Quality Assurance Handbook 2016-17

NVQ/SVQ & Competence-based qualifications

Contents

Introduction

This handbook is effective from 1 September 2016 until 31 August 2017 and addresses the quality assurance arrangements for centres delivering stand-alone NVQs/SVQs and competence-based qualifications.

The handbook should be read in conjunction with the **Pearson Edexcel and Pearson EDI NVQs, SVQs and Competence-based qualifications – Delivery Guidance and Quality Assurance Requirements 2016-17**, available on our website: qualifications.pearson.com/en/home.html

This handbook is designed for centres offering NVQs/SVQs or competence-based qualifications. All Quality Nominees, Programme Managers Internal Verifiers and Assessors for these qualifications should familiarise themselves with this document.

If you are offering NVQs/SVQs and competence-based qualifications within the BTEC Apprenticeship framework, please refer additionally to the **Work-Based Learning: BTEC Apprenticeships Quality Assurance Handbook 2016-17,** available on our website:

qualifications.pearson.com/en/about-us/qualification-brands/btec/delivering-btec/key-documents.html

What is standards verification for NVQs/SVQs/Competence-based qualifications?

We will assure quality for NVQs/SVQs through centre visits for standards verification for each qualification, or group of qualifications.

- Standards verification is the way in which we check that centres are conducting both internal quality assurance and assessment to the right standards
- Standards Verifiers will provide advice and guidance and work with you to support you in demonstrating that you are working to the standards and addressing possible areas where you may require support
- Standards verification ensures that you have accurate assessment records and are assessing learners appropriately, consistently and fairly
- Where you register learners on a BTEC Apprenticeship Framework, verification will be coordinated across components where possible
- Where you register learners on separate components of a BTEC Apprenticeship Framework, your WBL Standards Verifier will need to sample across cohorts in order to release certification. Please ensure you alert your Standards Verifier to programmes outside the Apprenticeship framework where appropriate
- There will typically be two visits each year for qualifications in a sector

Which qualifications does NVQ/SVQ/Competence-based qualification standards verification cover?

- Pearson Edexcel and Pearson EDI NVQ and competence-based qualifications regulated by Ofqual
- Pearson Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) regulated by SQA accreditation

Note:

If you are offering NVQs/SVQs within BTEC Apprenticeship framework, standards verification for NVQs/SVQs is integrated with verification of the other components in the BTEC Apprenticeship framework. Please refer to the **Work-Based Learning: BTEC Apprenticeships Quality Assurance Handbook 2016-17** for further detail, available on our website:

qualifications.pearson.com/en/about-us/qualification-brands/btec/delivering-btec/key-documents.html

BTEC Apprenticeships and NVQs/SVQs are not in scope for centre Quality Management Review and centres solely delivering BTEC Apprenticeships and NVQs/SVQs will not receive a visit from a Centre Quality Reviewer as part of the external quality assurance process. Standards Verifiers will review the overarching management and support for the delivery of NVQs/SVQs.

Roles and Responsibilities

Pearson

Standards Verifier

We will appoint Standards Verifiers to cover one or more sectors; they will be occupationally competent for the NVQs/SVQs they cover. We will tell you who your Standards Verifier is in October. If you are a new centre, or, if you offer NVQs/SVQs in a new sector, we will tell you 4 to 6 weeks after you first register learners. Standards Verifiers for NVQs/SVQs will typically visit twice annually.

The primary focus of the Standards Verifier is to ensure that staff involved in the planning, delivery and assessment of qualifications:

- maintain the national standard of qualifications awarded by Pearson
- assess learner performance in accordance with national standards and evidence requirements
- maintain a robust mechanism for the internal verification of NVQ/SVQ qualifications
- have a clear commitment to assuring and improving quality.

The Standards Verifier will:

- visit your centre, normally twice annually and possibly more frequently, particularly if you have a different arrangement with us. liaise with you to arrange visit dates and plans so that all needs are met
- sample and review learners' portfolios, assessment records and internal verification records including records of standardisation meetings
- verify that the National Occupational Standards for assessment, internal verification and for the occupational sector are met
- provide advice, support and guidance to the centre on best practice for implementation of assessment and internal verification and for the achievement of the National Occupational Standards for the occupational sector
- provide verbal feedback at the end of their visit
- submit reports within 10 working days of their visit
- recommend certification or otherwise for the respective occupational sectors.

Senior Standards Verifier

We have a Senior Standards Verifier for each sector who takes an overview of standards within the sector and ensures that all Standards Verifiers have appropriate standardisation. We may ask the Senior Standards Verifier to become involved with a centre where further support is required on understanding the standards for the sector.

Centres

Quality Nominee

You must appoint a member of staff as a Quality Nominee to act as the main point of contact between Pearson and your centre. The Quality Nominee should be someone who has the capacity and authority to act for the centre. Your Quality Nominee should ensure the effective management of NVQ/SVQ programmes of delivery, and actively encourage and promote good practice.

You must keep the Quality Nominee details up to date on Edexcel Online. For NVQ/SVQ standards verification, your Quality Nominee will:
● be the initial point of contact for the Standards Verifier
● liaise with appropriate Programme Managers and Internal Verifiers to ensure that Standards Verifiers are able to carry out their visits
● be notified that a Standards Verifier has provided a report, which is accessed via Edexcel Online.

Programme Manager

A Programme Manager or Programme Leader is the person responsible for day-to-day management and delivery of the qualification. For Pearson NVQ/SVQ qualifications, the Programme Leader may also act as the Internal Verifier.

As the Programme Manager or Internal Verifier, you will:
● liaise with the Quality Nominee to obtain the details of the Standards Verifier and to provide information in preparation for the visit
● notify the Standards Verifier of changes to Internal Verifiers or Assessors
● prepare for the standards verification visits, providing any information that the Standards Verifier needs and agreeing a visit plan
● provide information during the visits, including evidence related to learners' portfolios, assessment, internal verification and quality assurance
● receive feedback at the end of the visits
● review the visit reports via Edexcel Online or Pearson's Qualification Management Application system and take actions when required.

Internal Verifiers

Internal Verifiers must be both suitably qualified and occupationally competent and should ideally be involved in the delivery and assessment of the qualification. You cannot internally verify your own assessment. Where there is a team of Assessors, it is good practice to encourage some of the team to become qualified for the internal quality assurance role.

For each NVQ/SVQ qualification for which approval is sought, there must be two qualified Assessors, one of whom may also be a qualified Internal Verifier. There must be two Internal Verifiers, one of whom should be a qualified Internal Verifier and one of whom may be working towards qualification, with an identified target date for completion. This is a minimum of three personnel. In order to ensure

that assessment is being carried out consistently and that National Occupational Standards are being met, Internal Verifiers are responsible for monitoring that Assessors maintain their Continuous Professional Development (CPD) as specified in the assessment requirements or assessment strategy for the sector.

As an Internal Verifier, you will:

● ensure your internal quality assurance of assessment process and practice meets the National Occupational Standards for internal quality assurance
● ensure an effective system of recording learner achievement is in place
● develop an internal verification strategy and form an internal verification plan to implement this strategy
● keep accurate and up-to-date records of the internal verification process, including standardisation activities
● advise and standardise Assessors on the appropriateness of assessment evidence with regard to level, sufficiency, authenticity, validity and consistency
● use your sector knowledge and experience to sample assessments to verify Assessors' judgements, ensuring that they are consistent, fair and reliable
● provide standardisation activities for Assessors to ensure consistency in the assessment process
● ensure your own assessment decisions are sampled when teaching on the programme
● ensure that appropriate corrective action is taken where necessary
● take part in the formal stages of any appeal.

Assessors

In order to ensure that assessment is being carried out consistently and that National Occupational Standards are being met, Assessors must be both qualified for their role and suitably occupationally competent and they should take part in standardisation meetings. Assessors must maintain their CPD as specified in the assessment requirements or assessment strategy for the sector.

As an Assessor, you will:

● ensure that your assessment activity meets the National Occupational Standards for assessment
● use your sector knowledge and experience to assess learners' evidence against the requirements of the qualifications in the BTEC Apprenticeship framework, if applicable
● engage in standardisation activities to ensure consistency in the assessment process
● keep accurate and up-to-date records of your assessment activity
● engage learners in the planning of assessment and the assessment process
● provide feedback to learners at both formative and summative stages on the suitability of assessment evidence with regard to level, sufficiency, validity and consistency
● support learners to take appropriate corrective action where necessary.

Where there are several NVQs/SVQs delivered by your centre, it is good practice to ensure that there is coordination across the whole centre. A Programme Manager, an Internal Verifier or the Quality Nominee could undertake this. This helps us to communicate with you and helps you to coordinate any actions needed following Standards Verifier visits.

Support

Comprehensive information and support material is available on the NVQ/SVQ pages at
qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/nvq-and-competence-based-qualifications.html

This includes:

- Pearson Edexcel and Pearson EDI NVQs, SVQs and Competence-based Qualifications – Delivery Guidance and Quality Assurance Requirements 2016-17
- Pearson NVQs and SVQs General Guidance for Centres and Learners
- profiles for a wide range of NVQs/SVQs including accreditation information, expiry dates, occupational competence requirements for Assessors and Verifiers, etc.
- links to other useful NVQ/SVQ sites
- details of new publications that have become available after the Pearson publications catalogue has been published.

Standards Verifiers and Internal Verifiers should be familiar with the websites and publications for the appropriate Sector Skills Council or Standards Setting Body and any other relevant industry organisation.

NVQ/SVQ centres and Standards Verifiers should ensure they have copies of the following:

- A full set of the relevant occupational standards, usually available from the Standards Setting Body and the National Occupational Standards website: http://nos.ukces.org.uk/Pages/index.aspx
- The specification for each NVQ/SVQ qualification being delivered, which include the assessment strategy and evidence requirements.
- Joint Awarding Body (JAB) Guidance on Internal Verification of NVQs, available as a download from http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/nvq-and-competence-based-qualifications.html

Training

We provide customised training and support through **Training from Pearson**:

http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/training-from-pearson-uk/about.html

The standards verification process

We allocate a Standards Verifier:

- to those approved centres that have registered learners, and notify you by email to your Quality Nominee who acts as our point of contact
- to qualifications in specific sectors for which they are occupationally competent to verify (for some sectors, you may be allocated separate Standards Verifiers for qualifications at levels 1-3 and qualifications at levels 4-7).

The Standards Verifier will liaise first with your Quality Nominee. We will send the Quality Nominee an email giving contact details of the Standards Verifier and the qualifications to which the Standards Verifier is allocated. This information is also available on Edexcel Online. For some centres, this information is now available on Pearson's Qualification Management Application system.

Centre's need to ensure that the Standards Verifier has the right information on each visit, including any changes to the Internal Verifiers or Assessors, to ensure quality assurance is targeted according to our requirements and to your needs.

Centre's will typically receive two visits annually. The annual cycle starts in September and finishes in August. We may change the frequency of Standards Verifier visits to support your centre or to respond to an urgent issue.

Additional visits are generally not permitted without consent from Pearson WBL Assessment. Please make any requests for additional visits to your allocated Standards Verifier, who will contact Pearson on your behalf. Please note that you may be charged a fee for additional visits.

Standards Verifiers can only visit centres to look at qualifications with registrations, so you should check registrations carefully when making arrangements. You must register learners promptly (normally within one month of enrolment and as advised in the Pearson Work Based Learning Centre Guide) so that you receive guidance and support from the Standards Verifier as early as possible within the programme for the delivery of the qualification. You must also ensure that information regarding learners is accurate and up to date so that we can provide appropriate support and ensure compliance with regulatory requirements.

If you cancel a pre-arranged visit at short notice, you must have a legitimate reason. We may withhold any claims for certification until a verification visit has been completed. We reserve the right to charge for visits that have been cancelled at short notice.

The Standards Verifier will:

- agree a Visit Requirements Plan with the Programme Manager
- agree a schedule for the visit which will normally include reviewing Internal Verification plans, reports and records, including records of standardisation meetings, assessment records and validating assessment judgements through sampling learner portfolios and evidence
- review the internal quality assurance process for the qualification – checking the Internal Verification sampling strategy, Internal Verifier records, records of standardisation meetings and feedback to Assessors
- review the occupational competence and qualifications including the Assessment and Quality Assurance qualifications of the centre team, including professional development plans for assessors and Internal Verifiers

- ensure that centre staff have all the necessary current documentation
- check assessment practice against the requirements of the overarching assessment strategy and validate the quality and consistency of Assessors' judgements against national standards through sampling assessment decisions at interim and final stages
- inform the Programme Manager promptly of any areas of weakness and agree an action plan for improvement
- provide positive feedback and encouragement when good practice is identified
- make full use of retrospective sampling where necessary. You must retain portfolios for all learners certificated between verification visits in order to allow the Standards Verifier to undertake retrospective sampling
- recommend access to certification or actions to be undertaken by the centre, as appropriate
- where necessary, recommend limitation or suspension of certification, or suspension of registration.

Exceptionally, if we consider that a centre is low risk because it has a good history then it is possible to arrange for verification of qualifications to be conducted remotely either by postal sampling or e-portfolio sampling.

The Standards Verifier will verify samples of learners' evidence, reviewing Assessor and Internal Verifier's records and possibly contacting learners. The outcome for remote sampling is likely to be restricted to limited certification for the learners for whom portfolios have been submitted unless the Standards Verifier deems there are no risks to certification. Please note, 'low risk' is determined via at least one visit from a Standards Verifier. This will therefore not apply to newly approved programmes.

For remote standards verification where the sample is submitted remotely:
- the Standards Verifier agrees the units, learners, portfolios and other related records required in the sample and confirms arrangements with you in writing
- you should never send original evidence or records unless specifically required.

First visit for newly approved qualifications

The Standards Verifier's first visit to a newly approved qualification will include a review of the Pearson recognition and approval criteria to confirm that you are meeting the requirements.

The Programme Manager or Internal Verifier should have a copy of the recognition and approvals submissions available for the Standards Verifier. Where serious discrepancies between the submissions and current practice are found at the visit, the Standards Verifier will notify us.

Arranging the visit and the visit schedule

The Standards Verifier will first check with you which programmes are running, and whether there are learners registered. Standards Verifiers are not allowed to visit centres to look at qualifications without registrations unless given prior permission from us.

The Standards Verifier will then agree with you a date for the visit and timings for key activities. The date of this visit should be appropriate for when learners require certification. The Standards Verifier will send you a Visit Requirements Plan setting out what you have agreed.

You should structure activities so that the best use is made of the Standards Verifier's time. The visit must be of sufficient duration for the Standards Verifier to complete all necessary verification activities in order to make recommendations on certification. We would expect a typical visit to take at least four hours.

The visit should include time to cover the:
- qualifications to be verified
- internal verification plans and their implementation
- records of standardisation meetings
- Assessors and Internal Verifiers to be seen
- evidence to be made available on the day, or in advance
- follow up of action points from previous reports
- observation of assessment practice
- sampling of learner work and interviews with learners
- named sites to be visited, where provision is dispersed
- review of the assessment strategy requirements and their implementation
- feedback to the Internal Verifier/Programme Manager and, in some cases, the assessment team.

In some cases, it may not be practical for the Standards Verifier to complete their report during their visit, but it is important that the main action points are agreed with you during the visit.

Pre-visit information for Standard Verifiers

The Standards Verifier - particularly if newly appointed to the centre – will ask to see materials and documentation before finalising the visit plan, so that they can familiarise themselves with the organisation and highlight any matters for discussion. This information may include:
- a list of designated Assessors and Internal Verifiers for each qualification
- any changes to the designated assessors and Internal Verifiers for each qualification since the last Standards Verifier visit
- CVs and authenticated copies of D units or A and V awards for Assessors and Internal Verifiers
- registered learners for each qualification (and their locations if provision is dispersed)
- details of the assessment methods used
- records of learners certificated since the last standards verification visit.

Preparing the visit

You need to prepare for the Standards Verifier visit so that best use is made of the time available for both your centre and for Pearson. For each visit, you should have ready the following information:

For learners
- Start date, registration date and number, NVQ/SVQ qualification/level
- Initial assessment, including learning needs and Recognition of Prior Learning
- Workplace location, including details of supervisor/manager/mentor
- Assessor allocation
- Progress review dates, including latest action agreed

- Records of assessments and summative decisions
- Unit progress and completion

For Assessors
- Details of any changes to the assessment team since the last visit
- Up to date CVs, relevant to the qualifications assessed
- Assessment qualification certificates or validated copies of the originals
- Personal development plans for Assessors showing professional updating/development on a rolling basis
- Learner workload including assessment sites (if provision is dispersed)
- Records of monitoring Assessor performance including feedback
- Specimen signatures of Assessors

For Internal Verifiers
- Details of any changes to the Internal Verifier team since the last visit
- Up to date CVs, relevant to the qualifications assessed
- Quality Assurance qualification certificates or validated copies of the originals
- Personal development plans as Internal Verifiers, showing ongoing professional updating/development
- Assessor locations
- Learner locations
- Records of monitoring assessor performance including feedback
- Specimen signatures of Internal Verifiers

For the programme
- The current version of the Quality Assurance Handbook
- Internal verification sampling strategy, including proposed and actual sampling
- Monitoring of assessment practice records and feedback
- Sampling of assessment decisions and feedback
- The previous standards verification report
- Certification claims for current learners and those made since the last visit
- Records of Assessor meetings and standardisation activities
- Records of internal verification meetings
- Specimen signatures of any "expert witnesses", validated by the Internal Verifier
- Appeals/complaints/malpractice/maladministration records and policies relevant to NVQs/SVQs
- it is a requirement that a centre's internal policies include a Complaints and Appeals process for learners. For SVQs, this process must state that following the complaint or appeal being escalated to Pearson, the learner can escalate their issue to the SQA if they remain unsatisfied.
- Equal opportunities policy
- Health and safety policy and procedures, including monitoring of placement sites

Much of the above is sensitive information and should be held securely and restricted to named personnel. Where information is stored electronically, access to the system should be password protected and accessible only to those authorised to make amendments. It should be kept up to date, preferably by a named officer, and be easily retrievable. You must keep centre records for three years for audit purposes. This includes all learner records, internal verification and assessment reports. If you

have learners who have withdrawn from the qualification, then you should promptly withdraw their registration through Edexcel Online.

If you are delivering several NVQs in different sectors, then you may want to have full coordination across the Standards Verifier activity. If you contact WBL Assessment, we can agree to nominate one of your Standards Verifiers to coordinate visits and reporting.

The visit

The visit should follow the agreed schedule and enable the Standards Verifier to make a decision whether certification claims can go ahead. The Standards Verifier will make decisions based on the centre recognition and approval criteria and the Pearson requirements for the delivery of assessment on the report.

The Internal Verifier will have responsibility to provide evidence to demonstrate that these requirements are being met. Where there is more than one Internal Verifier on a qualification, one should adopt the senior or coordinating Internal Verifier role and take responsibility for managing the programme information.

The Standards Verifier will review:
- resources
- learner support specific to the NVQ/SVQ
- assessment and verification
- centre records.

At the end of the visit, the Standards Verifier will discuss the conclusions and agree an action plan with you. If the Standards Verifier decides that assessment criteria and requirements have not been met, in the report they will identify:
- directed actions
- limitation to, or suspension of, certification
- in exceptional circumstances, suspension of registration.

Internal quality assurance

You must provide copies of all internal verification:
- sampling plans
- records for any written, structured evidence generating opportunities, assessment instruments or assignments
- sampling records, including feedback to Assessors
- records of standardisation meetings
- records of monitoring assessment practice, including feedback to Assessors.

The Standards Verifier will normally start by reviewing the quality of internal verification to see that it is rigorous and robust.

The Standards Verifier needs to be sure that all Internal Verifiers:
- understand centre systems and procedures
- are knowledgeable about the standards and sector assessment requirements/strategy
- are knowledgeable about the learners
- understand their own role in quality assurance and for the standardisation of Assessors

Sampling learners' evidence

The sampling of learners' evidence is central to standards verification. The Standards Verifier will sample learners' evidence of achievement to enable them to confer Direct Claim Status on programmes. Centre's must make learners' evidence of achievement available for sampling.. If you do not make learner work available when requested, the Standards Verifier report will identify actions. If no learners' evidence of achievement is sampled for a qualification then certification cannot be allowed.

Sampling of learner evidence:
- will be carefully planned to ensure that the Standards Verifier can reach a judgement on standards
- should include formative (interim) and summative (final) stages, particularly for new centres or inexperienced teams and where qualifications have changed
- may be portfolio based or in alternative formats, for example, workplace evidence, video, CD/DVD, audio tape, e-portfolio
- will include the support and guidance offered to learners.

There is no prescribed size of sample and the selection of the sample for each centre will vary according to the needs of the centre and the particular NVQ/SVQ. Standards Verifiers will ensure that they can select independently some of the learners who are sampled to ensure the validity of the sampling process.

The Standards Verifier will select their sample based on:
- separate standards verification of NVQ and SVQ qualifications
- reliability (to be sure sufficient work and Assessors have been seen)
- different assessment methods
- Assessors/Internal Verifiers – changed personnel, number, experience, workload and location
- number of assessment sites and satellites
- learner range, for example full-time/part-time, different employers
- introduction of new/revised NVQs/SVQs or additional units
- all units and, in particular, any problem units
- inclusion of verified and non-verified assessment decisions
- opportunities to access assessment
- any special requirements of the assessment strategy
- retrospective sampling of learners for whom certification has been claimed between Standards Verifier visits.

The Standards Verifier will require a quiet space to work in order to review the sample. As the Internal Verifier, you should be available to answer questions but also allow the Standards Verifier time to complete sampling without interruption.

Meeting the team

The Standards Verifier will meet with staff from the assessment and verification team to discuss and advise on assessment issues and practices.

The Standards Verifier will check details such as:

- learner enrolment and registration dates
- access to assessment and to unit achievement
- assessment and verification dates.

The Standards Verifier will want to see evidence that all Assessors and Internal Verifiers meet the occupational competence requirements for the NVQs/SVQs they are assessing/verifying. These are usually set out in the sector assessment requirements/strategy. In some sectors (e.g. hairdressing), this is specified in detail. In others, the requirement to maintain occupational competence is implied rather than explicit.

The Standards Verifier will also want to see evidence of professional development and updating within the assessment team. Your centre should review and agree personal development plans with staff, which will support them in their roles. If you have staff based primarily in education and training, who are no longer actively working in the sector in which they are assessing and verifying, you need to consider how their occupational competence remains current.

The Standards Verifier will check the qualifications for Assessors and Internal Verifiers. Where Assessors or Internal Verifiers are qualified with D units or A and V awards, they must operate to the new standards for Assessment and Quality Assurance. They do not need to achieve the new awards, but an updating session should be held to ensure understanding of the new requirements, particularly with regard to assessment requirements/strategies and independent assessment. Please see the **Key Documents** pages on the NVQ Pages of our website,
qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/nvq-and-competence-based-qualifications/about.html

The Standards Verifier will want to meet with assessors and learners to discuss the implementation of the programme of delivery for the qualification. Provision should be made for the Standards Verifier to witness assessment practice by observing assessment taking place.

A crucial part of the Standards Verifier's role is to advise and support centres. The visit should allow time to discuss concerns or to answer queries. Where issues are outside the Standards Verifier's remit or experience they will obtain the relevant information directly (and respond by phone or email) or refer you to the appropriate person/department at Pearson.

Conclusion of the visit

The Standards Verifier will discuss the findings of the visit with you at the end of the visit and advise on actions for improvement. Any action points will be directly related to the non-compliance with the relevant centre recognition and approvals criteria and our requirements for the delivery of assessment, as indicated on the report.

It is important that the actions and target dates agreed are clear and realistic, since failure to complete the actions within the timeframe will lead to limitation or suspension of certification or suspension of

registration. As the Internal Verifier, you need to understand any required actions and clarify any issues before the end of the visit.

Accessing the report

- For Pearson Edexcel qualifications, your report is called the e-QRF. The report is available online from your Edexcel Online account
- For some centres, this information is now available on Pearson's Qualification Management Application (QMA) system.

Pearson Edexcel report (e-QRF)

- Once the electronic report form (e-QRF) has been submitted, your Quality Nominee will receive an automatic email alert and you can access your report through Edexcel Online. If not already a user of Edexcel Online, please ask your Edexcel Online administrator to set you up with access
- The e-QRF shows whether each centre recognition and approvals indicator continues to be fully met (i.e. consistently throughout), or not met. Where evidence has not been seen, an explanation must be given. For example, if requested information is not available either before, or at the visit, then the indicator will be marked as "No"
- When an indicator is marked as "No", the comments box in the appropriate section will be used by the Standards Verifier to explain the reason
- Any indicator marked as "No" will trigger an action point
- The e-QRF will also identify any significant failings in the delivery of qualifications where these exist. For example, if the assessment process is found to disadvantage learners, then the indicator will be marked "Yes"
- When one of these indicators is marked as "Yes", the comments box in the appropriate section will be used by the Standards Verifier to explain the reason
- Any of these indicators marked "Yes" will result in limitation or suspension of certification or suspension of registration

For centres on the QMA system

- Standards Verifiers will complete an offline e-QRF for each programme. This replaces the Pearson EDI QAR report.
- For centres running the same programmes on both systems, the Standards Verifier will be required to sample across both cohorts in order to release both programmes. The e-QRF will be completed in the normal manner covering both programmes. Any quality outcomes for QMA programmes will need to be detailed in an Appendix. The Standards Verifier will then send the Appendix to VQDeployment@pearson.com to ensure quality outcomes are applied to all programmes across the two systems.

Maintaining the integrity of NVQs/SVQs

Standards Verifiers will provide support, advice and guidance to centres to achieve Direct Claim Status (DCS). Direct Claims Status is reviewed annually. Once Direct Claim Status is confirmed, DCS generally lasts for 365 days.

Pearson will generally deploy Standards Verifiers from September through to August or once learners are registered.

Centres are actively encouraged to engage with the quality assurance process to ensure learner certification is planned in a timely manner. This ensures Pearson can give appropriate support. Direct Claims Status (DCS) may be conferred on qualifications, as recommended by the Standards Verifier, where the centre demonstrates that the NOS for assessment, internal quality assurance and the NOS and requirements for the sector have been **consistently** met.

Standards Verifiers will provide support, advice and guidance to centres on the manner in which to achieve DCS. For qualifications that have DCS, the portfolios of those learners for whom certification is claimed between SV visits must be retained for retrospective sampling.

Where there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate consistency in the application of the NOS or to reflect other circumstances at a centre, Standards Verifiers may recommend 'limited certification' to release certification for specified learners who have achieved the standard.

Certificates for all newly approved qualifications are automatically blocked until the Standards Verifier is satisfied that national standards are being consistently met and that internal quality assurance is robust.

In some situations, for example where learner evidence meets national standards but this has not been demonstrated consistently over time, the Standards Verifier may recommend limited certification for individual learners.

Where the Standards Verifier identifies quality issues in the delivery of qualifications, we will exercise the right to:
● direct you take actions
● limit or suspend certification
● suspend registration.

The Standards Verifier will inform you as the Internal Verifier/Programme Manager that they intend to recommend suspension of certification or suspension of registration and explain the next steps.

The Standards Verifier makes the recommendation through the report. The Senior Standards Verifier for the sector will check the recommendations for suspension of certification or suspension of registration, once the report is submitted to us. The report is not immediately available to you when suspension of certification or suspension of registration is recommended until the Senior Standards Verifier has reviewed the circumstances.

If a suspension of certification or registration is confirmed:

- we will inform you directly and provide you with access to the report
- we will work with you to address the issues
- if additional training is required, we will aim to secure appropriate expertise to provide this
- a charge may be made for consultancy visits arising from a quality issue.

For informal advice or guidance about the centre recognition criteria and the Pearson requirements for the delivery of assessment, please contact our Quality Standards team: vocationalqualitystandards@pearson.com

SQA Accreditation's Right of Access

SQA Accreditation use robust quality assurance processes such as awarding organisation audits, self-assessment, risk profiling, centre monitoring, reviewing and evaluating accreditation submissions. These approaches help SQA Accreditation ensure compliance, maintain standards over time and protect learner interests.

All centres delivering accredited qualifications must adhere to SQA Accreditation's right of access. Centres must ensure that when required, SQA Accreditation have access to:

- premises and staff,
- centres, assessment locations and learners where appropriate,
- third parties and service providers where applicable,
- documents, records and data,

for the purposes of quality assurance.

Claiming certificates as a result of standards verification

The Standards Verifier will recommend whether or not to allow Direct Claims Status or limited certification. Certificates for all newly approved qualifications are blocked until the Standards Verifier is satisfied that national standards are being consistently met and that internal quality assurance is robust.

Indicating "Yes" to Direct Claims Status on the e-QRF or adding the qualification to the Direct Claim Status list on the e-QRF enables you to claim a full NVQ/SVQ certificate or unit certificates between standards verification visits. You must retain portfolios for all learners certificated between verification visits in order to allow the Standards Verifier to undertake retrospective sampling.

Direct Claims Status may be stopped by the Standards Verifier through imposing a sanction level on the qualification on the e-QRF. In exceptional circumstances, we may stop certification directly.

In some situations, for example, where learner evidence meets national standards but this has not been demonstrated consistently over time, the Standards Verifier may recommend limited certification for individual learners. The Standards Verifier can list on the report learners for whom certification may be released. These learners will have their certificates released once the report is submitted.

The Internal Verifier is responsible for confirming and authenticating all claims for certification. If sampling reveals problems with assessment, you will be asked to resolve the issues.

The release for claims to certification for both NVQs & SVQs will expire after 365 days, unless there has been a further recommendation for release to claims for certification by an allocated Standards Verifier through the submission of a further e-QRF. Centres must engage with the standards verification process to maintain the release of claims for certification and Direct Claims Status.

In order to comply with the SQA Regulatory Principles Directive, RPDIR 1, claims for certification for SVQs must not be made within 10 weeks of learners being registered on the qualification. Certification will not be released within this period for the learners concerned.

Standards Verifier Support

Standards Verifiers advise and support centres in the delivery and assessment of Pearson NVQs/SVQs both during and between visits.

Standards Verifiers are prepared to advise on:
● current requirements and procedures relating to the relevant qualification areas
● best practice in assessment and internal verification
● meeting the needs of learners with special assessment requirements
● administration, for example completion of forms for the NVQ/SVQ

Enquiries or appeals

If you are unclear about what our requirements are, or you feel you have not had information from us that you need, you can formally complain or enquire to us. If you believe that the Standards Verifier has acted incorrectly or has reached an incorrect decision, then you can appeal. Our Enquiries and Appeals Policy is available from: http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-topics/understanding-our-qualifications/policies-for-centres-learners-and-employees.html

Electronic management of NVQ/SVQ learners

Call this number 0844 463 2535 to speak to your account specialist or email us and we will respond to you within two days: examsofficers@pearson.com

We strongly recommend that senior decision makers in centres consider the use of electronic management systems for examination officers and NVQ/SVQ administrators.

Edexcel Online (EOL) is a free resource for you to manage the administration function. Information about Edexcel Online is available on our website. Contact our Customer Service Team on 0844 576 0045 for advice on registering.

It is important that copies of the relevant sections of the Pearson Work Based Learning Centre Guides are made available to NVQ/SVQ Administrators and to all Coordinators and members of staff responsible for the preparation of documents for enrolment, registration, assessment and reporting of achievement for learners on all NVQ/SVQ qualifications or individual NVQ/SVQ units.

Centres must adhere to the requirements for prompt registration and certification. Learners must be registered within one month of the start of the assessment of learners against the requirements of the qualification. Centres must supply Pearson with timely and accurate data when certificates are required. Additional fees may be charged for late registrations resulting in additional work incurred by Pearson. If the deadlines are not met, Pearson cannot guarantee prompt certification.

Learners for NVQ/SVQ qualifications must be registered promptly with Pearson using Edexcel Online. This ensures that Pearson is aware that a qualification is running and that a Standards Verifier visit is required. Learner registration triggers Standards Verifier allocations and visits to allow certification. Changes to centre records should be maintained using Edexcel Online.

Making registrations on Edexcel Online

Edexcel Online and is a web-based services designed to make it quicker and easier for you to administer and access learner information. These services allow you to make registrations within a few minutes and get immediate confirmation of registration numbers.

You will need to be registered to use this service, either by an existing user at your centre (normally your exams officer) or by **contacting us**. Learn how to use Edexcel Online to make vocational registrations.

Making registrations via Electronic Data Interchange

Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) is a service for centres that use a Management Information System (MIS). If you choose to make registrations and entries by EDI, we recommend that you still also have an Edexcel Online account so that you can use other facilities, such as EDI file tracking and access to entry and results reports. Find out more about making vocational registrations by Electronic Data Interchange

Please note that SA1 (BTEC) forms must **not** be used for NVQ/SVQ learner registrations except in exceptional circumstances. If you wish to make registrations on an SA1 (BTEC) form for any reason, please contact our Customer Services team on wblcustomerservices@pearson.com

All learner stationery for registration and certification purposes will be sent to the approved centre for the attention of the Examinations Officer at the main centre address. However, if necessary, this may be sent to a sub-centre or separate site address. Any problems that may arise over delivery addresses must be notified to the Customer Services team on wblcustomerservices@pearson.com or 0844 576 0045

Appendix 1- Realistic Working Environments

Realistic Working Environment

Qualifications that attest to occupational competency – NVQs, SVQs and competence-based qualifications – are delivered and assessed in the actual workplace.

There are – mostly exceptional - circumstances where the delivery and assessment of these qualifications may be undertaken in a simulated environment as permitted and published by the relevant Sector Skills Council or Standards Setting Body for the sector concerned. This provision is published in documents variously titled as 'Assessment Strategy', 'Assessment Requirements' and 'Assessment Principles', as examples.

Where simulation is permitted, the relevant Sector Skills Council or Standards Setting Body for the sector concerned stipulates that this must take place in a Realistic Working Environment' (RWE).

Where the relevant Sector Skills Council or Standards Setting Body does not fully specify that which constitutes a RWE, Pearson will apply the requirements that follow.

Definition of a Realistic Working Environment

For NVQs, SVQs and competence-based qualifications, the following criteria must be applied to the delivery and assessment environment for the occupational skills to which these qualifications attest. These criteria must be consistently and rigorously applied to ensure that all learners are being taught and assessed in a RWE that properly reflects the environment found in a commercial workplace. This is to ensure that learners taught in this environment are not disadvantaged and are able to develop fully occupational skills that are equivalent to those developed in the workplace.

1. A RWE established in schools, colleges, private training providers, industrial, commercial and other premises approved for the delivery of Pearson Edexcel and Pearson EDI NVQs, SVQs and competence-based qualifications must be managed as a real work situation i.e. learners must operate in and undergo assessment under realistic business, commercial and industry pressures.
2. Learners should provide occupational services that are completed both in a manner and to a timescale that is acceptable to commercial business organisations and in a manner that reflects normal, daily working patterns for the sector concerned.
3. The work rate and volume of work that learners provide must be comparable to that which is acceptable to normal, commercial business organisations.
4. The RWE in which the learner operates must take full account of any by-laws, legislation or local authority requirements that have been set down in relation to the type of work for the sector concerned.
5. The physical space and environment of the work area in which the learner operates must reflect that of a normal, commercial business organisation and comply with Health and Safety legislation as it applies to the sector concerned.
6. The full range of contemporary, industry-standard services, professional products, tools, materials, equipment and ICT facilities must be available for use to enable learners to properly develop the full range of skills required for the occupational sector.
7. Where the occupation demands that learners demonstrate leadership or management skills, the RWE must allow the learner to meet these requirements and to properly discharge their responsibilities in this respect.

8. Where the occupation demands that the learner has additional responsibilities the RWE must allow the learner to properly meet these requirements.

9. Public and customer experience and perceptions of the RWE must properly reflect that for the occupation concerned such that learners meet the requirements for effective and acceptable:

- written and verbal communication
- use of Personal Protective Equipment as required by the occupation
- punctuality and time-keeping
- customer service
- personal conduct, appearance and hygiene

10. At all times the RWE and the conduct of learners must fully comply with Health and Safety Legislation as it applies to the sector concerned.