

Pearson Centre Guide to Quality Assurance

2018 - 2019

**NVQs/SVQs and Competence-
based qualifications**

Contents

Contents	2
Introduction	4
We're here to help	4
Quality Assurance for Work-based Learning	4
What's changed?	4
Which qualifications are covered by work-based learning quality assurance?	6
QMR / LSV Flexibilities.....	6
How we will quality assure programmes	7
Lead standards verification	7
Risk-based verification	12
What do we mean by 'risk-based' standards verification?.....	12
Ascertaining risk.....	13
Completing your Centre Self-Assessment	13
Initial risks levels	15
Working with your sector Standards Verifiers	15
Requirements for Terms and Conditions	16
The Lead Standards Verification Visit.....	17
Arranging the Lead Standards Verifier visit	18
After the Lead Standards Verifier visit	19
Sector Standards Verification	19
Applying flexibilities	20
Registered learners.....	20
The Standards Verifier will:	21
Retrospective Sampling.....	21
Arranging the Standards Verification visit	22
Preparing for sector standards verification	23
Pre-visit information for Standards Verifiers.....	24
The Standard Verification Visit - what to expect.....	25
Internal quality assurance	25
Meeting the Programme team	28
Enquiries or appeals.....	31

Introduction

Thank you for choosing to work with Pearson. This guide provides you with the information you need to be prepared for quality assurance for all our Pearson NVQs/SVQs and competence-based qualifications in 2018–2019.

It takes you through:

- what you need to do
- who's responsible at each stage

and gives additional advice and guidance around best practice.

We hope you find this guide useful and easy to use. We've aimed to cover all the relevant points to help you successfully deliver Pearson NVQs/SVQs and competence-based qualifications.

We're here to help

If you need more information or support at any stage, please do contact the Work-Based Learning Assessment team at: btecdelivery@pearson.com and the Vocational Quality Advisors at: qualitynominees@pearson.com

We are here to help with all your assessment queries.

For other general queries, please visit the [contact us](#) pages of our website so that your question can be answered as quickly as possible by our teams. If you are an existing customer, please email wblcustomerservices@pearson.com

Quality Assurance for Work-based Learning

What's changed?

Standards verification is how we check that you are operating appropriate quality assurance and maintaining national standards. Previously for work-based learning, this has been achieved by a Standards Verifier visiting a centre twice a year, per programme or group of programmes.

Standards Verifiers have a wider role in terms of providing advice and support for sectors in which they specialise. We want to utilise their expertise to provide better upfront support to you on how to improve practice and meet national standards so that learners have the optimum opportunity to achieve their targeted qualification(s).

Our aims, therefore, are to:

- work with you to identify and reduce risks to valid certification
- target standards verification and other resources to where it is needed most at your centre
- use quality outcomes to tailor verification activities
- provide better upfront support to our centres.

Since September 2017 we implemented a number of key changes to move towards 'risk-based' standards verification. This means making decisions based on evidence and analysis, allowing us to tailor verification and focus support where it is needed most.

It requires collaboration and not just 'checking' if standards have been met. It's about working together to gain the best outcomes for learners. Risk-based standards verification offers the opportunity to provide bespoke support and assessment activity in line with your needs as customers, and learners.

Key changes included:

- Annual completion of a Centre Self-Assessment
- A 'Lead' Standards Verifier, assigned to your organisation, to support you through the risk-based process and act as a single point of contact across programmes for problems and questions
- Simplifying the visits that sector Standards Verifiers make, allowing them to focus on sampling assessments, providing judgements and giving simple and specific feedback
- More flexibility in how we deal with claims and other issues and a more personal approach with our centres.

We hope the new model and the introduction of a Lead Standards Verifier has supported your centre and has improved the verification experience.

Improvements for 2018-19

We have also been listening to your feedback and to provide further improvements and support to your centre, we have made the following changes for 2018-19:

- **Updated Centre Self-Assessment** – the form has now been updated to simplify the process and enable you to complete this more easily and efficiently, especially if you are delivering lots of qualifications.
- **Lead Standards Verifier allocation visible on Edexcel Online** – for our Edexcel Online centres, you will now be able to view your allocated Lead Standards Verifier online.
- **Online Lead Standards Verifier reporting available on Edexcel Online** – you will also be able to view your Lead Standards Verifier reports via Edexcel Online.

Which qualifications are covered by work-based learning quality assurance?

This guide provides you with the information you need to deliver quality assurance for:

- Level 1 – 7 Pearson Edexcel and Pearson NVQs and competence-based qualifications regulated by Ofqual
- Pearson Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) regulated by SQA Accreditation
- BTEC Apprenticeship frameworks (except the Functional skills suite)
- BTEC Security and Fire qualifications
- Standalone BTEC Specialist
- New BTEC Level 2 Technicals (except those in the creative sectors or where you already offer BTEC Firsts or Nationals, see below).

For the purposes of this guidance, the qualifications above will be referred to collectively as work-based learning (WBL) programmes.

QMR / LSV Flexibilities

To streamline the process for you as much as possible, if you also deliver BTEC First / Nationals, we have applied some flexibilities for the LSV / Quality Management Review (QMR) process:

Qualifications	LSV / QMR
If your centre is delivering WBL programmes (including Security) and less than 50% are BTEC Firsts and Nationals	You will receive an LSV allocation, but QMR will not be required
If your centre is delivering WBL programmes (including Security) and over 50% are BTEC Firsts and Nationals	Then you will receive both an LSV and QMR allocation*

If your centre is delivering **WBL programmes** (including Security) and **BTEC Higher National programmes**

Then you will receive **both** an **LSV** and **QMR/AMR** allocation*

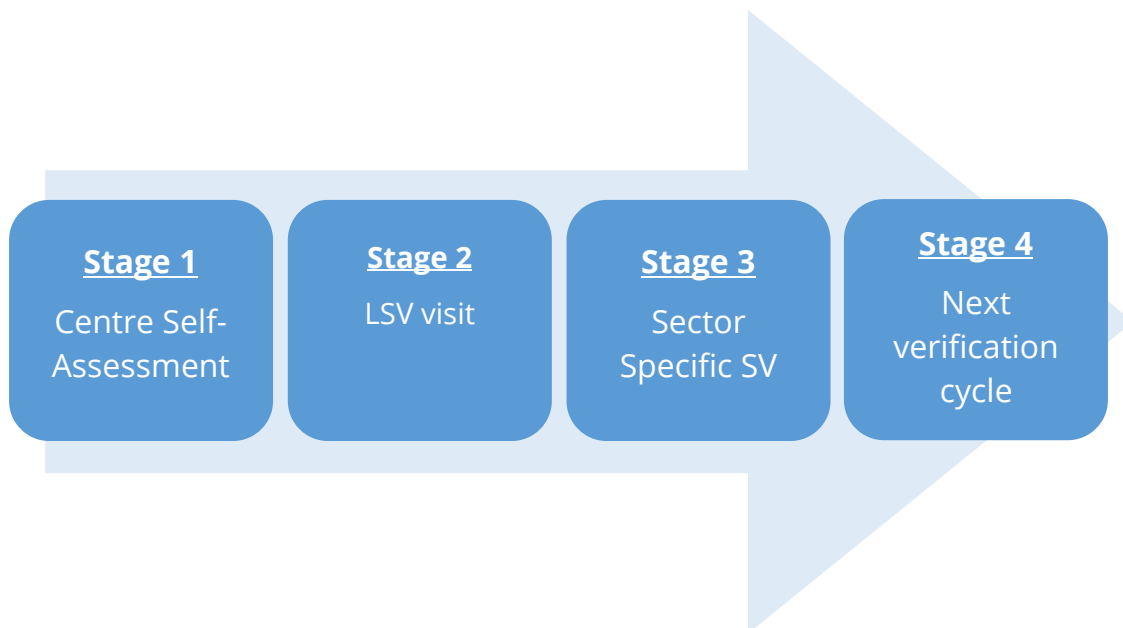
* if you require both an LSV and QMR allocation, the QMR will complete a desktop review only.

Please note: that BTEC Level 4-7 qualifications remain subject to QMR (or Academic Management Review, AMR, if you're a private college) and External Examination.

How we will quality assure programmes

Lead standards verification

We allocate a Lead Standards Verifier (LSV) to review quality assurance systems to support delivery at your centre by following this four-stage process:



Stage 1: Centre Self-Assessment

Around October you will need to complete a Centre Self-Assessment on the programme or group of programmes you deliver and plan to deliver. If you have completed this the previous year, you should only now update this. You do not need to complete a new form every year. You should be as critical as you want of your

delivery and quality assurance systems. Once this is complete, your Lead Standards Verifier will use the assessment to work with you to identify areas of best practice as well as work with you on areas that may need further development. The purpose of this activity is to work with you to plan all verification activities for the year ahead, reduce risks to invalid certification and more importantly, delays to certification.

More information and the new Centre Self-Assessment form can be found on our [Quality Assurance webpage](#).

Stage 2: A visit from our Lead Standards Verifier

Your Lead Standards Verifier will be allocated to your centre in October. They will introduce themselves and ask you to complete your Centre Self-Assessment form. This will allow the Lead Standards Verifier to plan and tailor their visit to your needs.

Your Lead Standards Verifier will visit you annually, ideally before December, but this will depend on your needs. Your Lead Standards Verifier will also be available all year to give you guidance on quality assurance to support delivery across programmes and can even help you prepare for sector standards verification. Additional visits can be requested based on your needs.

After the Lead Standards Verifier visit you will be provided with a report outlining the findings. This will include good practice, and any actions to help improve programme delivery or your quality assurance systems. The aim is to identify any 'risk to valid certification'. Unless significant failings are evident, the findings should be used to prepare for your standards verification visit(s) later on in the year. This means, if any 'risks' are identified in one of your programme areas, you will be able to mitigate these ahead of your standards verification visits.

The Lead Standards Verifiers will be your single point of contact for verification activities and they will work with your sector Standards Verifiers as a team to complete the verification process.

Lead Standards Verifiers can also act as sector Standards Verifiers in their given area of expertise, therefore we will aim to allocate you a Lead Standards Verifier who is also occupationally competent in at least one of your programmes.

Step 3: Sector standards verification

To complete standards verification for work-based learning programmes, we allocate Standards Verifiers to conduct sampling of learner work. Standards verification ensures that you have accurate assessment records and are assessing

learners appropriately, consistently and fairly.

Standards Verifiers are sector experts, occupationally competent, and have up-to-date and relevant continuing professional development (CPD) for the sector(s) they verify.

Standards Verifiers provide advice and guidance and work with you to support you in demonstrating that you are working to standards and identify possible areas where you may require support.

You will normally receive at least one visit from a Standards Verifier per sector, per year, followed by ongoing support and development. This may result in more visits or remote support, as required, to complete the verification process and release certification. The exact frequency and duration of Standards Verifier visits will reflect your centre's performance, taking account of the:

- number of assessment sites
- number and throughput of learners
- number and turnover of Assessors
- number and turnover of Internal Verifiers.

For high risk programmes such as Security, Emergency Care and Construction you will receive at least two visits.

Where a Standards Verifier is competent in more than one sector in which you deliver programmes, we will endeavour to allocate the same Standards Verifier.

Apprenticeships

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 Standards Verifier will sample across cohorts in order to release certification.

To support us in providing you with a better experience, please alert your Lead Standards Verifier or Standards Verifier to programmes outside the Apprenticeship framework.

Stage 4: Next verification cycle

Three-way partnership

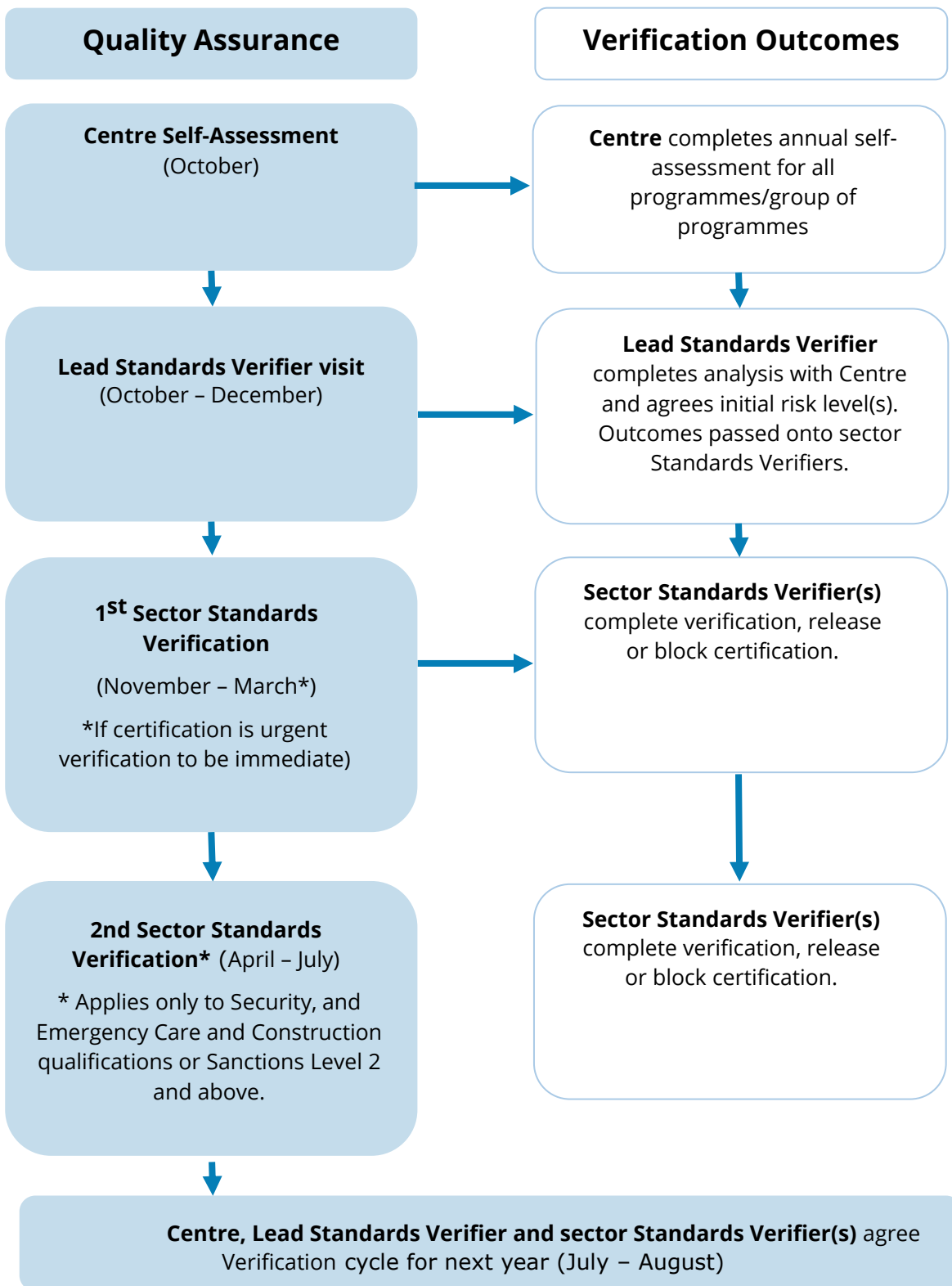
The Quality Assurance model has been designed as a three-way partnership between you, the Standards Verifiers and Pearson. This means that Direct Claims Status will be based on information derived from three sources: the Centre Self-Assessment; the findings from the Lead Standards Verifier; and the outcomes of sector standards verification.

During the year you will be supported throughout the verification process across all programmes – continual communication will be key to ensuring that we can work together to quality assure certification ahead of claims.

Applying flexibilities

Whilst we have reduced the number of sector Standards Verifier visits in the first instance, the approach we have taken is to work closer with you. The purpose of a risk-based approach to standards verification is to have a clearer understanding of your centre. This allows us to amend the 'two visit approach', and tailor sampling towards the needs of your programmes. Your Lead Standards Verifier will submit a final report at the end of the year, providing Pearson with their recommendations for the following year's verification cycle. This may include recommendations to change sampling visits further or move to remote verification.

Quality assurance process



Risk-based verification

What do we mean by 'risk-based' standards verification?

The core principle underpinning the approach is the recognition that, whilst we must have robust systems in place to uphold standards and safeguard certification, there isn't a 'one-size-fits-all' approach within work-based learning.

The aim of risk-based standards verification is to allow us to safely tailor standards verification in frequency and interval. To be able to do this, we need to accurately understand how well programmes are being delivered against our expectations.

Definition of risk

For Pearson, risk means the level of risk we believe you carry as a customer of ours when delivering our qualifications. The risk itself is in relation to learner achievement. For example, if evidence suggests that internal quality assurance is 'poor', or learners are not given enough contact time with Assessors, then the likelihood of learners achieving will be low, and therefore the risk you carry is 'high'.

Risk can also be defined as:

- the probability of invalid certification
- the possibility of learners not achieving their qualification.

Our quality assurance model has been designed to ascertain 'levels' of risk so that we can work with you to reduce them ahead of your sector Standards Verifier visits.

As a result, the Lead Standards Verifier Report form has been designed with objective criteria and a scoring system to enable us to evaluate the rigour and consistency of quality assurance and programme delivery. We will continue to review the scoring system to ensure that it accurately reflects the centre's risk levels.

Ascertaining risk

Risk-based standards verification requires accurate information. This will be derived from three key sources of information:

- Your Centre Self-Assessment
- Your Lead Standards Verifier
- Your sector Standards Verifier(s)

Collaboration – without working together we will not be able to release certification

The Lead Standards Verifier will manage a team of sector Standards Verifiers for your centre, drawing the information together and working with you to determine risk levels for each programme.

Completing your Centre Self-Assessment

The purpose of the Centre Self-Assessment is to allow you to begin the verification process. We also need accurate information on the programmes you are delivering so that we can make appropriate decisions about the way forward.

Our systems tell us about registered learners, but you can use this self-audit to tell us about recruitment plans or when you plan to certificate; this means we can ensure a sector Standards Verifier will be available.

Key changes

Following feedback from our centres and Lead Standards Verifiers, we have now reviewed and revised the Centre Self-Assessment form to make it more streamlined and easier for you to use, whilst ensuring it provides your LSV with all the necessary information.

The key changes include:

- **Planned learners:** the first page of the Centre Self-Assessment form is for you to include your centre details and programmes; we have now also added a space for you to include the number of future projected learners by programme. This will help your LSV to ensure appropriate standards verification is in place.

- **Individual unit registration:** the next section gives you the opportunity to list any learners registered on individual units rather than the full qualification, again it would be helpful if you included future projected learner numbers by programme / units in this section.
- **Key information:** we have introduced the 'Key information' section this year, please use this section to tell us about your centre, include information about your organisational plans for 2018/19 for example any changes to your delivery staff, centre mergers etc.
- **Assessment and internal verification sections:** these sections have now been combined into one simple table. We hope this makes the form easier and quicker for you to complete.

You can access the updated Centre Self-Assessment form via our [Quality Assurance webpage](#).

The Centre Self-Assessment form is divided into three main sections:

- Section 1: Management arrangements
- Section 2: Learner support
- Section 3: Assessment and Internal Verification

Sections 1 and 2 should be completed by your Quality Nominee or Centre Manager. This can be completed for all work-based learning qualifications.

Section 3 'Assessment and Internal Verification' requires each of the Programme Managers or Lead Internal Quality Assurers complete the table for the relevant programme areas. Once completed, the Centre Self-Assessment form should be sent to your Lead Standards Verifier who will then review the information.

More information on completing your Centre Self-Assessment can be found in the **Centre Self-Assessment Guidance for Work-based Learning Programmes 2018-19** document which can be found on our [Quality Assurance webpage](#).

The Lead Standards Verifier will arrange a date to visit you to meet with your Quality Nominee and Programme Leaders/Managers. This visit is intended to amplify and clarify information on the Centre Self-Assessment and an opportunity for you to discuss programme delivery and quality processes.

Initial risks levels

During the first few months of delivery, once a Lead Standards Verifier visit has taken place, an 'initial risk level' will be assigned to each programme or group of programmes. This will allow you to work on areas that may need improving ahead of sector Standards Verifier visit(s).

This means the Lead Standards Verifier is not there to scrutinise programmes and remove Direct Claims Status; the Lead Standards Verifier is there to work with you to identify risk to certification as well as good practice.

Your Lead Standards Verifier is there to provide upfront support, act as a point of contact for quality assurance systems for all work-based learning programmes.

Working with your sector Standards Verifiers

Sector Standards Verifiers will continue to complete the electronic report form eQRF for programmes on Edexcel Online or the QMA report form for programmes on the Qualifications Management Application (QMA) system as normal to release certification.

Your Lead Standards Verifier will send their findings and initial risk levels to your sector Standards Verifier(s). This will support sector Standards Verifiers in completing 'Management arrangements' and other generic information required to complete the verification process. This will allow sector Standards Verifiers to focus more on how well programmes are delivered, the effectiveness of learner support and the accuracy and rigour of assessment and quality assurance.

The key to understanding which areas Lead Standards Verifiers review and what sector Standards Verifiers review is to remember that sector Standards Verifiers are occupationally competent and have the relevant CPD, and therefore will remain responsible for reviewing areas that require occupational competence such as competence of personnel or national standards. Policies such as Complaints procedures, Equality and Diversity, will be reviewed by your Lead Standards Verifier.

Final risk levels

On completion of the sector standards verification, sector standards verification report(s) will be reviewed by the Lead Standards Verifier and the risk level for each

programme area will be confirmed or adjusted. Final risk levels must be agreed with the sector Standards Verifier. This gives you a final risk level, for each programme area at your centre.

It may therefore be perfectly possible for one 'high risk' programme at your centre to receive more than two supporting Standard Verifier visits in a 12 month period.

Conversely, 'low risk' programmes may receive one supporting visit once in 18 months. The Lead Standards Verifier will monitor this and as circumstances change within a centre, adjust the risk level and verification cycle for each programme area.

Final risk levels will only be assigned after a year of verification (usually in July), as this will allow us to gain an accurate picture of performance before adjusting the frequency and intervals of verification activities.

This will mean that where risk is determined as 'low', i.e. where quality assurance processes are strong and consistent, there will be less frequent standards verification interventions, unless and you request additional support. Remember, your Lead Standards Verifier is available all year round, so you will have someone to contact.

Requirements for Terms and Conditions

As an awarding organisation it is our responsibility to regularly review and update our Pearson Terms and Conditions, to ensure they are aligned with our regulators' responsibilities, as well as our own regulatory policies.

We therefore require the Head of Centre to review, sign and date the Pearson Terms and Conditions document **annually** as part of your centre approval criteria.

Please indicate with your Centre Self-Assessment form if this has been completed, and ensure this is complete prior to your LSV visit. If you have not completed this by the date of your LSV visit, an action point will be given.

For centres delivering qualifications on Edexcel Online, you can download the updated terms and conditions here or from Edexcel Online by following the instructions below:

- Choose 'NVQ' or 'Apprenticeships' under the 'Select Qualification' drop-down menu.
- Go to the 'Centre Terms and Conditions' tab
- Select the current academic year (2018/19) on the drop-down menu
- Click on the file called 'T&C'

To return the terms and conditions, please upload the signed document on Edexcel Online following the instructions above (points 1 to 3 only), and click on the 'Choose File' button, select the signed document from your computer, and then 'Upload'.

Important: If you deliver both NVQs and Apprenticeships please only upload the signed document once by choosing either 'NVQ' or 'Apprenticeships' under the 'Select Qualification' drop-down menu.

For centres delivering qualifications on QMA ONLY, please send your completed forms to ukapproval@pearson.com

If you have any questions regarding this process, please contact vocationalqualitystandards@pearson.com

The Lead Standards Verification Visit

We will allocate a Lead Standards Verifier:

- to approved centres that have registered learners, and notify your centre Quality Nominee who acts as our point of contact
- to manage a team of sector Standards Verifiers
- to undertake Standards Verifier duties where they have current occupational competence in a sector where you have active programmes.

Wherever possible your Lead Standards Verifier will work with you to rationalise the number of Standards Verifiers allocated to your centre. Lead Standards Verifiers can also act as sector Standards Verifiers where they are occupationally competent and have relevant and up-to-date CPD. This reduces the need for additional personnel.

Our Lead Standards Verifier will work with your Quality Nominee. The Lead Standards Verifier will check which programmes are currently offered in your centre and confirm registrations on each. You may have completed the Self-Assessment ahead of receiving details of your Lead Standards Verifier. If not, your Lead Standards Verifier will send you a Centre Self-Assessment to complete.

The Lead Standards Verifier will then arrange a suitable date to visit you and to meet with your Quality Nominee and Programme Leaders/Managers.

From October this year, you will be able to see your allocated Lead Standards Verifier on Edexcel Online, along with their contact details. Please see Appendix 2 for guide on how to view this.

If your centre is on QMA, this functionality is unfortunately not yet available and you will continue to hear directly from your Lead Standards Verifier with an introductory email.

Arranging the Lead Standards Verifier visit

The Lead Standards Verifier will meet with your Quality Nominee and the Programme Leaders/Managers. If your centre offers numerous Pearson work-based learning programmes, allow time for each Programme Leader/Manager meeting. Allow some time at the start of the day and again at the end of the day for the Lead Standards Verifier to discuss findings with your Quality Nominee.

The visit will need to be long enough for the Lead Standards Verifier to look at programme documentation and centre wide policies and procedures. We would expect a typical Lead Standards Verifier visit to take around 4–5 hours depending on the number of programmes being reviewed. The Lead Standards Verifier will not observe any assessment, nor will they meet with learners as this will be undertaken by sector Standards Verifiers.

Preparing for the Lead Standards Verifier visit

Prior to their visit your Lead Standards Verifier will send you a Visit Requirements Plan. In the Plan the Lead Standards Verifier will set out which Programme Leaders they would like to meet. The Lead Standards Verifier will work with you to organise the times of each meeting so that you can arrange the day around your centre activities. The Visit Plan and schedule should be agreed at least a week in advance of the visit.

The Lead Standards Verifier Visit Plan will also identify the information needed on the day. This should include:

- learner numbers on each programme
- approval letters for any programme approved within the previous 12 months
- details of any new programme proposed within the next 12 months
- details of sub-sites/additional sites, consortia arrangements
- examples of codes of practice/contracts between satellite, outreach, linked sites and work placements
- details of responses to Standards Verifier action points

- examples of remedial actions in response to recommendations from other agencies e.g. Ofsted
- examples of programme reviews
- details of sanctions applied in the preceding 2 years
- examples of learner induction processes and materials
- systems for ensuring work placements are safe and suitable
- details of equipment and IT resources for each programme area.

If you are unable to supply relevant documents or policy then this will be explored during the Lead Standards Verifier visit and guidance will be given.

After the Lead Standards Verifier visit

Following the visit your Lead Standards Verifier will assign an 'initial risk level' for each programme area, and the report should follow no later than 10 working days after the visit.

From October this year, we are pleased to confirm that the Lead Standards Verifier report will now be available for you to access via Edexcel Online once it has been submitted. Each year, two versions of the report will be submitted:

- an initial report submitted after the Lead Standards Verifier's visit,
- and a final report submitted at the end of the verification year, with a final risk level.

Please see Appendix 2 to see how to access your Lead Standards Verifier allocation and report.

Sector Standards Verification

We allocate a Standards Verifier:

- to those approved centres that have registered learners
- to qualifications in 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. Wherever possible we will seek to rationalise the number of sector Standards Verifiers allocated.

Applying flexibilities

Standards Verifiers will carry out a visit for their programme area, usually between November and March. This visit will assess the risk level of a programme area(s) which will be fed back to you and the Lead Standards Verifier. Depending on the outcome, this may change the frequency and type of the next verification activity for the programme(s).

For example, for programmes assigned as 'low risk' by the Lead Standard Verifier, and award DCS by the Standards Verifier it may be suggested that they move to remote sampling. In other cases, the Standards Verifier may return for a second visit more quickly. In both cases, this will be discussed with you and the Lead Standards Verifier.

Where the risk level for a programme area changes, this will change the verification type and frequency. This will enable us to provide support where it is most needed.

Whenever programmes are started, it's important to note that flexibilities will only apply after at least a year of verification, this is so we have had enough time to make the right decisions about your delivery.

Registered learners

Standards Verifiers will only review qualifications with registrations. Learners should be registered within six weeks of enrolment so that you can receive guidance and support from the Standards Verifier as early as possible.

Information regarding learners should be accurate and up to date so that we can provide appropriate support and ensure compliance with regulatory requirements. If learners leave a programme it is important to withdraw their names from Edexcel Online or the Qualifications Management Application (QMA) system so that we can base verification on accurate numbers. Our Account Managers and/or Specialist can help you with this.

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 a fee for visits that have been cancelled at short notice.

The Standards Verifier will:

- visit your centre usually before March each year, subsequent visits or sampling will depend on the risk level for each programme area
- liaise with your Programme Manager(s) to arrange a visit date and a schedule for the day
- sample and review learners' evidence, assessment and internal verification including records of standardisation meetings
- observe live assessment practice wherever possible
- review the learning and work-based resources to ensure these enable the learner to meet national standards
- review the additional support available to learners to help them progress
- 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
- provide verbal feedback at the end of their visit highlighting any areas for improvement or non-compliance
- agree an action plan for improvement where needed
- 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
- submit reports within 10 working days of their visit.

Retrospective Sampling

Standards Verifiers are required to make full use of retrospective sampling. To enable retrospective sampling to take place, portfolios must be retained for all learners certificated between verification activities.

Please note, 'final risk level(s)' are determined from at least one visit from a Standards Verifier and in agreement with the Lead Standards Verifier. This will not apply to newly approved programmes until the Standard Verifier has verified and completed, summative assessment decisions across a full qualification.

For remote standards verification where a sample is requested by the Standards Verifier:

- 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.

Arranging the Standards Verification visit

The Lead Standards Verifier will have already confirmed with you which programmes are running, and the number of registered learners and/or planned registration numbers. 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 plan the day so that the best use is made of the Standards Verifier's time. If your centre has several assessment sites, you will need to make the Standards Verifier aware of this and agree which will be visited. The visit will need to be of sufficient duration for the Standards Verifier to complete all necessary verification activities in order to make recommendations on certification.

The visit should include time to cover the:

- observation of assessment practice
- sampling of learner work and interviews with learners
- review of internal verification plans and their implementation
- records of standardisation meetings
- meeting with Assessors and Internal Verifiers
- discussion of any action points from previous reports
- review of learning and support resources and materials
- review of the assessment strategy requirements and their implementation
- feedback to the Internal Verifier/Programme Manager and, in some cases, the assessment team.

Preparing for sector standards verification

The following sets out the information that you will need to prepare for the Standards Verifier visit:

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 to learner allocations
- 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 or Standards Verifier sampling
- 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 or sample
- 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
- Learner support materials
- Records of individual needs assessments and support provided

Pre-visit information for Standards Verifiers

Standards Verifiers may ask for information to be sent to them before finalising their visit plan. This helps Standards Verifiers familiarise themselves with the organisation and ensure that they see key people and resources. This information may include:

- a list of designated Assessors and Internal Verifiers for each qualification
- CVs and authenticated copies of D units or A and V awards, or the Level 3 Certificate in Assessing Vocational Achievement and Level 4 Award in Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment for Assessors and Internal Verifiers Processes and Practice for Assessors and Internal Verifiers.
- registered learners for each qualification (and their locations if provision is dispersed).

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 or QMA.

The Standard Verification Visit - what to expect

In the new the risk-based verification system, the Standards Verifier will evaluate:

- learner resources – equipment, learning materials, IT etc
- learner support specific to the NVQ/SVQ/Competence-based qualification
- the quality and accuracy of assessment
- the rigour and effectiveness of internal quality assurance/internal verification.

The most important aspect of the visit is that the Standards Verifier has enough information to make a decision as to whether if certification claims can go ahead. The decision will be based on the centre recognition and approval criteria and the assessed risk level for the programme(s) being verified. The Standards Verifier's priority is to ensure that all claims for certification are valid and that all learners have parity of access to assessment.

Internal quality assurance

The Internal Verifier is responsible for demonstrating that assessment meets the required standards and that there are satisfactory quality assurance measures in place to maintain these consistently in the future. In larger centres, where there are several Internal Verifiers it would be helpful if there is one point of contact to take responsibility for managing the programme information for the Standards Verifier visit such as a Lead Internal Quality Assurer or Quality Nominee.

The Standards Verifier will ask to see evidence of internal verification/quality assurance. This may include:

- an overall sampling strategy based on risk
- sampling plans of assessment planning, decisions and practice
- sampling records, including feedback to Assessors

- records of standardisation meetings
- records of monitoring assessment practice, including feedback to Assessors
- development plans for assessors.

The Standards Verifier will typically 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 managing their assessment team
- base their sampling on the risk level of their Assessors
- maintain effective and appropriate quality assurance processes.

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 usually 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.**

However, in unique circumstances it may be appropriate to agree exceptions to this rule. Where centres apply for qualification approval with only two personnel, these requests will need to come to the WBL Assessment team for review to ensure learners are not disadvantaged, maintain the integrity of qualifications and safe certification. 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.

Sampling assessment

The sampling of assessment decisions on learners' evidence is central to standards verification. It is important therefore that you ensure that learners' evidence is available and that the records of formative and summative assessment can be seen. If assessment records and learner work isn't available when requested, the Standards Verifier report will identify actions. If no summative assessment decisions on learners' evidence are sampled for a qualification then certification will not be allowed.

When sampling assessment, Standards Verifiers will plan to see sufficient evidence to enable them to decide that there is consistent and accurate assessment by all assessors and across all units in a qualification. 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 to:

- include formative (interim) and summative (final) stages, particularly for new centres or inexperienced teams and where qualifications have changed
- see a range of evidence and assessment methods including hard copy and alternative formats such as video, CD/DVD, audio tape, e-portfolio, etc
- evaluate the suitability and efficiency of the assessment approach
- review the support and guidance offered to learners
- check consistency across Assessors
- focus on new or inexperienced Assessors/Internal Verifiers
- look at different assessment sites and satellites
- see different learners, with particular assessment needs
- focus on new/revised NVQs/SVQs or additional units
- see all units and, in particular, any problem units
- include internally verified and non-internally verified assessment decisions
- check assessment decisions on learners for whom certification has been claimed between Standards Verifier visits

- include SVQ learners who are also undertaking a **Foundation Apprenticeship***.

Provision should be made for the Standards Verifier to observe assessment practice, such as assessment planning with a learner, live assessment of a workplace activity, verbal questioning or professional discussions.

***Foundation Apprenticeships** have recently been launched in Scotland. Foundation Apprenticeships have been designed for school pupils and they are typically delivered by FE colleges working in partnership with the pupils' schools. The Foundation Apprenticeship also require the pupils to undertake a work placement. More information on Foundation Apprenticeships can be found [here](#).

A Foundation Apprenticeship normally comprises of a National Progression Award and a number of units from the main qualification in the Modern Apprenticeship Framework.

It is a requirement that any learners registered on our SVQs, who are also undertaking a Foundation Apprenticeship, are included in the verification sample completed by the Standards Verifier.

Please inform both your Lead Standards Verifier and Standards Verifier (for the relevant qualification) if any of your learners registered on our SVQs, are also undertaking a Foundation Apprenticeship.

The Standards Verifier will then work with you to include SVQ learners on a Foundation Apprenticeship within their verification sample.

Meeting the Programme team

The Standards Verifier visit is a valuable opportunity to obtain expert help and advice. The Standards Verifier will meet with Assessors and Internal Verifiers to discuss and advise on assessment issues and practices. It is worthwhile drawing up a list of any questions or concerns that Assessors may have prior to the Standards Verifier visit so that they can make the most of the opportunity and raise these. Where issues are outside the Standards Verifier's remit or experience they will refer you to the appropriate person/department at Pearson.

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 need to show that their practice and understanding is up to date with current requirements.

Please see our [Quality Assurance webpage](#) for more information.

The Standards Verifier will check 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. It is however, essential that all requirements are met.

It is part of centre approval requirements that occupational competence is maintained, and continuing professional development (CPD) is updated. Therefore, Standards Verifiers will also review the relevance and currency of professional development within the assessment team. Your centre should have personal development plans in place for all staff to 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 and be able to demonstrate how their occupational competence remains current.

Conclusion of the visit

It may not be practical for the Standards Verifier to complete their report during their visit, but they will want to meet with key personnel and provide a summary of the visit outcomes. The Standards Verifier will discuss their findings and where appropriate agree an action plan with you. It is important that the actions and target dates agreed upon 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. The person responsible for ensuring the action plan is met is the Lead Internal Verifier, with support from the centre Quality Nominee.

Where there are quality issues or concerns, Standards Verifiers will consider how and to what extent these may disadvantage learners or threaten the integrity of the qualifications. If Standards Verifiers decide that requirements have not been met, they will recommend one of the following:

- actions to remedy non-compliance
- limited, or suspension of, certification
- (in exceptional circumstances), suspension of learner registration.

Certification

Certification status can be:

- open (Direct Claims Status)
- limited (on a named learner basis)
- suspended/blocked.

Standards Verifiers will provide support, advice and guidance to centres to achieve Direct Claim Status (DCS) so that you can claim certificates on an ongoing basis. DCS is reviewed annually. Once DCS is confirmed, DCS generally lasts for 365 days, subject to review. To ensure standards are upheld, we reserve the right to revoke DCS if evidence suggests this action is appropriate.

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

In situations 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 recommendations of Standards Verifiers are reviewed by the Lead Standards Verifier who will combine their findings, and discussions with you to ascertain a holistic view of performance at your centre and establish final risk levels.

Where the recommendation is to suspend certification or registrations this is reviewed by the Senior Standards Verifier. In this case the report is not immediately available to you, but rather, is subject to pending review by the Senior Standards Verifier. This may mean in these rare circumstances, you may not receive your report within the usual 10 days.

If 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.

It is envisaged that the new quality assurance model will reduce the need to suspend or block certification, due to the efforts put in ahead of sector standards verification.

Accessing standards verification reports

For centres delivering qualifications on Edexcel Online, standards verification reports can be accessed online, via your Edexcel Online account. For further guidance on how to access your report on Edexcel Online, see Appendix 1.

For centres delivering qualifications on the Qualification Management Application (QMA) system, standards verifications reports will be emailed to you directly. They will also be available for you to access online via QMA.

SQA Accreditation's Right of Access

SQA Accreditation uses 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, maintenance of standards over time and protection of 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.

In order to comply with the SQA Regulatory Principles Directive, RPD1R 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.

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 contact us. If you believe that the Standards Verifier has acted incorrectly or has reached an incorrect

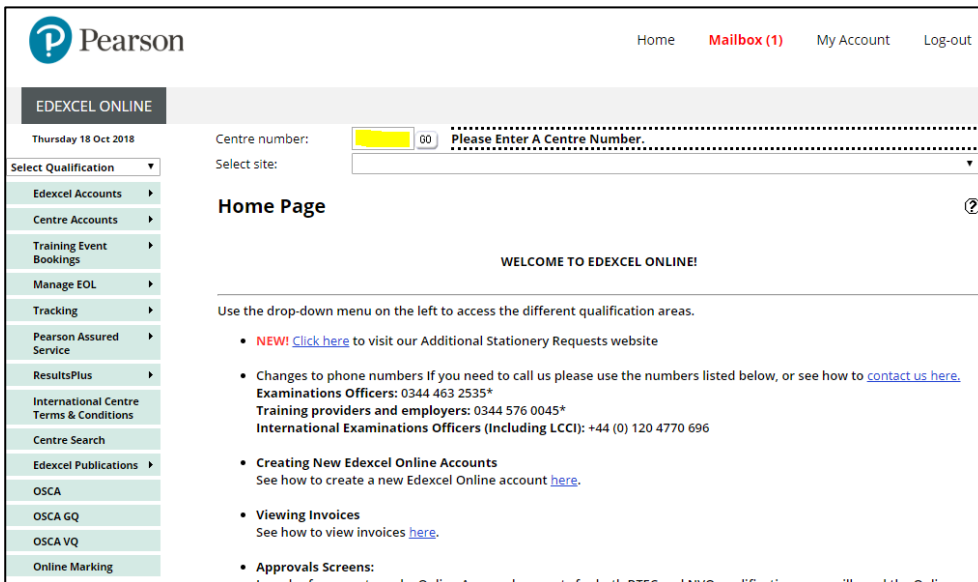
decision, then you can appeal. Our Enquiries and Appeals Policy is available from our [Pearson Policies page](#).

Appendix 1: Accessing your Standards Verification Reports

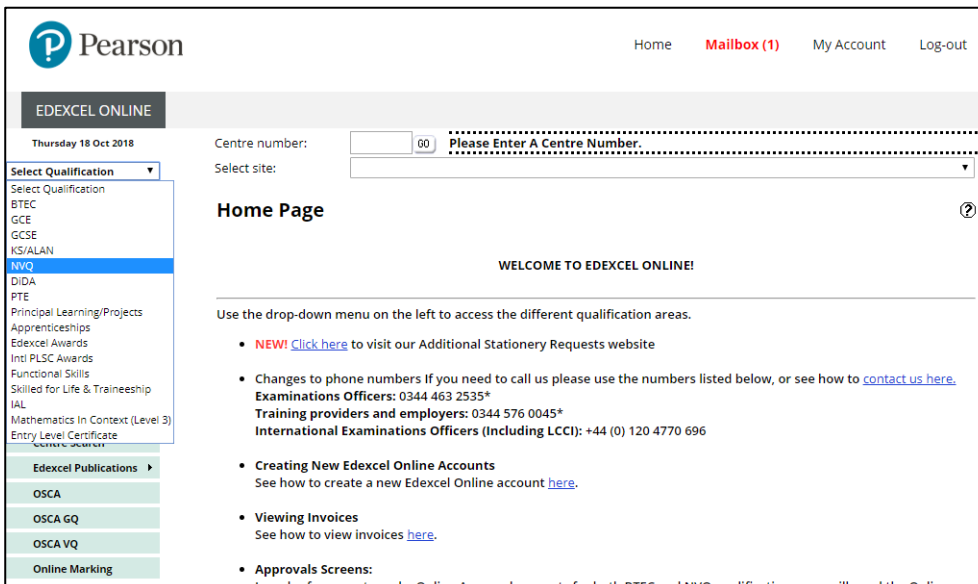
Appendix 2: Accessing your LSV allocation and reports

To access both your LSV allocation and your LSV report, please follow the steps below:

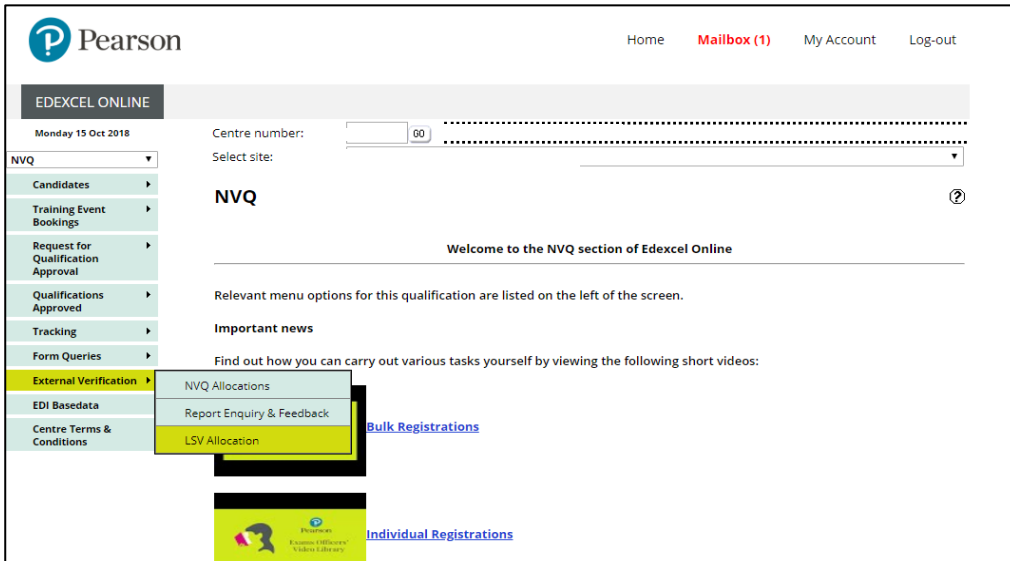
Step 1: Enter your centre number on Edexcel Online:



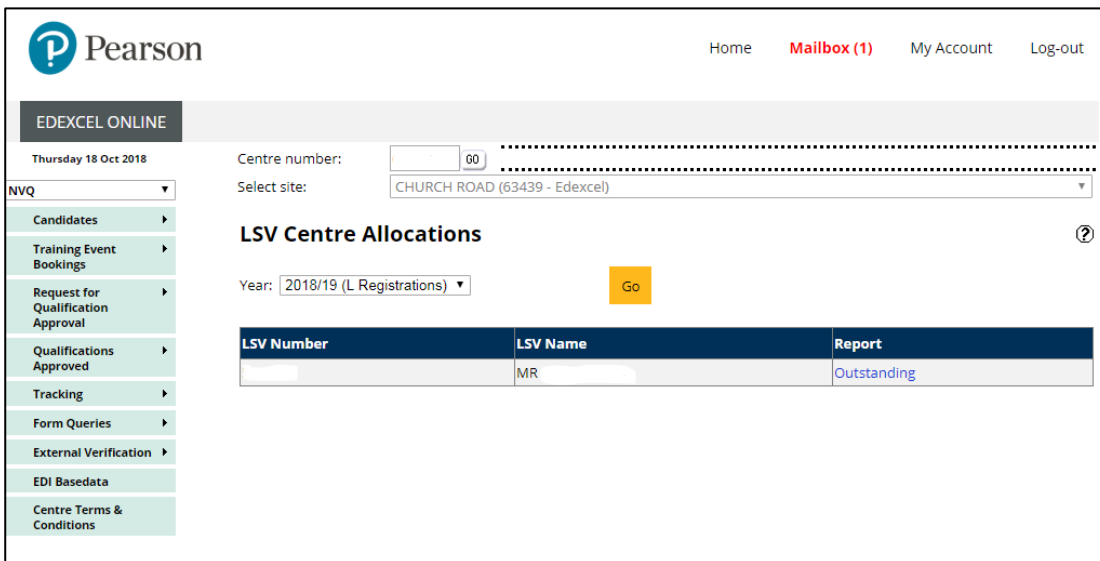
Step 2: Select 'NVQ' or 'Apprenticeship' in the drop down bar on the left-hand side:



Step 3: Select the 'External Verification' tab on the left-hand side, and then select 'LSV Allocation'. Please see the screen shot below.



Step 4: You will then see your allocated LSV, and the status of their report:



Please note: If your centre registers learners via the Qualification Management Application (QMA) system, your allocated LSV will send an email to your Quality Nominee to introduce him/herself. Your LSV report will also be sent via email directly to the Quality Nominee.

