/her findings and any required actions.

The Standards Verifier/External Examiner will tell you when the report will be sent, and this is normally within 10 working days of the visit.

## Frequently Asked Questions

*Question: Can the Standards Verifier deliver training for us?*

*Answer:* The Standards Verifier/External Examiner is not allowed to deliver training to your centre. Training sessions can be arranged through our specialist training division.

*Question: Is there a cost for this activity?*

*Answer:* There is a cost for the sampling activity. Please ask your Regional Development Manager for more information about the charges.

*Question: Will we always have two visits?*

*Answer:* If after running the programme for three years during which time you have received acceptable reports i.e. release of certification, the number of samples can be reduced to one per year. This is subject to approval by Centre Management in London. There must be no outstanding issues or required actions.

Please note: If quality issues should arise leading to a block of certification, the frequency of the sampling will return to two per year until a satisfactory quality profile is re-established.

*Question: Is the same sampling strategy applied to all the programmes in our centre?*

*Answer:* The frequency of sampling applies to specific programmes and does not apply across your centre. You may receive one sample per year for one of your BTEC programmes but still have two samples for other programmes.

*Question: Do we have to use the Pearson templates?*

*Answer:* These templates are not mandatory; you are free to design your own but these must contain the same details as on the Pearson templates.

*Question: Is there an additional cost if we have a team of standards verifiers working in our centre?*

*Answer:* There will be an increased cost for visits that require a team of Standards Verifiers/External Examiners or for visits that will take more than one day to complete the required amount of sampling e.g., when there are a high number of registrations or certificates are needed urgently when the programme has not yet been fully sampled.

# Outcomes of the sample

The report will:

- show the status and quality of the programme
- evaluate the materials and processed reviewed during the visit
- guide you towards action required to improve the quality of the programme
- decide whether certificates can be released for printing

You must give full and serious consideration to the comments and recommendations contained in the Standards Verifier//External Examiner reports.

First sample report status	Outcome
Certification Released	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A sufficient sample has been provided and the Standards Verifier/External Examiner judges that you are assessing to national standards and documenting assessment correctly</li> <li>• All student evidence is valid, authentic and sufficient</li> <li>• The Standards Verifier/External Examiner report releases certification, programme by programme</li> <li>• You will receive separate reports for different levels of programmes with different assessment methodologies</li> <li>• The Standards Verifier/External Examiner may agree that assessment standards are being maintained but identify Essential Actions or Recommendations in sections 1 – 7 of the report (where appropriate). You should read the report carefully for Essential Actions or Recommendations.</li> <li>• Certificates can be claimed on Edexcel Online and certificates will be printed</li> </ul>
Certification Pending	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certification pending means that the Standards Verifier/External Examiner does not agree that you are assessing to national standards and/or not documenting assessment and internal verification</li> </ul>

	<p>correctly on one or more of the programmes in the sector</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certification pending status will also result from any evidence of student plagiarism found in the sample</li> <li>• The Standards Verifier/External Examiner judges that one or more assessment decisions are incorrect, or the approach to assessment and verification does not meet requirements</li> <li>• Certificates should not be claimed</li> <li>• Certificates will not be printed</li> </ul>
Not Yet Fully Sampled (NYFS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Standards Verifier/External Examiner has not yet sampled a satisfactory amount of units that make up the qualification.</li> <li>• Your learners are in the first cohort and this first cohort will not yet have completed the course</li> <li>• Certificates are not yet required and will not be claimed</li> </ul>
Certification pending with limited certification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Standards Verifier/External Examiner is prepared to release the certificates for a small number of learners. The standard of these learners' work is judged as appropriate for certificates to be issued. A limited certification form will be submitted along with the Standards Verifier/External Examiner's report</li> <li>• The programme has certification pending status for certification of other learners</li> </ul>

The Standards Verifier/External Examiner will send a copy of the report to:

- ❖ The Centre
- ❖ [reportsprocessing@pearson.com](mailto:reportsprocessing@pearson.com)
- ❖ International Quality Manager
- ❖ Regional Office [pqs.internationaleo@pearson.com](mailto:pqs.internationaleo@pearson.com)

The reports are read and reviewed. In very exceptional circumstances, the decision of the Standards Verifier//External Examiner might be challenged, investigated and the decision may be overturned.

The actions taken because of content of a report, or the reasons for not following recommendations, should be formally recorded and circulated to those concerned. You should ensure that student representatives are given the opportunity to be fully involved in this process, enabling them to understand all the issues raised and your response.

At centre level the general issues and themes arising from the reports should be reviewed.

## Appeals

If you have concerns about the outcomes of standards verification, we have a formal enquiries and appeals process. Details can be found on the Policies section of our [website](#)

### ***Frequently Asked Questions***

*Question: If one programme receives the outcome of certification pending does that stop certification for the whole centre?*

*Answer:* The external examination report will release or stop certification for each individual programme within a sector. Therefore, if one or more programmes are subject to “certification pending” this does not automatically affect certification of the other programmes.

# Sampling sizes

Samples for Level 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7

INTERNATIONAL			
Learner Numbers (Proxy For Assessors)	1-100	101-200	201+
Samples Size Enhanced RISK	18	36	48
Samples Size Standard RISK	12	24	36

# Support and Guidance

*If you have a question, please contact your International Quality Managers via the Pearson Support Portal.*

## International Quality Managers

International Quality Managers are an important part of our quality partnership and are full time managers within our BTEC Assessment team. We have four International Quality Managers working in:

- Indian subcontinent – [saurabh.saxena@pearson.com](mailto:saurabh.saxena@pearson.com)
- Middle East, Africa, Latin America, Caribbean, Turkey & Uzbekistan – [mohamed.kamel@pearson.com](mailto:mohamed.kamel@pearson.com)
- Gulf and Lebanon – [khaled.elhabashy@pearson.com](mailto:khaled.elhabashy@pearson.com)
- Asia Pacific – [florence.chan@pearson.com](mailto:florence.chan@pearson.com)

Their role is to:

- offer quality assurance advice and support for BTEC qualifications
- provide formal support and monitoring throughout our quality assurance
- process of standards verification
- review SV/EE reports submitted for centres in their region

## Regional Development Managers

Our Regional Development Managers are sales experts who provide information and guidance to Senior Management Teams.

If you would like your Regional Development Manager to get in touch, their contact details can be found on the website. Alternatively, email [pqs.internationaleo@pearson.com](mailto:pqs.internationaleo@pearson.com) and the team will get in touch with you.

In addition, you will find further information on Pearson qualifications and services the [Delivering BTEC Qualifications](#) section of our website.



# Appendix A – Preparation Guidance

Everything that the Standards Verifier/External Examiner will want to see should already exist. It should be a matter of getting everything together and letting everybody know what is expected of them on the day of the visit.

This list will help you think about what is required and can be used as a planning aid for the visit.

Required documents for the visit	Person responsible
The visit plan sent by the Standards Verifier/External Examiner	Lead Internal Verifier (where appropriate); Quality Nominee
The Internal Verification plan that shows what is going to be Internally Verified, by whom and when	Lead Internal Verifier (where appropriate), Programme Leader



The assessment plan that shows when units are going to be delivered and when assessment opportunities are going to be given to learners	Lead Internal Verifier (where appropriate); Programme Leader
Internal Verification records that show assignments were internally verified before being given to learners	Internal Verifiers, Lead Internal Verifier (where appropriate)
Internal Verification records that show assessment decisions for all Assessors have been sampled and shown to be correct	Internal Verifiers, Lead Internal Verifier (where appropriate)
Assessed learner work as called for by the Standards Verifier/External Examiners	Assessors
All assessment records that track the learners	Programme Leader
The last Standards Verifier/External Examiner report (unless this is a first visit)	Quality Nominee; Lead Internal Verifier (where appropriate); Programme Leader

There will be several activities that will need to be planned. This list is not exhaustive, but it will help you arrange a useful visit.

Things to do	Person who may do this
Inform the staff and learners of the date of the visit and why the visit is happening	Senior Management
Check the learner registration details on Edexcel Online match the learners on programme	Examinations Officer, Quality Nominee
Check assessment records are up-to-date	Programme Leader
Check that all assessors are using the correct programme/unit specification	Programme Leader; Lead Internal Verifier (where appropriate), Assessors
Check that Internal Verification records are up to date	Lead Internal Verifier (where appropriate), Programme Leader

Check that learners' work is available and accessible by the Standards Verifier/External Examiner	Assessors
Arrange a room for the Standards Verifier/External Examiner to work in quietly and undisturbed	Senior Management
Book transport and driver to collect and return the Standards Verifier/External Examiner to the hotel (if requested)	Regional Development Manager and centre
Arrange the time for the staff to meet with the Standards Verifier/External Examiner	Senior Management
Arrange the time for the learners to meet with the Standards Verifier/External Examiner (Higher National and Level 7 only)	Programme Leader
Ensure that all materials are available in the room on the day of the visit	Programme Team

## Appendix B - Postal sampling of practical units

It is important that sampling evidence is sufficient to justify the assessment and grading criteria awarded. Please ensure that the Standards Verifier/External Examiner has all the information needed to verify grades, to prevent misunderstandings.

You should send copies, **not** original evidence, to reduce the risk of damage to the learners' work. Also, original work may be too bulky and expensive to deliver. For some units, this may present logistical issues.

The following guidance gives advice on how best to prepare for sampling of the various types of evidence. If in doubt, discuss the sample with your Standards Verifier/External Examiner.

## General guidance

- Encourage the recording of work as it is being done. Records of work in progress can provide good evidence. Also, collating a sample is easier if records have been kept throughout
- Portfolios should be indexed allowing the Standards Verifier/External Examiner to find work quickly and easily
- Witness statements and observation records should be included where relevant
- A front sheet should be included for every assignment, showing the learner's name, Pearson registration number, centre name and number, unit and criteria awarded. The work of each learner must be clearly identifiable, and it should be clear which assignment each piece of work applies to
- All work, including electronic files, should be clearly labelled with the learner's name and unit title
- Electronic evidence should be on a CD, DVD or using Cloud storage
- The quality and resolution of any photographs or digital evidence must be high enough for the Standards Verifier/External Examiner to be able to make judgments on the quality of the original work. This includes video or audio files
- To make sure that the Standards Verifier/External Examiner can open electronic files, please discuss this with them before you prepare a postal (electronic) sample. You should use the standard file formats: PowerPoint;
- Word Document (in Rich Text Format, to ensure compatibility); PDF; for video & audio files: WMV (Windows), MPEG (Mac), high quality MP3
- Please do not use software that is not commonly available on home systems unless you have agreed this with the Standards Verifier/External Examiner beforehand
- When photographing work, please ensure:
  - adequate lighting, using natural daylight where possible
  - proper framing and the subject are in focus
  - white balance is corrected
  - any text is easily readable
  - a high resolution (for digital)
- Some units require working logbooks (actor logs, dance diaries, training diaries, production files, etc.) which can be bulky, contain annotated scripts, studio diagrams, videos... etc.
- Completed units may relate to more than one performance. At the Standards Verifiers /External Examiners' discretion, samples of completed units may comprise one of the performance projects, if all the assessment and grading criteria have been assessed at least once in the sample. This should include final assessment decisions

- Learners must be clearly identified, particularly in a group performance or team activity. Learners can verbally identify themselves on video and/or you can provide a written commentary with a written description, timings and positions
- For musical performances, all performers should be identified. If this is an audio only recording, a written note would cover this
- Ensure that the playback medium is agreed beforehand with the Standards Verifier/External Examiner. In most cases, a DVD which is playable in a domestic DVD player will be appropriate. If a DVD is provided, you must check that it can be played on a standard PC or Mac without the need for specialist software

### Production-based units

- As with performance-based units, some productions often require working logbooks (actor logs, dance diaries, production files, meeting minutes, etc.) which can be bulky, contain annotated scripts, studio diagrams, videos...etc.
- CAD evidence of stage plans, studio layouts, shot blocking, etc. will need to be printed or made available in a format accessible to the Standards Verifier/External Examiner
- Evidence may include design portfolios containing sketches, swatches, textured elements, etc.; 3D sets and models; large ground plans and scale diagrams; costumes, etc. These will need to be recorded in photos or videos
- Video and photo records of puppets and masks will be needed to show quality of workmanship as well as fitness for purpose and fitting (masks) and ease of use (puppets)
- For audio and video group productions, it should be made clear what role the learners undertook, so that the Standards Verifier/ External Examiner can assess the contribution from the learner in the sample. Individual production logs are a good way for learners to identify what they did and allows for self-evaluation of their processes and finished production
- Some production evidence may come from project files using specific sequencing or editing software. You should discuss this with the Standards Verifier/External Verifier beforehand. If they do not have access to the relevant software, you may wish to include screenshots of the project environment and include versions of the finished piece to show progression. These will need to be clearly labelled

### Visual arts units

- Completed units in Art & Design may include a significant amount of visual evidence. Think about which of the units are most appropriate to send evidence by post. Some units may have evidence which is easier to copy, or may have more evidence in electronic or written formats

- 3D work or large scale 2D pieces should be photographed. It is useful to identify the dimensions of the work by showing a coin or a ruler alongside the piece. It is also useful to photograph ceramic or 3D work from all sides. With hollow vessels, an overhead view would reveal the quality of the interior
- Visual evidence should be supplemented by the learner's research and analysis of the brief, sketchbook work and design development, presentation sheets and the final outcome
- Where a learner has produced several versions of a piece, but do not materially add to the evidence, you may select the appropriate evidence. However, the evidence selected should still show coverage of the assessment and grading criteria awarded
- Any annotations on work should be legible. If this is difficult, then provide close ups of the annotation or a supplementary sheet showing what was said will help
- The images should be presented in the correct sequence so that the Standards Verifier/ External Examiner can see the learner's journey. PowerPoint is one way of ensuring that the images stay in order. Each individual JPEG image or word file should be numbered, and the sequence should be clear. Numbering files is another simple way of doing this.