

Standards Verifier Handbook

2015-16

Wider Key Skills

Contents

What is the Standards Verifier Handbook?	3
How we work together	3
How we recruit, induct and select	4
Non-Senior recruitment	4
Senior recruitment	5
Next steps	5
Further support	5
How we update and standardise you	5
Induction training	5
Standardisation training	6
Online training	6
How we monitor you	6
Supervision	7
Appeals	7
How we contract, allocate and pay you	8
Non-Senior: automated contracting	8
Senior: manual contracting	8
Payments: service pledge	8
Expenses	9
Further support	9
How to deal with quality issues	9
Plagiarism	10
Our expectations of professional behaviour	10
How you can plan effectively	11
Giving advice	11
Visit planning	12
Remote sample planning	12
How you can network effectively	13
How you can report effectively	14
Timeliness of reporting	14
Accuracy of reporting	14
No surprises in the report	14
Clear action points	15
Roles and responsibilities – Skills Standards Verifier	15
Purpose of this role	15
Key accountabilities	15
Advice and guidance	16
Managing the sampling process	16

Outcomes of sampling	17
Sample size	18
Second sample	18
If you recommend a certification block	19
Various centre types	20
General FAQs	21
Support	22

What is the Standards Verifier Handbook?

The Standards Verifier Handbook covers all aspects of how we work with you, our Standards Verifiers, and what we expect from you. It provides guidance on all areas of Standards Verifier activity from recruitment to monitoring. It offers advice on preparing for and carrying out visits and samples, along with how best to report the outcomes of core activities to us.

It also outlines the roles and responsibilities of the different types of Standards Verifiers that we work with.

The sector covered is Wider Key Skills. For specific information on the quality assurance process and the requirements involved, you must refer to the relevant chapter of the **Quality Assurance Handbook 2015-16**, which can be found here on our website.

Throughout this handbook, we use two terms: *Standards Verifiers* is a specific term for a particular role within a sector; *Assessment Associate* is a generic term for any role within the vocational assessment suite.

We hope you will find this guide useful and that you find your time working with the Vocational Assessment division enjoyable.

How we work together

We aim to make your experience of working with us as a Standards Verifier as mutually beneficial as possible. We hope that through your work for us you will gain experience of assessment practices in vocational education, as well as providing your expertise. We work collaboratively with you and value your hard work and commitment without which it would be impossible to deliver the qualifications that we do.

Because of the key role that Standards Verifiers play in everything that we do, we do our very best to keep you up-to-date with new developments and information. You will have regular training to ensure that you're always aware of the latest requirements. We also make sure that communication is a two way process and are always ready to listen to feedback from you. We hold regular forum meetings with our Senior Standards Verifiers and as your representatives they are able to enter into direct dialogue with Vocational Assessment staff.

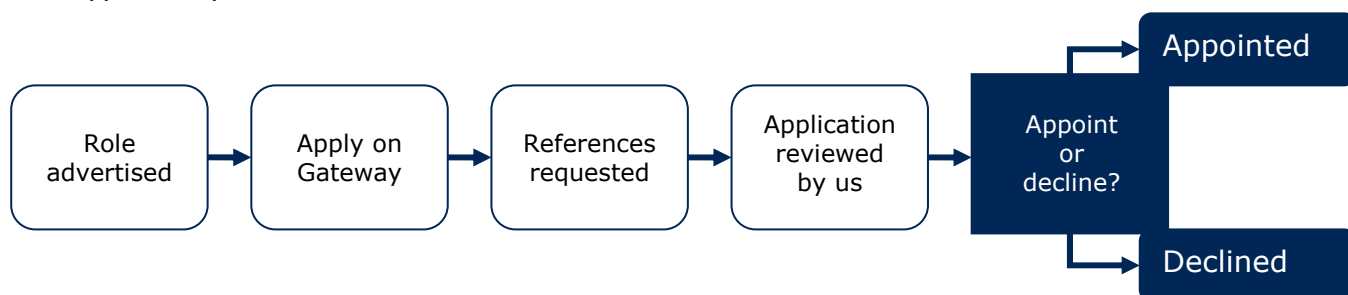
We hope that you enjoy your time working with us and aim to ensure that whatever happens, you are always learning and developing your professional skills.

How we recruit, induct and select

- All of our Assessment Associate roles are applied for online via AA Gateway: www.edexcelgateway.com
- They are advertised on our main website
- Our Assessment Associate roles are generally divided into senior and non-senior roles and applications for both of these are processed in a similar way, though applicants for senior roles will attend an interview
- Depending on the role applied for some applicants, including all applicants for senior roles may be asked to complete an assessed task as part of the process.

Non-Senior recruitment

Applications for non-senior Assessment Associate positions are processed online. The step-by-step application process is as follows:



- All roles are advertised on our website and it is here that you can see which roles we are currently recruiting. Some roles are open for applications all year round and some are only open for specific windows
- Complete your application on AA Gateway for the role and submit it to us. Your application is automatically filtered based on the information you have provided to ensure you fulfil the basic criteria for the role. Please make sure that the information you provide is full and accurate
- Your references are automatically requested via AA Gateway and your chosen referees will be invited to provide relevant information. Please ensure you follow the guidance and choose referees who hold senior positions in the organisations you have worked for and who are able to comment on your suitability for the role. Once the positive references have been received and proved satisfactory, your application will progress to the next stage
- Your application, including any tasks that may have been part of it, is reviewed
- After your application has been reviewed you will be informed whether you have been appointed to the role or whether your application has been declined. It is important to remember that being appointed to a role does not guarantee that we will offer you a contract in any given year – your details are held with us and if work is available you will be eligible to be contracted on the condition that you complete the required training you are invited to
- The period of eligibility usually lasts for 2 years and if you have not been offered a contract after this time you will need to reapply

Senior recruitment

Recruitment for senior Assessment Associate positions follows the process outlined above with the following additions:

- once your application and references have been reviewed, we shortlist and invite the candidates who most closely match the criteria for interview
- at the interview you will be expected to present a task to the panel that you will have prepared in advance as well as undertake a formal, competency based interview.

Next steps

- Once you have completed the recruitment process you will be informed whether you are successful or not
- Successful applicants' details will be placed on our list of Assessment Associates eligible to receive contracts and, if work is available for you, your details passed to our Training and Events team who will invite you to a training event
- Once this training is successfully completed you will be offered a contract.
- If you are new to working with us you will be issued with an Assessment Associate reference number
- You are welcome to apply for further Assessment Associate roles with us but each time you will need to go through AA Gateway to complete the application process.

Further support

Any questions about applying for Assessment Associate roles with us or about any outstanding applications you have submitted should be sent to aarecruitment@pearson.com. If you need any help with completing the application form, please contact Assessment Associate Recruitment before submitting it to us. Once your application is submitted no more changes can be made.

How we update and standardise you

If you are offered a contract you will need to attend a compulsory training event. Only once all relevant training has been completed will your allocations be released.

Induction training

Standards Verifiers new to working with the Vocational Assessment division will be invited to an induction event. These events take place at intervals throughout the year and you will be invited to the first one to take place after you have been contracted.

This induction event is face-to-face and will provide you with:

- an introduction to Pearson
- an introduction to the Vocational Assessment division
- an overview of the role you will undertake.

Standardisation training

Once a year all Standards Verifiers go through standardisation training. Standardisation events are designed to ensure that everyone with a specific role and sector is working to the same standard and is applying a consistent approach to centres. Standardisation is a vital part of maintaining the high standards we take pride in as an awarding body and the events are there to help you learn to apply the standards in line with our Senior Standards Verifiers.

The majority of standardisation events now take place online but some roles will have face-to-face standardisation events. These events are usually delivered by the Senior Standards Verifiers for the sector you are working in.

Online training

The majority of our training is completed online as this allows much more flexibility in terms of delivery. You can access training at your convenience without leaving home, and training online allows us to record the event so you can revisit it at your leisure for a refresher. The online training aims to make accessing this facility much simpler, quicker and easier for all our Standards Verifiers.

If you are attending an online training event the training team will provide you with full instructions on how to use the relevant system in plenty of time before the event is due to take place.

Before the event you will be sent joining instructions with details of how to access the training and when it will take place. All you need to do is follow the instructions to log in at the time the event is scheduled to take place. At live online training events you will be able to interact with the trainer delivering the event and also the other delegates attending.

How we monitor you

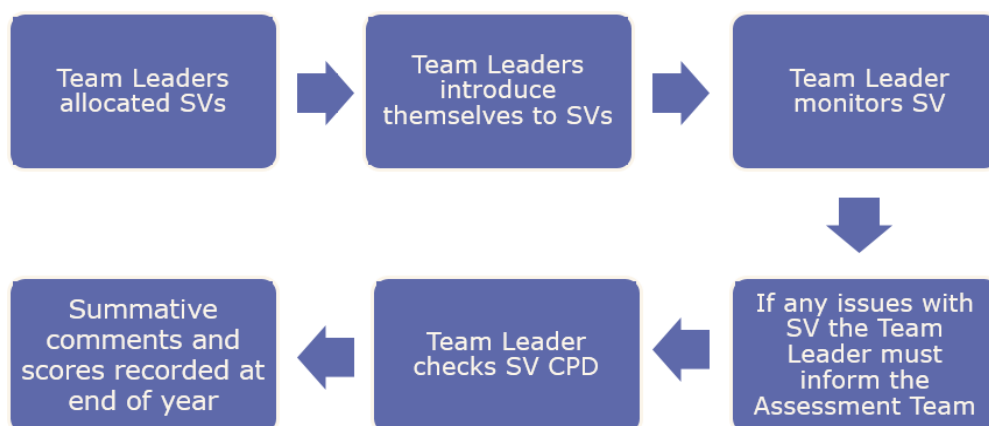
All Standards Verifiers are assigned a Team Leader. The supervisory process is there to support you and enable you to continually develop in your role. In most cases you should receive an automated email informing you who your Team Leader will be and your Team Leader will contact you very early in the academic year.

The Team Leader has two main responsibilities:

- to support you throughout the process with advice and feedback
- to provide us with an assessment of your performance.

Supervision

Supervision over the year follows this process:



Over the course of the year your Team Leader is there to provide support and guidance on areas of the role that you might be unsure about. Team Leaders are all experienced Standards Verifiers and will be able to help you with many of the questions that will arise. If you are unsure of any part of the process related to one of the centres you are dealing with, your Team Leader should be your first contact for advice.

Your Team Leader will be able to see the reports you submit and they will periodically check your work to ensure that the standard remains high. At least once during the year they will contact you to discuss your work in more depth, providing full, formative feedback on one of the reports you have written. This is aimed at improving the standard of reports that our centres receive and, just as importantly, helping you to develop your skills within the role you are carrying out.

You will be responsible for your supervisees over the course of an academic year and will therefore need to be in regular contact with them to provide the necessary support and guidance. All contact you have with supervisees must be recorded in the formative feedback section of the form. You should record the main reason for contact rather than full details of what was discussed.

Appeals

If you would like to appeal against the final grade that you are awarded there is a formal appeals process by which you can challenge this grade if you believe it to be unfair. Full details of how this process takes place will be included with the letter informing you of your final grade.

How we contract, allocate and pay you

Non-Senior: automated contracting

The majority of non-senior Assessment Associate contracting is done automatically via AA Gateway.

- You have a formal contract which normally lasts until mid-August
- These may not be issued at the same time as work being allocated
- You can only accept allocations if you accept your contract
- There may be a time gap between you accepting a contract and receiving allocations. This is normal
- If you are still working with a centre and your contract has lapsed or may lapse, then you need to confirm that we still want you to continue with the work, unless we have already advised you to continue

Allocations for other role types and qualifications are released throughout the year, when appropriate.

- Once your allocations have been made available you will receive an automated email letting you know and inviting you to log in to AA Gateway to view and accept them
- Once you receive this message you have 10 days to accept or decline your allocations before we contact you again. Remember, this is a deadline - please accept or decline allocations as soon as possible
- Log in to AA Gateway and accept the Terms of Contract as well as the Terms & Conditions of service before viewing the actual centres you have been allocated
- You can then view the centres you have been allocated and accept or reject each one. There is an option to accept all
- If we receive no response after 7 days, the system will send an automatic reminder to you
- If we receive no response after 21 days, your allocations will automatically be withdrawn and re-allocated to someone else

Senior: manual contracting

All Senior Standards Verifier and Team Leader contracts are sent out via email directly to you. If this affects you we would ask that you keep an eye on your email account and respond quickly to any contract offers we send you.

Payments: service pledge

Our promise to you is to process payment within 30 days of completing work. The 30 day promise is counted from the date all work involved with a specific allocation is completed.

In most cases this means that we cannot begin processing payment until the completed report has been submitted. Please do not put fees on claim forms as these will be automatically paid to you and placing them on claim forms may unnecessarily delay processing your expenses claim.

Expenses

You will be reimbursed for reasonable travelling and other expenses necessarily incurred in the performance of your services as an Assessment Associate as detailed in the **Assessment Associate Travel and Subsistence policy** (available to view in the Forms and Guidance section of AA Gateway).

You must follow the **Assessment Associate Travel and Subsistence policy** when booking accommodation or buying meals. This includes booking accommodation through our approved agent. No claims for expenses incurred by you for accommodation or meals outside of the policy will be reimbursed. All requests for overnight accommodation must be authorised by the Vocational Assessment teams in advance and you are obliged to accept the hotel allocated to you. In the vast majority of cases there should not be a need for overnight accommodation.

Expenses should be claimed on the relevant form accompanied by receipts and/or vouchers supporting the claim. Payment of expenses will be made directly to your bank account.

If you have more than one contract with us you may only claim once for expenses incurred. Expenses incurred for the same day's work under more than one contract will not be reimbursed except travel expenses for clearly separate and identifiable journeys under different contracts.

We reserve the right to place limits on the reimbursement of expenses of a particular type and to refuse reimbursement where we consider expenses claimed to be unreasonable.

Further support

If you have any questions about payments or expenses please use the following email addresses:

- for questions relating to payment of fees due for work you have completed: aapayments@pearson.com
- for questions relating to payment of expenses you have incurred in the course of your work: claimscontrol@pearson.com

How to deal with quality issues

A quality issue is one that gives rise to serious concern about a centre's operation of its vocational programmes, such as non-compliance with the terms and conditions of approval, or fraud. A quality issue may be identified as a result of:

- standards verification activities
- quality review & development activities
- a complaint from a learner
- 'whistle blowing'
- information from external agencies.

Quality issues are logged and monitored by our Vocational Quality Standards team and they have responsibility for their resolution. You can notify us of an issue either by identifying it directly in your report as a required action or, if the matter is sensitive or unproven, it can be sent directly to us at: vocationalqualitystandards@pearson.com

Where a quality issue arises from another source, then you may be asked to comment. You will be kept informed of relevant quality issues and their potential impact on certification.

Plagiarism

There are many definitions of what constitutes plagiarism. All of them agree that plagiarism is a form of academic misconduct or, put more simply, a form of cheating. Plagiarism is much more than simple copying from another student, or from books, or from the internet and can be taken to include paraphrasing, sub-contracting the work to someone else, submitting the same piece of work for two different purposes, etc. Ultimately, plagiarism is attempting to pass off other people's work and ideas as your own.

If you encounter evidence of plagiarism and it has not been addressed by the centre, you must raise this with them as an issue. Assessment decisions cannot be agreed if there is evidence of plagiarism which has not been identified and dealt with by the centre.

Our expectations of professional behaviour

As a Standards Verifier you are a representative of Pearson. Therefore, we expect you to be professional at all times, especially when dealing with centres.

In your dealings with customers, we expect you to be mindful of the following points.

- Regard the needs and best interests of the customer and Pearson as of the utmost importance
- Undertake work that you are qualified to perform and in which you are able to fulfil the customer needs effectively. You should not make any misleading claims and must be prepared to provide evidence of competence and/or references to us if required
- Handle information relating to the customer in the strictest confidence at all times. You should not disclose privileged information obtained during the course of your work to any third parties. This includes the use of social networking sites
- Consider data protection and child protection legislation when handling assessment documentation and learner evidence from customers. Please follow the guidance on storage and disposal of postal samples
- Never enter into correspondence with learners directly
- Provide information, advice and recommendations to customers and us based on thorough, impartial consideration and analysis of all available facts. Options suggested should be realistic, practicable, cost effective and clear
- Advise the customer honestly and truthfully to the best of your ability and don't be afraid to tell the customer you need to seek additional information or refer the matter further
- Strive at all times to ensure that your working practice encourages equality of opportunity for those involved. You should not act or communicate in any discriminatory way
- Present a professional image as appropriate to the needs of the customer and to the prevailing circumstances. You should comply with health and safety requirements at all times and adopt a positive and caring approach to the environment

In maintaining your professionalism we expect you to adhere to the following points:

- avoid any action or situation which is inconsistent with your professional obligations or which may result in a loss of integrity
- disclose at the earliest opportunity any relationship or interest (financial or otherwise) which could, or be seen by others to, influence your professional integrity and objectivity
- exercise the utmost care where circumstances result in a situation which is inconsistent with their professional obligations or which might cause a conflict of interest. If such a situation arises, you should immediately withdraw or remove the source of conflict. The matter must be reported to: vocationalqualitystandards@pearson.com
- at all times represent Pearson with professionalism and not seek to further your own interests in any way – for example promoting any training not offered by us
- not discuss other Standards Verifiers, our personnel or other awarding bodies in a derogatory manner with customers, other Standards Verifiers or personnel
- behave courteously and responsibly at all times and respect individual rights, beliefs and preferences
- maintain your professional development to meet requirements of the role
- declare to us immediately if you feel there may be any conflicts of interest between contracts you hold with us and/or other parts of Pearson and your responsibilities as part of the quality assurance process.

How you can plan effectively

Effective planning of your activities is vital in allowing you to complete your allocated tasks effectively and on time. Below are some of the key things to establish early on and agree with the centre:

- who your key contacts are and their specific contact details
- what key areas you will need to cover as part of your visit/postal sampling
- what evidence the centre will need to provide.

It is important to keep details of proposed visit dates or sample deadlines updated within AA Gateway so we are aware of your progress in completing your allocations.

Giving advice

Part of your role is to give advice to centres. If you are asked questions outside your immediate range of knowledge and experience, offer to respond later by telephone, email or post after you have obtained the relevant information.

If you say you will respond, please make sure that you do. If you are unable to answer the question immediately, your first point of contact should be your Team Leader and if they are unable to help then you should contact the Senior Standards Verifier or Principal Standards Verifier for your sector.

Visit planning

If your role requires you to visit a centre, please read the following guidance. Before each visit you should agree a detailed agenda with the centre to ensure they are clear about the requirements for the visit.

In this you should cover:

- people to be seen
- key areas to be covered
- evidence to be made available
- whether you will need to talk directly to some learners (you should never be put in a position where you are left alone with an individual learner)
- how interim feedback to the Internal Verifier/Programme Manager/Quality Nominee will take place.

You should ensure that the centre does not try to manage your visit but that they accommodate the needs of your visit.

Whenever you go on a visit it is a good idea to ensure that you have the direct telephone number of the relevant Regional Quality Manager for the centre you are visiting as well as our Assessment Associate Helpline number. This is to ensure that should you run into a serious problem on the visit you are able to contact us immediately. You can find Regional Quality Manager contact details on the Support page of our website.

Please remember that your report needs to be with the centre no more than 10 working days after the visit date.

Remote sample planning

When organising remote sampling activities the most vital part of the process is maintaining communication with the centre. You should use the introductory letter templates, available on AA Gateway, for your first contact with the centre to ensure that they have all the relevant details and are aware of how to contact you, should they have any questions about the verification process.

It is also important that you use the facility on AA Gateway to log your proposed sampling dates so we are aware of when you are completing sampling.

The key things to ensure you work into your planning and communicate to the centre:

- what needs to be included in the sample
- what other evidence they need to submit
- when the sample should be submitted by – make sure this is communicated clearly and confirmed in writing with the centre
- when they can expect feedback from you – again make sure that both parties are clear about when this will be available; remember you should be completing reports within 10 working days of receiving the sample.

If a centre sends you an incomplete sample, or there is some confusion about what has been sent, contact them straight away for clarification. Do not submit a report blocking the programmes until

you have given them the opportunity to provide any evidence missing due to an oversight or error when sending the sample.

If you have problems getting in contact with a centre, or if they have missed the deadline to submit their sample and remain unresponsive, then contact the relevant Regional Quality Manager for the centre and they will be able to support you. You can find Regional Quality Manager contact details on the Support page of our website.

Storage and disposal of postal samples

During the course of your allocation, you may accumulate a significant amount of evidence from centre samples. Please follow these guidelines to ensure that this evidence is managed effectively.

- Under no circumstances should you share any of the evidence with third parties
- Only share evidence with Pearson colleagues when specifically requested to do so, either by a member of the Vocational Assessment teams or your Team Leader/Senior Standards Verifier
- If any evidence is forwarded to us for use in training or standardisation, ensure that it is accompanied by a signed **Learner Consent Form**
- Make sure that the centre sends copies, not originals. If you suspect that the evidence sent is original work, confirm this with the centre as soon as possible. Once sampling is completed, you must return any original evidence. You may use the courier service account, following the details on Edexcel Gateway: www.edexcelgateway.com
- Where copies are sent, you don't need to return these to the centre. However, you must keep the samples until the end of the reporting window in case of any queries or appeals. Don't dispose of the samples straight after submitting your report
- Once all of your allocations are complete, and the reporting window is closed, you may dispose of the samples – providing you haven't been asked to forward it to us for use in training or standardisation
- All samples must be disposed of securely. Shredding is advised, where possible. Be particularly careful about any evidence that contains potentially sensitive information about learners.

How you can network effectively

Networking effectively among the wider group of Standards Verifiers within Vocational Assessment is something that will be very beneficial to you and your role. Your main points of contact will be with your Team Leader and the Senior Standards Verifier.

Your Team Leader is there to provide guidance on the functional aspects of your role. They are there to support you via feedback and also to answer any specific questions you have about report writing, communication with centres, carrying out visits and similar practical issues. Team Leaders are all experienced Standards Verifiers and will be able to offer you a lot of practical help with how you can organise your activities in the most efficient way.

Your Senior Standards Verifier is the person to get in touch with if you have any specific questions about the role you are carrying out. For Standards Verifiers this will focus mainly on subject specific questions about the qualification you are verifying and the assessment of it.

There are a number of communication channels that we use to get in touch with you and we would ask that you keep an eye out for these as they provide lots of useful information to help you in your role.

- The qualification web pages contain a wealth of useful information and are constantly being updated: www.edexcel.com then follow the 'Qualifications' link to your qualification's specific page
- AA Gateway is a repository of information specifically for Assessment Associates – go to the '**Forms and Guidance**' option on the left hand menu
- Look out for the Vocational AA Newsletter that is sent out periodically with updates on specific pieces of information that you need to know

Finally, take the opportunity to get to know other Standards Verifiers fulfilling the same role as you through the training events that you undertake in order to build up a network of people you can draw on for support.

How you can report effectively

In writing effective reports there are a number of key principles to consider.

Timeliness of reporting

- It is very important that you complete and submit the report soon after your visit or after completion of the sampling. This will help you maintain accuracy as it will be fresh in your mind
- The centre should not have to wait too long to receive the outcome of your visit or sample
- Remember that your report should be complete and with the centre within 10 working days and you should aim to respond to queries within two working days

Accuracy of reporting

- You should be careful to follow guidance and ensure you cover all the necessary content when producing reports
- It is also important to ensure that the centre has followed guidance in terms of providing the correct sample or providing the correct evidence to you
- In writing reports, you should not name individuals, either to praise or to criticise. If there is a problem, seek an explanation from the person concerned and respond constructively. If you are still not satisfied, investigate with the Internal Verifier/Programme Co-ordinator or equivalent

No surprises in the report

- Your report should be professionally written and details should remain confidential
- Please ensure that you use clear, concise language avoiding the overuse of technical jargon that may confuse the centre
- Nothing in the report should come as a surprise to the centre, especially if you have carried out a visit. You should discuss your action plan with the relevant member of staff to ensure they have understood it and allow them to ask any questions about its implementation. In this way, you can check that all comments are authoritative and accurate

Clear action points

- It is very important that any action points arising from your sample or visit are clearly communicated to the centre
- Action points should be constructive and easy to understand for staff in the centre
- It is good practice to apply the SMART principle to action points you give to centres:
 - Specific - make it absolutely clear what the action relates to and what the centre needs to do to address the issue
 - Measurable - how will we be able to see that the issue has been addressed?
 - Achievable - don't make unreasonable demands of centres. The centre should be able to complete the action successfully within a reasonable timeframe
 - Relevant - stick to the requirements. Don't insist on actions that are subjective and not related to the requirements of the qualification. You may make additional recommendations to help centres improve further
 - Time Bound - give clear deadlines for the monitoring and completion of any actions

Roles and responsibilities – Skills Standards Verifier

The following pages contain details of the different roles undertaken by vocational Standards Verifiers.

Purpose of this role

- Undertake sampling of assessment and internal verification for Wider Key Skills(WKS), in order to affirm that national standards have been achieved and upheld
- Support centres during the sampling process
- Direct centres in the delivery of specific programmes to national standards

Key accountabilities

Covering a defined range of programmes within the qualification, the WKS Standards Verifier will:

- sample learner work to ensure that valid and reliable assessment decisions are made and national standards are maintained
- produce reports for centres and us on the sampling undertaken, outcomes reached and support provided
- apply certification blocks at the earliest possible opportunity where it is deemed that flawed assessment or internal verification decisions or processes mean that national standards are not met
- release programmes via re-sampling at the earliest possible opportunity where it is deemed that the flawed assessment or internal verification decisions or processes have been corrected
- produce targeted actions for centres to assist with remedial action where national standards are not being upheld
- support centres to understand and implement identified actions
- report back to us and centres following standards verification activity within agreed timeframes

- source appropriate materials for training and standardisation if directed to do so by the Senior Standards Verifier or Team Leader
- keep records of communication with centres of visits and sampling carried out so that an audit trail of the verification process exists for 18 months after certification
- undertake any other duties appropriate to the work of the Vocational Assessment teams in relation to this role.

Advice and guidance

Centres can find all information about WKS on the individual pages of these qualifications. These can be accessed through the 'Qualifications' tab on our website. Each qualification page contains the Specifications, support materials (e.g. Tracking Sheets) and the **Quality Assurance Handbook 2015-16**.

The common **Qualification Assurance Handbook 2015-16** is the main source of information on internal assessment, internal verification and standards verification for centres as well as Standards Verifiers. It also contains contact information for various Pearson teams.

Managing the sampling process

In keeping with the regulatory requirements, we take a proactive role in selecting samples for standards verification:

- you select the sample
- you sample both work that has been internally verified and work that has been assessed only
- if second samples are necessary, those include extra learners.

The process you should follow is detailed below.

- Contact the Quality Nominee for the centre as soon as you accept your allocation
- Check that the Quality Nominee contact details are correct and that they have accessed the **Quality Assurance Handbook 2015-16**
- The Quality Nominee should put you in touch with the relevant Programme Manager/Lead Internal Verifier
- Where relevant, ensure that the Lead Internal Verifier understands the process and how it relates to their accreditation status
- Agree an appropriate date for a visit
- Agree the unit(s) to be sampled
- To allow you to select the learners to be sampled, ask the centre to provide you with an anticipated list of learners with completed portfolios before the agreed sample date
- Where possible, the majority of the sample should include learners who have already been internally verified. Therefore, you should ask the centre to include details of which learners have already been subject to internal verification. Many centres will have an internal verification schedule already, so a copy of this may suffice. If this isn't possible, the centre may need to undertake more internal verification to be able to provide a sufficient sample
- Where possible, you should also select learners with a range of achievement in terms of the grades awarded. A significant proportion of any sample must include learners who have successfully achieved the unit
- It is good practice to check with the centre if there are UCAS applicants on any Level 3 programmes sampled. We need to ensure that sampling is completed as soon as possible so that their applications aren't delayed

- If a postal sample is required, make sure the centre sends copies, not originals. Electronic submissions are also acceptable, but liaise with the centre to ensure that they are in a format you can access. A free courier service is available and account details are available on Edexcel Gateway: www.edexcelgateway.com
- Read the guidance in the **Quality Assurance Handbook** on providing evidence for practical activities
- On the day of the visit/receipt of the postal sample, check the sample is complete and sufficient. If you feel that there are elements missing, or the evidence is not clearly identified, contact the centre for clarification. If it is an oversight on the centre's part, do not block certification on the basis of missing evidence without giving them an opportunity to provide it
- Read through the evidence thoroughly and make notes. Submit your report within 10 working days of your centre visit/receiving the sample. A template of the Standards Verifier Report is on Edexcel Gateway
- Where applicable, we expect all sampling activities, including second sampling and roll-on, roll-off programmes, to be completed in time for learners to receive certificates in time for college/university applications
- If, for any reason, it looks likely that sampling will go beyond 31 July, you must let our VQ Deployment team and the Regional Quality Manager know straight away. They can support you to ensure sampling is conducted as soon as possible

Outcomes of sampling

- If national standards are being met, your report will release certification and this is the end of your allocation
- If national standards are not being met, you must include SMART actions, explaining exactly what the centre must do to address the issues. A second sample is required. The second sample should include the elements of the first sample that caused the initial certification block, with evidence to show that the issues have been addressed:
 - if this relates to assessment or internal verification decisions, you will need to see evidence that the work has been reassessed in line with your comments
 - if this relates to how the process of internal verification is carried out, you may require the centre to provide an action plan of how they intend to address the issues
- Negotiate a suitable date for the second sample, allowing the centre sufficient time to address the issues
- Complete a postal report following the same process as before
- If the issues are addressed, your report will release certification and this is the end of your allocation
- If the issues have not been addressed, your report will continue to block certification and the Regional Quality Manager will intervene to support the centre
- The Regional Quality Manager will be alerted, but it is also good practice to contact them yourself to let them know that you have submitted a second block, and why
- Regional Quality Manager contact details can be found here: www.btec.co.uk/support

Sample size

The programmes and levels sampled will dictate the number of units selected:

Number of learners per skill	Portfolios to be sampled per skill for Improving Own Learning, Working with Others and Problem Solving
1 – 7	All
8 – 250	8
251+	10 and a supplementary postal sample of 5 per skills to be approved by the Team Leader

Please note:

To request a Postal sample you will need to complete a Postal Approval Form. This must be completed before postal sampling is carried out. This form must be sent to your Team Leader for approval.

Second sample

A second sample is required where DCS is not awarded for a skill/level because the standards have not been met. The second sample will be a postal sample.

Number of learners per skill	Portfolios to be sampled remotely per skill for Improving Own Learning, Working with Others and Problem Solving
1 – 7	All
8 – 250	8+4
251+	10 + 5

Please note:

- The original portfolios + an additional sample as required all to the correct standard.

Some Dos and Don'ts when talking to the centre assessment and verification staff

Do:

- prepare properly beforehand
- be friendly and facilitating
- remember to manage the time
- remember that equal opportunities are important
- use secondary sources of information where appropriate and helpful

- treat the information obtained sensitively, tactfully and diplomatically
- remember that this is an important source of information, but it is not the only one.

Don't:

- ask leading questions
- ask complicated questions
- refer to individuals not present by name
- attribute negative statements or opinions to individuals
- be patronising or rude
- make speeches
- tell the staff about your own institution or your learners.

If you recommend a certification block

If you have serious concerns about a centre's quality of assessment decisions and consistency of application of the mark scheme, your submitted report will recommend a certification block.

In this case:

- agree actions and deadlines for their completion with the centre
- if there is a serious concern, contact the Regional Quality Manager for the centre
- our Quality Standards team will also alert the Regional Quality Manager, who will review your report and confirm whether a block is appropriate
- if the Regional Quality Manager confirms the block, they will take on the allocation and support the centre to address the issues
- if the Regional Quality Manager doesn't feel that a block is appropriate, they will amend the report and let you know. You will keep the allocation and monitor progress against essential actions as normal

Various centre types

Centres can vary greatly. Before your visit, it is important to correspond with the Quality Nominee to gain an understanding of the nature of their centre. The following examples are centres you may be allocated. Remember, if in doubt; ask your Team Leader or the relevant Regional Quality Manager for advice before conducting the visit.

Very small centres

You may be allocated to a centre with very small WKS provision. You should still visit these. You may find that the visit may not take a whole day, given the size of provision.

Very large centres

We have several centres that have very large provision with us. There is no reason why the visit cannot be completed in one day. When visiting these centres, we ask that all subject areas are represented. In large centres, this does not mean that every single Programme Manager/Internal Verifier needs to be present. You should negotiate with the Quality Nominee to ensure that there are sufficient representatives available on the day. It is fine to have people there who can represent various subject areas.

Large centres with good quality systems should have overarching, standardised procedures, so this doesn't necessarily make it any more complicated to make judgements about.

Multi-site centres

If you are visiting a centre with multiple sites, you will still normally be able to complete the visit in one day. We would expect most centres to be able to accommodate the visit at their main site, with relevant staff available on the day. Extra days for visits are by exception and are not allowed.

Centres with multiple centre numbers

We are aware of some large centres that operate under more than one centre number. Where we have arranged this with the centre, we will allocate one Standards Verifier to conduct a single visit that covers the whole centre. If you are allocated to a centre and find this is the case, or if you find that the centre has several centre numbers and has been allocated a number of Standards Verifiers, you must contact our FS Assessment team at: fsassessment@pearson.com for clarification before agreeing a date for a visit.

Welsh medium centres

There are some schools in Wales that operate entirely in Welsh, including documents for their internal systems and procedures. We will try, where possible, to allocate Welsh speaking Standards Verifier to a centre operating entirely in Welsh. If you are a Welsh speaker, please let us know!

If you are allocated to a Welsh medium centre, this doesn't mean that you cannot complete your visit if you are not a Welsh speaker. Much of the evidence for standards verification is verbal. Therefore, you can still gain a good understanding of a centre's quality assurance systems and procedures through your conversations on the day. If any specific documents that you wish to look at are in Welsh, the Quality Nominee or other member of staff can provide you with a verbal translation.

Portfolios for WKS must be completed in English.

For more information on this, please see our **Use of Languages (Welsh and Irish) Policy** here: www.edexcel.com/policies

General FAQs

I'm having technical problems with one of your systems. Who should I contact?

If you are having technical problems with any of our online systems you should call the Assessment Associate Helpdesk on 0800 169 9202.

I'm on a visit and I've got a problem with the centre. Who do I call?

In the first instance contact your allocated Team Leader. If they are not available, please contact the relevant Regional Quality Manager for the centre you are visiting. You can find Regional Quality Manager contact details on the Support page of our website.

I've received a sample from a centre and it has become obvious that the centre needs more help than I am able to give. What should I do?

In a case such as this you should escalate the situation to the centre's relevant Regional Quality Manager who will be able to support them better. You can find Regional Quality Manager contact details on the Support page of our website.

A centre wants more training and support, where should I direct them?

The most important thing is that you must not direct them to any non-Pearson training provision. They should get in touch with us and enquire about training courses that we offer. They can contact our Training from Pearson team.

How do I apply for other Assessment Associate roles?

All our Assessment Associate roles are advertised through AA Gateway and it is here that you can apply for other Assessment Associate roles with us. In the case of senior posts, these are often advertised by email to existing Assessment Associates in the relevant sector and in these cases you will receive a direct link to the advert for that position.

How do I become a Team Leader?

Our Team Leaders are expected to be drawn from Assessment Associates who have a number of years' experience in their roles and have consistently achieved high grades in their end of year appraisals. If there are Team Leader positions available Assessment Associates with suitable experience will be invited to express interest through AA Gateway and the most suitable candidates will be chosen to fill the available positions.

I may not be able to complete all the allocations I have accepted, what should I do?

If you think you will not be able to complete all your allocations it is very important that you let us know as soon as possible. You should contact us at VQdeployment@pearson.com so that we can ensure that the affected centres will be sampled or visited as appropriate within the agreed time limits.

I am getting emails for programmes that are not running, what should I do?

In this case please let us know at VQdeployment@pearson.com so we can record that this programme is not running.

Support

This section gives you details of who you need to contact for various queries.

Contact details	What can they help me with?
Assessment Associate Helpdesk 0800 169 9202	Any general problems or for technical help with our systems
AA Recruitment aarecruitment@pearson.com	Queries relating to applying for other Assessment Associate positions or about any outstanding applications you might have with us
AA Training & Events vqevents@pearson.com	Queries relating to training or standardisation events that you are taking part in
Vocational AA Deployment VQdeployment@pearson.com	Queries relating to your allocations
AA Payments aapayments@pearson.com	Queries relating to payment of fees for work you have completed
Claims Control claimscontrol@pearson.com	Queries relating to payment of expenses claims
FS Assessment fsassessment@pearson.com	Questions about the assessment and quality assurance of our vocational qualifications
Quality Standards vocationalqualitystandards@pearson.com	If you have serious concerns regarding the assessment practice of a centre
Regional Quality Managers	For help and support for quality issues with a specific centre. You can find a UK map with Regional Quality Manager contact details here