

Delivery Guidance & Quality Assurance Requirements

2016-17

Pearson Edexcel & EDI NVQs & SVQs

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Introduction

What is this document about?

Pearson requirements for the delivery of and the external quality assurance model for NVQs, SVQs and competence-based qualifications and the arrangements that support this.

For the purpose of this document, Pearson Edexcel accredited NQF NVQs, QCF NVQs, SVQs and QCF competence-based qualifications will be referred to collectively as NVQs & SVQs. The external quality assurance model has been devised to reflect the *Conditions of Recognition for Awarding Bodies* and *SQA Accreditation's Regulatory Principles 2014* published by Ofqual and the SQA, respectively. The external quality assurance model places emphasis on working collaboratively with centres to improve the quality management of programme delivery.

Who is this guidance for?

- Employers and centres approved to deliver or seeking approval to deliver Pearson Edexcel NVQs & SVQs
- Centre Quality Nominees and managers
- Centre assessment and quality assurance staff delivering Pearson Edexcel NVQs & SVQs
- Pearson Standards Verifiers

The role of the centre Quality Nominee

- As a part of the Ofqual General Conditions of Recognition of Pearson as an awarding organisation, condition C2, Arrangements with Centres has, inter alia, where a Centre undertakes any part of the delivery of a qualification on behalf of an awarding organisation Pearson must require the Centre to have available sufficient managerial and other resources to enable it effectively and efficiently to undertake the delivery of the qualification as required by the awarding organisation. The SQA Accreditation's Regulatory Principles (2014) states that the awarding body shall ensure that it has the necessary arrangements and resources for the effective delivery, assessment and quality assurance of SQA accredited qualifications
- In relation to this, Pearson requires each centre to have in place a manager to take the role of the centre Quality Nominee
- The centre Quality Nominee is integral to the quality assurance model for Pearson Edexcel and Pearson EDI NVQs & SVQs and is the principal point of contact for all Pearson personnel and Pearson Standards Verifiers
- It is essential that the centre Quality Nominee is in a position of authority in the centre and is able to provide a means of communication between key centre personnel and Pearson Standards Verifiers
- Pearson holds the details for each centre Quality Nominee on its systems. These details are accessible to centres via Edexcel Online (EOL). To permit effective interaction between Pearson and centres these details must be set up and kept up to date by the centre EOL accounts administrator – usually the Examinations Officer
- The centre Quality Nominee is the key to effective interaction between the centre and Pearson in order to ensure the safe and timely certification of learners
- The centre Quality Nominee must ensure that the requirements for workplace assessment of NVQs & SVQs - as specified by the relevant Sector Skills Council (SSC) or Standards Setting Body (SSB) - are fully met
- Where provision is made by the SSC or SSB for assessment to be undertaken in a Realistic Working Environment (RWE), the RWE must provide conditions the same as the normal day-to-day working environment, with a similar range of demands, pressures and requirements for cost-effective working. Please see Appendix 6

Quality Assurance of Pearson Edexcel and Pearson EDI NVQs & SVQs

NVQ Code of Practice & SQA Accreditation's Regulatory Principles (2014)

- 1.1. To meet conditions C2.1, C2.2 and C2.3 of the *General Conditions of Recognition June 2016* and the *SQA Accreditation's Regulatory Principles (2014)*, Pearson continues to apply the following sections of the *QCA NVQ Code of Practice*¹ to NQF NVQs, QCF NVQs, QCF competence-based qualifications and SVQs:
- a) Expertise: Paragraphs 4-5.
 - b) Data Requirements: Paragraphs 22, 23 & 24. [Appendix 2, this document]
 - c) Application of assessment methodology: Paragraphs 40-72. [Appendix 3, this document]
 - d) Approved centre criteria Appendix 1: [Appendix 4, this document]
 - e) Sanctions for non-compliance with the centre approval criteria Appendix 3 [Appendix 5, this document].
- 1.2. All centre staff members managing, delivering and administering Pearson Edexcel and Pearson EDI NVQs & SVQs should be fully aware of the contents and requirements of both this document and the relevant sections of the *QCA NVQ Code of Practice*, QCA/06/2888, 2006 and the *SQA Accreditation's Regulatory Principles (2014)*, respectively.

Centre Recognition and Qualification Approval

- 2.1. For Centre Recognition and Qualification Approvals, Pearson will ensure that centres have available sufficient managerial and other resources to enable it to effectively and efficiently undertake the delivery of the qualification, this includes the physical and the human resources to meet the requirements for the effective delivery of NVQs & SVQs, before approval may be given – Appendices 1, 3 & 4
- 2.2. To gain approval for Centre Recognition for the delivery of Pearson Edexcel and Pearson EDI NVQs & SVQs, centres will be visited by an Pearson Centre Approval officer to confirm that centre recognition requirements and approval criteria are met
- 2.3. To gain Qualification Approval, centres must submit details of the personnel delivering the qualification to an Pearson Qualifications Briefer to confirm requirements of the sector are met, with particular reference to the SSC's or SSB's overarching assessment strategies/requirements for NVQs & SVQs. Standards Verifiers will check that personnel continue to meet requirements of the sector and have adequate resources as part of the external quality assurance for the programme
- 2.4. Centres must notify the Standards Verifier allocated to a sector of any changes to personnel acting as assessors or internal verifiers for that sector
- 2.5. The assessment strategies enable NVQs & SVQs to attest to competence in the workplace through:
 - a) identifying the specific skills, knowledge and understanding needed to meet standards required in the workplace
 - b) specifying the type and amount of evidence to be collected for assessment purposes
 - c) specifying the aspects of the National Occupational Standards (NOS) that must be assessed through performance in the workplace

¹ Please note that although the QCA NVQ Code of Practice has been withdrawn, Pearson are continuing the relevant sections, as specified in Quality Assurance Handbooks and this document.

- d) clarifying where simulated working conditions may be used in assessment, and special requirements for these, including definitions of the realistic working environments (RWE)
 - e) specifying the occupational expertise of assessors, internal quality assurance staff and standards verifiers.
- 2.6. The assessment strategies also specify the qualifications that assessors, internal quality assurance staff and standards verifiers for NVQs & SVQs should possess to perform their roles.²
 - 2.7. Centres that have gained centre and qualification approval may also use Edexcel Online to gain approval to offer NVQs & SVQs in a different sector, provided that they have evidence of the effective delivery of NVQ programmes for which they are already approved. The evidence will be in the form of external verification reports with no sanctions higher than level 2 within the last 12 months.
 - 2.8. For centres switching from other awarding organisations to Pearson for the delivery of NVQs & SVQs, Pearson will provide both centre and qualification approval on the basis of:
 - a) Confirmation of centre and qualifications approval from the other awarding body, in the form of the original approval letters or other auditable evidence
 - b) Confirmation of the effective delivery of NVQs & SVQs, in the form of external verifier reports showing that no sanctions higher than a level 2 have been applied to the programmes concerned within the last 12 months.
 - 2.9. Pearson will transfer Direct Claims Status (DCS) for NVQ programmes switched to Pearson, provided there is auditable evidence **less than 6 months old** that DCS is conferred on the programme by the other awarding organisation at the time of switching.

Recruitment and Learner Support

- 3.1. Centres must act with integrity when registering learners on Pearson Edexcel and Pearson EDI NVQs & SVQs
- 3.2. Learners should be recruited on NVQs & SVQs suited to their ability – physical, mental, intellectual – and qualification aims. Centres should explain to learners if, due to a disability, they are likely to be unable to achieve the full qualification. Centres must comply with their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010
- 3.3. Centres must not impose any artificial barriers to prevent learners' access to NVQs & SVQs suited to their ability – physical, mental, intellectual – and qualification aims
- 3.4. Centres must provide support, advice and guidance to learners who are registered on Pearson Edexcel and Pearson EDI NVQs & SVQs
- 3.5. Centres should engage learners fully in both the assessment planning and the assessment processes as part of their personal and occupational development
- 3.6. Feedback should be provided to learners by their assessors at interim and summative stages of assessment.

Internal Quality Assurance

- 4.1. Please refer to Appendix 3
- 4.2. An integral aspect of the partnership between Pearson and centres approved to deliver Pearson Edexcel and Pearson EDI NVQs and SVQs is the requirement for centres to have in place robust procedures for the internal quality assurance of these qualifications

² Certain SSCs have made provision for employers to be approved for delivery of NVQs & SVQs in their sector through the 'Employer Direct' model. Under the 'Employer Direct' model, employers are required to demonstrate that their internal training programmes are delivered according to the NOS for Learning & Development and may then forego the requirement for assessors and internal quality assurance staff to be suitably qualified for their roles.

- 4.3. Centres must employ internal verifiers who are suitably qualified or who are working toward the Internal Quality Assurance qualification (or SCQF equivalent) and who meet the occupational competency requirements of the sector assessment strategy and ensure that internal verification procedures are robust
- 4.4. Internal verification carried out by an unqualified internal verifier must be countersigned by a qualified internal verifier who is occupationally competent
- 4.5. Internal Verifiers who are unqualified and working toward the Internal Quality Assurance qualification must achieve the qualification within 18 months of starting the role
- 4.6. The internal quality assurance process should be informed by best practice, such as that described in the Joint Awarding Body Guidance on Internal Verification of NVQs & SVQs - available to download from the Edexcel website - and the latest NOS for Learning & Development
- 4.7. We support our approved centres in developing an internal quality assurance process based on managing risk
- 4.8. The management of risk should lead to an internal quality assurance strategy and an internal quality assurance process
- 4.9. The process should include details of, for example:
 - a) sampling strategies, plans and records
 - b) monitoring of assessment judgments
 - c) standardising of assessors and assessment judgments
- 4.10. Part of the role of the internal quality assurance staff is to raise the quality of assessment practice through:
 - a) encouraging assessors to raise the standards of the assessment process
 - b) identifying and encouraging participation in training opportunities for assessors
 - c) interim internal verification to provide advice and support to assessors at an early opportunity
 - d) arranging for the standardisation of assessors
 - e) using technology to reduce the assessment and administrative burden
- 4.11. As part of the external quality assurance process, Pearson will ensure that centres comply with the requirements for internal quality assurance through reviewing the processes, procedures, documentation and records in place to deliver internal quality assurance. Where the requirements for internal quality assurance are not met, standards verifiers will apply the appropriate sanctions.

Assessment

- 5.1. Please refer to Appendix 3
- 5.2. Centres must ensure that they employ assessors who are suitably qualified or that are working towards the Level 3 Award in Assessing Competence in the Work Environment (or SCQF equivalent) and that meet the occupational competency requirements of the sector assessment strategy and ensure that the assessment process is robust
- 5.3. Assessment carried out by an unqualified assessor must be countersigned by a qualified assessor who is occupationally competent
- 5.4. Unqualified assessors that are working towards the Level 3 Award in Assessing Competence in the Work Environment must achieve the qualification within 18 months of starting their role
- 5.5. The assessment process should be informed by best practice and the latest NOS for Learning & Development
- 5.6. Centre assessors are responsible and accountable for:
 - a) managing the assessment system, assessment planning, making and recording assessment decisions
 - b) assessing evidence of learner competence against NOS and the requirements of the assessment criteria in the qualification
 - c) ensuring that learners' evidence is valid, authentic, reliable, current and sufficient
 - d) maintaining accurate and verifiable learner assessment and achievement records.
- 5.7. The assessment process should support learners towards the achievement of their qualification aim, whilst ensuring that the requirements of the NOS for assessment and the sector are met
- 5.8. Part of the role of the assessor is to raise the quality of assessment through:
 - a) engaging learners at an early stage in the assessment process
 - b) effective and efficient assessment of naturally occurring activity
 - c) holistic assessment to maximise assessment opportunities
 - d) using interim assessment to provide advice and support at an early opportunity
 - e) encouraging access through using the full range of assessment methods
 - f) using technology to reduce the assessment and administrative burden
- 5.9. As part of the external quality assurance process, Pearson will ensure that centres comply with the requirements for assessment.

Records

- 6.1. Much of the external quality assurance process relies on centres maintaining a robust audit trail of assessment and internal quality assurance decisions and recommendations
- 6.2. Records of assessment and internal verification activity must be maintained in line with the requirements set out in Appendix 2
- 6.3. Centres must make records of assessment and internal verification available to Pearson Standards Verifiers on their visits to centres
- 6.4. Centres should use their records to monitor and review their achievements to inform future programme delivery as part of the quality cycle
- 6.5. Feedback from learners, employers and other stakeholders should be recorded and kept to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of qualification provision against the centre's stated aims and policies, leading to continuous improvement
- 6.6. Actions resulting from standards verification visits must be noted and disseminated to appropriate staff in order that corrective measures are implemented promptly
- 6.7. Records of learners' achievements and assessment outcomes must be used to monitor and review the effectiveness of the centre's equal opportunities policy.

Use of Language

- 7.1. Pearson will not allow assessment of national qualifications designed for the workplace and that attest to occupational competency in a language other than English, Welsh or Irish (Gaeilge). This is to ensure learners have sufficient proficiency in English, Welsh or Irish (Gaeilge) to enable them to properly carry out in a safe and secure manner the occupational role that is supported by the qualification in the UK.

The external Quality Assurance model

Standards verification

- 8.1. Please refer to Appendix 3
- 8.2. Pearson employs Standards Verifiers that are suitably qualified or that are working towards the level 4 (or SCQF equivalent) Award in the External Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice and that are occupationally competent
- 8.3. Standards verifiers that are working towards the level 4 Award in the External Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice (or SCQF equivalent) must achieve the qualification within 12 months of starting their role
- 8.4. Standards verifiers are contracted for eleven months of the year, followed by a break of one month. Visits will be scheduled within this contract period. Centres should seek to ensure that their requirements for external verification are accommodated within the contract period of their allocated standards verifiers
- 8.5. Centre Quality Nominees are notified by email when a standards verifier has been allocated to their centre. The contact details of the allocated standards verifiers are available to centres via Edexcel Online
- 8.6. The Quality Nominee must communicate promptly the details of the allocations and standards verifier contact details to the relevant internal verifiers, in order that the centre and internal verifiers may proactively engage with the standards verification process
- 8.7. Standards verifiers will work with their allocated centres to ensure that external quality assurance activity is sufficient to meet the centre's needs whilst being confined to the eleven months of the standards verifiers' contracts
- 8.8. The minimum frequency of standards verification visits to centres is usually two per year (a total of two days per year). The exact frequency and duration of external verifier visits must reflect a centre's performance, taking account of the:
 - a) number of assessment sites
 - b) number and throughput of candidates
 - c) number and turnover of assessors
 - d) number and turnover of internal verifiers.
- 8.9. Through the information provided by centres and feedback from standards verifiers, Pearson will put in place a risk management strategy for monitoring approved centres to determine the number of standards verifier visits required
- 8.10. The standards verifier reviews evidence, which must be provided by the centre, to ensure that the Centre Recognition and Qualification Approval criteria continue to be met
- 8.11. The standards verifier will wish to confirm that the centre management team understands and supports the centre's aims and policies in relation to NVQs and SVQs
- 8.12. The centre management team must ensure that there are sufficient and suitable physical and human resources available for the effective and efficient delivery of the qualifications for which it is approved and the standards verifier will wish to confirm that this is the case
- 8.13. The standards verifier will also sample learners' evidence to ensure the NOS for assessment, for internal verification, the NOS for the occupational sector, and the requirements of the qualification are fully met

- 8.14. Standards verifiers provide advice, support and guidance to centres on best practice for assessment and internal verification and for the achievement of the NOS for the occupational sector
- 8.15. Recommendation for certification or otherwise for qualifications within the occupational sector will be made by standards verifiers
- 8.16. Standards verifiers will consult with centres to agree the scope of the visit, the verification and sampling activities that will take place and provide a Visit Requirements Plan
- 8.17. Standards verifiers will plan to visit all assessment sites, over time
- 8.18. Centres must comply with requests for access to premises, people and records. If a centre fails to provide access, Pearson will take actions to protect the integrity of the qualifications concerned
- 8.19. If a centre cancels a pre-arranged visit at short notice, Pearson must be satisfied that there was a legitimate reason for this. If this cannot be established, we will reserve the right to withhold certification claims until a standards verification visit is completed
- 8.20. If there is insufficient reason for the visit being cancelled, Pearson reserves the right to charge centres for the expenses incurred for the visit
- 8.21. Centres are advised that Pearson and the regulatory authorities reserve the right to carry out visits at short notice or without notice, to minimise the risk of unsubstantiated claims for certification
- 8.22. Standards verifiers will make a record of the sampling carried out and the rationale behind its selection. Over time, the sample will include:
 - a) the assessment decisions of all assessors
 - b) all assessment methods
 - c) all assessment locations
 - d) learners at different stages of their award.
- 8.23. Standards verifiers will plan to meet with learners, assessors and internal verifiers to discuss aspects of learner support, programme delivery, assessment and internal verification. Centres must comply with requests for access to learners, assessors and those conducting internal quality assurance. Details of all registered learners must be made available to standards verifiers including those on programmes for distance learning / assessment.
- 8.24. The sampling of learners, assessors and internal verifiers will not be left solely to the discretion or convenience of centres
- 8.25. Standards verifiers will select some samples without giving prior notice to the centre, to minimise the risk of unsubstantiated claims for certification
- 8.26. Full use of retrospective sampling of the portfolios of learners for whom certification has been claimed between standards verifier visits will be carried out by standards verifiers
- 8.27. Standards verifiers must inform Pearson if a centre fails to make available those learners selected for interview or sampling. The centre must provide proof that these learners exist and, if this cannot be clearly established, Pearson will:
 - a) inform the regulatory authorities
 - b) suspend the centre from registering further learners or claiming certificates
 - c) start investigative action as agreed with the regulatory authorities.

The Qualification Report Form (e-QRF)

- 8.28. The standards verifier will provide feedback to centre staff at the end of a visit. The standards verifier will complete and submit an online report form, the e-QRF, within 10 working days of the visit to a centre
- 8.29. The e-QRF is accessible to centres via Edexcel Online
- 8.30. The e-QRF informs Pearson and the centre of the degree to which the centre complies with the Centre Recognition Criteria, Pearson requirements for the delivery and assessment of NVQs & SVQs and the NVQ Code of Practice Approved Centre Criteria. Please see Appendix I.

- 8.31. The report will include:
- a) the date of the visit
 - b) details of the monitoring and verification activities undertaken, including information on the sample and who was interviewed
 - c) confirmation or otherwise that the centre recognition and approvals criteria continue to be met
 - d) details any changes in centre staff or their competence since the last visit
 - e) explicit feedback to the centre on the quality and consistency of assessment and the effectiveness of internal verification
 - f) details of good practice
 - g) the actions the centre must take if its performance does not meet requirements, when these actions must be completed and who is responsible for completing them
 - h) confirmation of whether the centre has carried out previous action points.
- 8.32. If a centre fails to meet the requirements for the delivery and assessment of Pearson Edexcel and Pearson EDI NVQs, SVQs and competence-based qualifications or fails to implement directed actions, the e-QRF will generate verification outcomes according to the *QCA NVQ Code of Practice* tariff of sanctions. Please see Appendix 5
- 8.33. Standards verifiers are responsible for making a judgement on the suitability of these outcomes and may modify these to better reflect the circumstances at the centre
- 8.34. When the outcomes are modified, the standards verifier will explain why this is the case and recommend an alternative outcome that may be more or less severe.

Certification release

- 8.35. In order for claims for certification to be released for learners, confirmation is required through the submission of the e-QRF by the allocated standards verifier that the following are met: the NOS for assessment, the NOS for internal quality assurance, the NOS for the particular occupational sector and the requirements of the qualification
- 8.36. The release for claims to certification for both NVQs & SVQs will expire after 365 days, unless there has been a further recommendation for release to claims for certification by an allocated standards verifier through the submission of a further e-QRF. Centres must engage with the standards verification process to maintain the release of claims for certification and direct claims status.
- 8.37. 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. SQA Regulatory Principles Directive RPDIR 1.

Direct Claims Status and Verification Outcomes

- 8.38. Direct Claims Status (DCS) may be conferred on programmes, as recommended by the standards verifier, where the centre demonstrates that the NOS for assessment, internal quality assurance, the NOS for the sector and requirements of the qualification have been **consistently met**
- 8.39. Standards verifiers will provide support, advice and guidance to centres on the manner in which to achieve DCS
- 8.40. For programmes that have DCS, the portfolios of those learners for whom certification is claimed between SV visits must be retained for retrospective sampling
- 8.41. Where there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate consistency in the application of the NOS and requirements of the qualification, or, to reflect other circumstances at a centre, standards verifiers may recommend 'limited certification' to release certification for specified learners that have satisfied the NOS for the sector and the met the requirements of the qualification
- 8.42. Pearson will maintain the integrity of NVQs & SVQs through ensuring that the award of the qualifications is secure. Where there are quality issues identified in the delivery of programmes, Pearson will exercise the right to:
 - a) direct centres to take actions
 - b) remove DCS and limit certification
 - c) suspend certification and/or registration
 - d) remove approval to deliver individual qualifications
 - e) remove centre recognition for the delivery of Pearson Edexcel and Pearson EDI qualifications
- 8.43. The approach of Pearson in circumstances a, b, c and d will be to work with the centre to overcome the problems identified. If additional training is required, Pearson will aim to secure the appropriate expertise to provide this
- 8.44. The standards verifier will inform you as the Internal Verifier/programme manager if they intend to recommend suspension of certification or suspension of registration and explain the next steps
- 8.45. The standards verifier makes the recommendation through the e-QRF. The recommendations for suspension of certification or suspension of registration will be checked by the Senior Standards Verifier for the sector, once the e-QRF is submitted to us. The e-QRF is not available to you when suspension of certification or suspension of registration is recommended until the circumstances have been reviewed by the Senior Standards Verifier
- 8.46. If a suspension of certification or registration is confirmed, we will inform you directly, provide you will access to the e-QRF and
 - a) we will work with you to address the issues
 - b) if additional training is required, we will aim to secure appropriate expertise to provide this
 - c) a charge may be made for consultancy visits arising from a quality issue

Appendix I: Centre approval for NVQs & SVQs and SV Reports

The following Centre Recognition and Approval criteria and Pearson requirements for assessment and the delivery of NVQs & SVQs form the basis on which centres are approved for the delivery of Pearson Edexcel and Pearson EDI NVQs & SVQs. The Pearson requirements for the assessment and the delivery of NVQs & SVQs are informed by the QCA NVQ Code of Practice, 2006, the Approved Centre Criteria and the SQA Accreditation Regulatory Principles. Pearson standards verifiers report on centres' continued compliance with these criteria and make their recommendations on certification based on this.

This process of external quality assurance and the systems that support this assist Pearson in satisfying Ofqual's General Conditions of Recognition C1 and C2.

Recognition and Approval Criteria	Non-compliance
Management systems	
The centre's aims and policies in relation to NVQs are supported by senior management and understood by the assessment team.	Action Point
The centre's access and fair assessment policy and practice is understood and complied with by assessors and candidates.	Action Point
The roles, responsibilities, authorities and accountabilities of the assessment and verification team across all assessment sites are clearly defined, allocated and understood.	Action Point
There is effective communication within the assessment team and with the awarding body.	Action Point
Awarding bodies are notified of any changes that may affect the centre's ability to meet the centre approval requirements.	Action Point
Assessors and verifiers have sufficient time, resources and authority to perform their roles and responsibilities effectively.	Remove DCS
Information supplied to the awarding body for the purposes of registration and certification is complete and accurate.	Certification Suspended
Queries about the qualification specification, assessment guidance or related awarding body material are resolved and recorded.	Action Point
Candidate records and details of achievements are accurate, kept up to date, securely stored in line with awarding body requirements, and available for external verification and auditing.	Remove DCS
Requests are complied with for access to premises, records, information, candidates and staff for the purpose of external verification.	Certification Suspended

Recognition and Approval Criteria	Non-compliance
Centre Recognition	
There are sufficient competent and qualified assessors – as specified within the overarching assessment strategy for the sector - to support the assessment of units and the programme	Action Point
There are sufficient competent and qualified internal verifiers – as specified within the overarching assessment strategy for the sector - to support the assessment of units and the programme	Remove DCS
A system of professional updating explicitly linked to individual development plans is maintained for all assessors and internal verifiers	Action Point
Resource requirements for the effective delivery of the programme are accurately identified in relation to the specific qualification	Action Point
The identified resource requirements for the effective delivery of the programme are sufficient and accessible to all learners	Action Point
The centre ensures that equipment and facilities comply with relevant safeguarding, health and safety and other regulatory requirements	Action Point
The centre provides Pearson with access to premises, people and records, and cooperates with Pearson’s monitoring activities	Certification Suspended
Changes to programme personnel are notified to the Pearson Standards Verifier	Action Point

Recognition and Approval Criteria	Non-compliance
Learner Support	
Information, advice and guidance about qualification procedures and practices is provided to learners and potential learners	Action Point
Learners’ previous experience and development needs are matched against the requirements of the award and individual development/action plans are established.	Action Point
Where appropriate, literacy, numeracy & I.T. skills are evaluated and support agreed with learners	Action Point
Roles and responsibilities (including health and safety) of the learner and others involved in the process are explained	Action Point
Learners receive regular, ongoing guidance and support suited to their needs	Action Point
Individual assessment requirements of learners are identified and met where possible.	Action Point
There is a documented appeals process which meets Pearson’s requirements and which is explained to learners	Action Point
Access to unit certification is explained and available to learners.	Action Point

Recognition and Approval Criteria	Non-compliance
Assessment and Internal Quality Assurance	
Assessment is carried out by occupationally competent and qualified staff, as specified within the overarching assessment strategy for the qualification	Remove DCS
All decisions of unqualified assessors are validated by qualified, occupationally competent Assessors	Remove DCS
Assessment tools are suited to the NVQ and capture evidence effectively and efficiently	Action Point
Assessment is planned effectively to make best use of naturally occurring evidence opportunities	Action Point
Assessment is undertaken on an holistic rather than piecemeal basis	Action Point
Performance evidence from the learner's own working environment is the predominant source of evidence	Action Point
The range of methods used ensures equality of access to assessment for all learners	Action Point
The IV strategy sets out a clear and feasible rationale for sampling assessment decisions and assessment practice	Action Point
Assessment practice and decisions are systematically sampled and recorded	Remove DCS
Validation of summative assessment decisions is completed by qualified Internal Verifiers	Remove DCS
Results of sampling are acted upon and feedback given	Action Point
The IV system is used pro-actively to improve assessment practice	Action Point
Training and development is carried out to address identified needs of assessors and internal verifiers	Action Point
The effectiveness of the internal verification strategy is regularly reviewed against national requirements including the JAB guide	Action Point

Recognition and Approval Criteria	Non-compliance
Records	
Records of assessment and internal verification are made available for the purposes of auditing	Remove DCS
Records of assessment and internal verification activity are maintained in line with Pearson requirements	Action Point
A mechanism is in place to ensure that the centre's achievements are monitored and reviewed and used to inform future centre qualification developmental activity	Action Point
Learner, employer and other feedback is used to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of qualification provision against the centre's stated aims and policies, leading to continuous improvement	Action Point
A mechanism is in place to ensure that actions identified by external verification visits are disseminated to appropriate staff and corrective measures are implemented	Action Point
Learner achievement and assessment outcomes are monitored and reviewed in relation to the centre's equal opportunities policy	Action Point

Standards verifiers will also complete a section of their reports for centres that address the following risks to programme delivery.

Recognition and Approval Criteria	Non-compliance
Significant Failings In Delivery Of Programme(s)	
Assessment process disadvantages learners	Registration Suspended
Assessment decisions are unfair	Registration Suspended
No qualified internal verifier	Certification Suspended
Assessment does not meet national standards	Certification Suspended
The centre fails to provide access to requested records, information, learners and staff	Certification Suspended
Assessed evidence is not the authentic work of learners	Certification Suspended
Records of assessment show serious anomalies	Certification Suspended
Certification claims made before all the requirements of assessment are satisfied	Certification Suspended
Previously agreed corrective measures relating to 'Action Points' are not implemented	Remove DCS
Previously agreed corrective measures relating to suspension of DCS are not implemented	Certification Suspended

Appendix 2: Data requirements

QCA NVQ Code of Practice, 2006, Paragraphs 22 - 24

22. Awarding bodies must provide centres with instructions and guidance on record keeping. Instructions must specify the minimum information required to track learner progress and to allow for the independent authentication of certification claims. This must include:

- lists of all learners registered for each qualification offered, including:
 - learner name
 - date of birth
 - contact address
 - workplace address and contact details
 - assessor(s) name(s)
 - internal verifier(s) name(s)
 - date of registration with the awarding body
- learner assessment records detailing:
 - who assessed what and when
 - the assessment decision
 - the assessment methods used for each unit/component
 - the location of the supporting evidence
- records of internal verification activity detailing:
 - who verified what and when
 - details of the sample selected and its rationale
 - internal verifier standardisation meetings
 - assessor support meetings
 - assessor and verifier competence and the monitoring of assessor/internal verifier progress towards achievement of required qualifications
- requirements for the retention of learner evidence
- records of certificates claimed – including unit certificates – who claimed them and when.

23. Awarding bodies must require centres to retain these records for a minimum of three years in case any issues arise from external verification or appeals. Such records must be made available to the regulatory authorities upon request.

24. If a centre fails to comply with the requirements for maintaining auditable records and cannot substantiate claims made on behalf of learners, the awarding body must impose the appropriate sanction from the tariff of sanctions in Appendix 3 [Appendix 5, this document]. The awarding body must inform the regulatory authorities and start agreed investigative procedures (see paragraphs 73–81).

Appendix 3: Application of assessment methodology

QCA NVQ Code of Practice, 2006, Paragraphs 40-72

Assessment

40. Centres must appoint assessors to carry out internal assessment. Assessors will be responsible and accountable for:

- managing the assessment system, from assessment planning to making and recording assessment decisions as required by the awarding body
- assessing evidence of learner competence against the national occupational standards in the qualification
- ensuring that learners' evidence is valid, authentic and sufficient
- maintaining accurate and verifiable learner assessment and achievement records as required by the awarding body.

41. Centres must ensure that assessors are competent to perform their role. Centres must therefore provide appropriate training and development opportunities to ensure that assessors:

- either hold the qualifications needed to carry out assessment – D32, D33, A1 or A2 or Level 3 Award in Assessing Competence in the Work Environment or Level 3 Award in Assessing Vocationally Related Achievement or Level 3 Certificate in Assessing Vocational Achievement or within 18 months of commencing their role achieve Level 3 Award in Assessing Competence in the Work Environment or Level 3 Award in Assessing Vocationally Related Achievement or Level 3 Certificate in Assessing Vocational Achievement as appropriate, or any qualifications subsequently specified by the regulatory authorities, except where this requirement is replaced by equivalent measures contained within an assessment strategy approved by the regulatory authorities
- carry out assessment to the National Occupational Standards for Learning and Development (March 2010) Standard 9
- have the occupational expertise specified in the relevant assessment strategy before commencing their role and maintain the currency of this expertise for the duration of their role
- know the awarding body requirements for recording assessment decisions and maintaining assessment records.

42. Centres must ensure that the assessment decisions of unqualified assessors are checked, authenticated and countersigned by an assessor or internal verifier who is appropriately qualified and occupationally expert for the NVQ in question. The internal verifier must sample an increased proportion of assessment decisions by unqualified assessors. The internal verifier is also responsible and accountable for arranging the checking and countersigning process. Internal verifiers may verify only evidence that they did not assess.

43. Assessors and learners must provide a written declaration that learner evidence is authentic and that assessment took place under the conditions or context set out in the assessment specification. Failure to do this constitutes grounds for the suspension or withdrawal of approved status for the NVQ in question.

44. Centres must provide appropriate training and development opportunities to enable assessors to meet their responsibilities and gain a common understanding of relevant standards and other assessment requirements.

Awarding bodies must monitor a centre's compliance with this. Therefore, centres must keep records of all such staff development.

45. Awarding bodies must ensure that assessment arrangements at their approved centres comply with those detailed in the assessment specification.

46. In developing the arrangements and methodologies for the external quality control of assessment for each NVQ, awarding bodies must follow the agreed strategy for external quality control as established by the relevant sector body and approved by the regulatory authorities.

47. Centres' internal assessment processes and practices must be effective and support the integrity and consistency of the occupational standards in the award. This is achieved through internal verification, undertaken by the approved centre (see paragraphs 48–57 inclusive below) and external verification undertaken by the awarding body (see paragraphs 58–72 inclusive below).

Internal verification

48. Centres must operate explicit, written internal verification procedures to ensure:

- the accuracy and consistency of assessment decisions between assessors operating at the centre
- that assessors are consistent in their interpretation and application of the national occupational standards in the award.

49. Centres must appoint internal verifiers who will be responsible for: regularly sampling evidence of assessment decisions made by all assessor across all aspects of NVQ assessment. Sampling must include direct observation of assessment practice

- maintaining up-to-date records of internal verification and sampling activity and ensuring that these are available for external verification
- establishing procedures to ensure that all assessors interpret the national occupational standards in the same way
- monitoring and supporting the work of assessors
- facilitating appropriate staff development and training for assessors
- providing feedback to the external verifier on the effectiveness of assessment
- ensuring that any corrective action required by the awarding body is carried out within agreed timescales.

50. Centres must ensure that internal verifiers are competent to perform their role. Centres must therefore provide appropriate training and development opportunities to ensure that internal verifiers:

- either hold the qualifications needed to carry out internal verification – D34 or VI or Level 4 Award in the Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice or Level 4 Certificate in Leading the Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice or within 18 months of commencing their role achieve Level 4 Award in the Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice or any qualifications subsequently specified by the regulatory authorities, except where this requirement is replaced by equivalent measures contained within an assessment strategy approved by the regulatory authorities
- internal verifiers must carry out internal verification to the National Occupational Standards for Learning and Development (March 2010) Standard 11
- have the occupational expertise specified in the relevant assessment strategy before commencing their role and maintain the currency of this expertise for the duration of their role
- understand the content, structure and assessment requirements for the awards they are verifying

51. Centres must ensure that the decisions of unqualified internal verifiers are checked, authenticated and countersigned by an internal verifier who is appropriately qualified and occupationally expert as specified by the relevant sector body.

52. Awarding bodies must monitor a centre's compliance with these requirements. Centres must therefore provide evidence of their internal verifiers' development activities and qualifications.

53. Internal verifiers may undertake assessment at the centre. In such circumstances the internal verifier must have the qualifications and occupational expertise specified for assessors by the relevant sector body. Internal verifiers may verify only evidence they did not assess.

54. In exceptional circumstances, internal verification may be carried out by an external verifier. Awarding bodies may charge a centre for providing this service in line with their published costs and charges. In such cases the awarding body must ensure that the external verifier is competent to carry

out internal verification and that the decisions and work of this person are subject to independent scrutiny by a different external verifier (see also paragraph 30). Awarding bodies must be able to show that these arrangements are effective.

55. Awarding bodies must provide centres with guidance on internal verification to ensure that there are accurate and consistent standards of assessment both between assessors operating within a centre and between centres offering the same award.

56. Guidance produced by the awarding body must include exemplars of:

- procedures for standardising assessment so that assessors are operating to the same standard
- models for developing an internal verification sampling plan appropriate to the centre's level of assessment activity. Models must ensure that over time all assessors, all assessment methods and all learner units are included in the sample
- procedures for standardising the judgements and decisions of internal verifiers operating in a centre
- the types of records a centre must keep to demonstrate the effectiveness of its internal verification procedures.

57. Awarding bodies must monitor a centre's internal verification process through its own quality assurance arrangements. Centres must provide evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of such internal verification procedures against the requirements in paragraphs 48–56 above. Failure to meet these means that the integrity of assessment decisions at the centre is at risk. Therefore the awarding body must impose the appropriate sanction as specified in Appendix 3 [Appendix 5, this document] of the NVQ code of practice 2006.

External verification

58. External verifier visits to centres must be an integral part of an awarding body's quality assurance strategy. Awarding bodies must ensure that external verifiers visit only centres in which they have no direct or indirect personal or financial interest.

59. The minimum frequency of external verification visits to centres is usually two per year (a total of two days per year). The exact frequency and duration of external verifier visits must reflect the centre's performance, taking account of:

- number of assessment sites
- number and throughput of learners
- number and turnover of assessors
- number and turnover of internal verifiers.

Awarding bodies must put in place a risk management strategy for monitoring approved centres. To ensure consistency of approach to risk assessment across awarding bodies, risk assessment must identify and justify the number of external verifier visits required. Awarding bodies must retain evidence that their risk management strategy is effective and must make this available to the regulatory authorities upon request.

60. Awarding bodies must require external verifiers to:

- confirm that centres continue to meet the centre approval criteria
- recommend the imposition of appropriate sanctions on centres that fail to meet the requirements
- confirm that assessments are conducted by appropriately qualified and occupationally expert assessors
- sample assessment decisions to confirm that they are authentic and valid and that national standards are being consistently maintained
- confirm that assessment decisions are regularly sampled, through internal verification, for accuracy against the national standards
- check that claims for certification are authentic, valid and supported by auditable records
- confirm that centres have carried out corrective actions as required by the awarding body
- advise and support centres on the interpretation of national standards
- advise and support centres on awarding body requirements and procedures, including access to fair assessment and appeals against awarding body decisions

- provide centres with up-to-date information and advice in line with awarding body and regulatory authority guidance and requirements.

16 NVQ code of practice 2006

61. External verifiers must inform the centre in advance of planned activity such as a centre visit, to agree the scope of the visit and the verification and sampling activities that will take place. Awarding bodies must provide external verifiers with all the information they need to carry out the verification process effectively and to verify certification claims. Centres must understand that they are obliged to comply with any requests for access to premises, people and records for the purposes of external verification. If a centre fails to provide access, the awarding body must impose the appropriate sanction as specified in Appendix 3. [See Appendix 5, this document].

62. If a centre cancels a pre-arranged external verification visit at short notice, the awarding body must be satisfied that there was a legitimate reason to do so. If this cannot be established, the awarding body will reserve the right to withhold certification claims until a monitoring visit is completed (see also paragraph 35).

63. Awarding bodies must ensure centres are aware that the awarding bodies and the regulatory authorities reserve the right to perform such visits at short notice or without notice, to minimise the risk of unsubstantiated claims for certification.

Sampling

64. Awarding bodies must provide external verifiers with all the information necessary for them to carry out the sampling process effectively. This includes published guidance on the sampling of assessment and internal verification decisions and of learner and assessment records. Such guidance must ensure that the sampling strategy involves not only the inspection of evidence but also meetings with internal verifiers, assessors and learners, in order that the external verifier can confirm whether the process of assessment, as well as the standards being used to judge learner competence, meet national standards. The sampling strategy must also reflect the specific quality assurance needs of each centre. If external verification indicates that the consistency of assessment decisions and practices against the national occupational standards is at risk, an awarding body must increase the sample.

65. Awarding bodies must ensure that external verifiers record the sample and the rationale behind its selection, so that the awarding body can monitor the characteristics of selected samples over time as well as the effectiveness of the sampling carried out by its external verifiers. Over time, the sampling strategy must sample:

- the assessment decisions of all assessors
- all assessment methods
- all assessment locations
- learners at different stages of their award
- the decisions and records of all internal verifiers
- assessment records.

Awarding bodies must ensure that particular attention is always paid to the decisions of unqualified or inexperienced assessors and internal verifiers.

66. Awarding bodies must ensure that the selection of learners, assessors and internal verifiers for sampling are not left solely to the discretion or convenience of the centre. External verifiers must select some learners without prior notification to the centre, to minimise the risk of unsubstantiated claims for certification. External verifiers must inform the awarding body if a centre fails to make available those learners selected for interview. The centre must provide proof that these learners exist. If this cannot be clearly established, the awarding body must:

- inform the regulatory authorities
- suspend the centre from registering further learners or claiming certificates
- start investigative action as agreed with the regulatory authorities.

External verifier reports

67. External verifiers must provide feedback to centres at the end of each visit.

This must be followed by a written report that:

- records the date of the visit
- details the monitoring and verification activities undertaken, including
- information on the sample, any audits conducted and who was interviewed
- details any changes in centre staff or their competence since the last visit
- provides explicit feedback to the centre on the quality and consistency of its assessment process and the effectiveness of internal verification arrangements
- highlights areas of good practice against the centre approval criteria
- specifies what actions the centre must take if its performance does not meet the requirements, when these actions must be completed and who is responsible for completing them
- confirms whether the centre has carried out any previously agreed action points.

68. Awarding bodies must use external verifier reports as a key component of their ongoing monitoring work with centres. If a centre's external verifier changes, the awarding body must provide the new verifier with a copy of that centre's most recent report and action plan.

69. If a centre is consistently failing to meet the centre approval criteria or has failed to implement previously agreed actions, external verifiers are responsible for recommending that the awarding body impose the appropriate sanction as specified in Appendix 3 [Appendix 5, this document].

70. Awarding bodies must maintain rigorous quality assurance and control arrangements that ensure accurate and consistent assessment decisions against the national occupational standards specified for an award, both within and between centres approved to offer an NVQ.

71. Awarding bodies must ensure that external verifiers are competent to perform their role.

Awarding bodies must therefore provide appropriate training and development opportunities to ensure that external verifiers:

- either hold the qualifications needed to carry out external verification – D35 or V2 or Level 4 Award in the External Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice or Level 4 Certificate in Leading the External Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice – or within 12 months of commencing their role achieve the Level 4 Award in the External Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice, or any qualifications subsequently specified by the regulatory authorities except where this requirement is replaced by equivalent measures contained within an assessment strategy approved by the regulatory authorities
- carry out external verification external verification to the National Occupational Standards for Learning and Development (March 2010) Standard 12
- have the occupational expertise specified in the relevant assessment strategy before commencing their role and maintain the currency of this expertise for the duration of their role
- understand the tariff of sanctions specified in Appendix 3 [Appendix 5, this document] and how to apply it
- understand the national occupational standards for the NVQs & SVQs they will be verifying
- know the awarding body's systems and documentation
- understand the NVQ system and any national policy and guidance documents describing assessment and verification practice.

72. Awarding bodies must monitor the performance and judgements of their external verifiers for accuracy and consistency. This must include the use of performance review systems and supervised external verifier visits, plus the monitoring of centre feedback, external verifier reports and consistency in applying the tariff of sanctions. The frequency of such monitoring must reflect the prior experience and performance of the individuals concerned.

If the accuracy or consistency of external verifier decisions is in doubt, the awarding body must act promptly to safeguard the integrity of the verification process.

Appendix 4: QCA NVQ Code of Practice, 2006, Approved Centre Criteria

I Management systems

NVQ approved centre criterion number	Criteria	Possible sources of evidence
1.0	The centre's aims and policies in relation to NVQs & SVQs are supported by senior management and understood by the assessment team.	Documented quality procedures. Progress reports and staff updates.
1.1	The centre's access and fair assessment policy and practice is understood and complied with by assessors and candidates.	Documented policies and procedures. Access and fair assessment policy review mechanisms.
1.2	The roles, responsibilities, authorities and accountabilities of the assessment and verification team across all assessment sites are clearly defined, allocated and understood.	Documented quality assurance procedures. An organisational chart. Documented and signed agreements indicating the lines of accountability of partner organisations in relation to the management of assessment and internal quality assurance. Records of all assessment sites and personnel. CVs of the assessment team and internal verifiers.
1.3	There is effective communication within the assessment team and with the awarding body.	Staff handbooks and updates. Organisational charts. Minutes of team meetings. Records of communication with the awarding body.
1.4	Awarding bodies are notified of any changes that may affect the centre's ability to meet the centre approval requirements.	Notification of changes to the assessment and verification team. Notification of changes to resources.
1.5	Assessors and verifiers have sufficient time, resources and authority to perform their roles and responsibilities effectively.	A record of assessor/candidate allocation. Candidate/assessor ratios and time allocation. Oral confirmation from assessors/verifiers.
1.6	Information supplied to the awarding body for the purposes of registration and certification is complete and accurate.	Records of candidate entry/registration details and certificate claims.
1.7	Queries about the qualification specification, assessment guidance or related awarding body material are resolved and recorded.	Records of queries raised with awarding bodies. Records/minutes of queries raised with the internal verifier.
1.8	Candidate records and details of achievements are accurate, kept up to date, securely stored in line with awarding body requirements, and available for external verification and auditing.	Candidate registration details. Candidate assessment records. Evidence files/portfolios. Security and access arrangements.
1.9	Requests are complied with for access to premises, records, information, candidates and staff for the purpose of external verification.	Data and information management systems. Candidate tracking systems. Assessment and internal verification records.

2 Resources

NVQ approved centre criterion number	Criteria	Possible sources of evidence
2.0	There are sufficient competent and qualified assessors and internal verifiers to meet the demand for assessment and verification activity.	CVs and development plans for the assessment team. A list of qualified assessors and internal verifiers. Assessor/candidate ratios.
2.1	A staff development programme is established for the assessment and verification team in line with identified needs.	Staff induction and guidance materials. Records of meetings/briefings/updates. Records of individual development plans. Action plans to acquire the relevant qualifications.
2.2	Resource needs are accurately identified in relation to the specific award and resources are made available.	Records of resource availability. Evidence of any additional resources obtained.
2.3	Equipment and accommodation used for the purposes of assessment comply with the requirements of relevant health and safety acts.	Public employee liability certificates. Records of equipment and accommodation. Maintenance schedules. Health and safety policies.

3 Candidate support

NVQ approved centre criterion number	Criteria	Possible sources of evidence
3.0	Information, advice and guidance about qualification procedures and practices are provided to candidates and potential candidates.	Candidate guidance and induction materials. Details of support services available. Appeals procedures. Oral confirmation by candidates.
3.1	Candidates' development needs are matched against the requirements of the award and an agreed individual assessment plan is established.	Candidate initial assessment procedures. Candidate assessment plans. Learner/trainee contracts.
3.2	Candidates have regular opportunities to review their progress and goals and to revise their assessment plan accordingly.	Candidate assessment plan, frequency of review meetings; examples of revisions to assessment plans
3.3	Access to assessment is encouraged through the use of a range of valid assessment methods.	Assessment plans and candidate assessment records. Provision for candidates with particular assessment requirements.
3.4	Particular assessment requirements of candidates are identified and met where possible.	Materials/equipment/facilities to support candidates with particular requirements.
3.5	There is an established appeals procedure that is documented and made available to all candidates.	Documented appeals procedure, including details of grounds for appeal and timescales. Records of appeals made and their outcomes.
3.6	Unit certification is made available to candidates.	Records of units registered/claimed/awarded. Induction materials.

4 Assessment and verification

NVQ approved centre criterion number	Criteria	Possible sources of evidence
4.0	Internal verification procedures and activities are clearly documented, consistent with national requirements and ensure the quality and consistency of assessment.	Internal verification plans and reports. A sampling strategy and schedule of activity. Records of assessment team meetings. Assessor networking opportunities.
4.1	Assessment decisions and practices are regularly sampled and findings are acted upon to ensure consistency and fairness.	Sampled assessments (observation, candidate portfolios, knowledge evidence etc). Internal verification plans and records of internal verification activity. Records of assessment sampling strategies. Minutes of assessment team meetings. Records of networking/standardisation events.
4.2	Records of internal verification activity are maintained in line with awarding body requirements and made available for the purposes of auditing.	Internal verification plan and sampling records. Minutes of assessment team meetings.
4.3	The effectiveness of the internal verification strategy is reviewed against national requirements and corrective measures are implemented.	Internal reviews of sampling strategies. External verifier reports. Evidence of corrective actions taken.
4.4	Assessment is conducted by qualified and occupationally expert staff.	Details of the assessment team including occupational background, experience, possession of relevant qualifications. Details of countersigning arrangements for any assessment decisions made by unqualified assessors.
4.5	Internal verification is conducted by appropriately qualified and experienced staff.	Details of internal verifier occupational background, experience and relevant qualifications. Details of countersigning arrangements for any internal verification decisions made by unqualified internal verifiers.

5 Records

NVQ approved centre criterion number	Criteria	Possible sources of evidence
5.0	The centre's achievements are monitored and reviewed and used to inform future centre qualification developmental activity.	Internal audit/self-assessment arrangements. Records of findings against the approval requirements. Evidence of corrective actions taken/implemented.
5.1	Candidate, employer and other feedback is used to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of qualification provision against the centre's stated aims and policies, leading to continuous improvement.	Evaluation forms/surveys. Users' charter/customer service statements.
5.2	Actions identified by external verification visits are disseminated to appropriate staff and corrective measures are implemented.	External verifier report(s) circulated to the assessment team and senior management. Action plans.
5.3	Information and recording systems enable candidates' achievements to be monitored and reviewed in relation to the centre's equal opportunities policy.	Achievement records in relation to the access and fair assessment policy. Statistical information on achievement and certification rates analysed by factors such as ethnic origin, disability and gender.

Appendix 5: Sanctions and centre approval criteria

Sanctions for non-compliance with the centre approval criteria

Introduction

The regulatory authorities have developed a tariff of sanctions for dealing with approved centres whose NVQ & SVQ management, assessment and quality assurance systems fail to meet the centre approval criteria. Based directly upon these requirements, which are seen to be tried and tested and widely accepted, the tariff is designed to ensure:

- a transparent, fair and consistent response by all awarding bodies when specific shortcomings are found at their approved centres
- public confidence in the quality assurance and control arrangements underpinning NVQs & SVQs.

The regulatory authorities will monitor each awarding body's use of the tariff as part of their ongoing post-accreditation monitoring. An awarding body may withdraw centre approval for reasons not directly related to the quality of assessment, such as a failure to meet the awarding body's commercial terms of business. The tariff will be reviewed and updated as necessary in the light of operational experience.

The tariff of sanctions

The tariff links five levels of transgression against the centre approval criteria with a required sanction. These are set out in detail in Table 1 below, together with a rationale for the sanction, and represent the minimum response required of an awarding body to a particular shortcoming or problem.

Tariff/Level of Transgression	Sanction	Rationale
1	Entry in action plan	Non-compliance with centre approval criteria but no threat to the integrity of assessment decisions
2	Removal of direct claims status, i.e. claims for certification must be authorised by the external Verifier	Close scrutiny of the integrity of assessment decisions required
3	a) Suspension of registration (b) Suspension of certification	(a) Threat to learners (b) Loss of the integrity of assessment decisions – risk of invalid claims for certification
4	Withdrawal of qualification approval of specific NVQs & SVQs	Irretrievable breakdown in management and quality assurance of specific NVQs & SVQs
5	Withdrawal of centre approval for all NVQs & SVQs	Irretrievable breakdown in management and quality assurance of all NVQs & SVQs run by the centre

Sanctions and centre approval criteria

Tariff levels 1–3

For tariff levels 1–3, Table 2 links specific failure to meet requirements (non-compliances) with specific sanctions. With some requirements, more than one level of sanction may apply depending on the gravity of the infringement as indicated in the table.

Tariff levels 4 and 5

For tariff levels 4 and 5 there may be non-compliances across a range of centre approval criteria. These would need to indicate significant faults in management and quality assurance, resulting in an ongoing failure to meet essential assessment requirements. This would apply to a specific NVQ at tariff level 4, or across all NVQs & SVQs at tariff level 5. Failure to rectify non-compliances at tariff level 4 is a reason for applying a sanction at tariff level 5.

Guidance on interpretation

The above sanctions represent a minimum response to identified non-compliances, but there will be circumstances in which an awarding body may judge that a higher level of tariff is justified.

Combinations

A combination of non-compliances at a particular tariff might call for a more serious response. A judgement should be made against the rationale of the sanction. Thus a combination of infringements at tariff 2 could threaten the integrity of assessment decisions and thus merit a response at tariff 3.

Persistence

A failure to implement action plan requests at tariff level 1 should invoke a tariff level 2 response. Similarly a failure to rectify faults that have given rise to a level 2 sanction must invoke a tariff level 3 response.

Recurrences

A centre may temporarily rectify non-compliances in response to action plans (or higher level sanctions) only to display the same weaknesses again at a later date. An awarding body must take into account the track record of a centre in considering whether to impose a higher level sanction.

Malpractice

If the circumstances and nature of non-compliance indicate that fraudulence is involved, the procedures for dealing with malpractice should be invoked.

Non-compliance issue	Approved centre criteria that apply	Sanction	Rationale
<p>1.1 Centre's aims, policies and assessment practices, and responsibilities of personnel are not clear or well understood by assessment team</p> <p>1.2 Internal verification procedures and activities not clearly documented</p> <p>1.3 Communication within the assessment team and with the awarding body is ineffective</p> <p>1.4 Equipment and accommodation do not comply with health and safety acts</p> <p>1.5 Insufficient qualified assessors</p> <p>1.6 Assessors/internal verifiers do not have adequate development plans</p> <p>1.7 Candidates are not aware of their rights and responsibilities, e.g. no appeals procedure for candidates</p> <p>1.8 There is inadequate assessment planning with candidates</p> <p>1.9 Queries are not resolved or recorded</p> <p>1.10 Range of assessment methods is insufficient to encourage access</p> <p>1.11 Changes to personnel of the assessment and verification team are not notified to the awarding body</p> <p>1.12 Unit certification is not made available to candidates</p> <p>1.13 There is inadequate monitoring or review of procedures</p>	<p>1.0-1.2</p> <p>4.0</p> <p>1.3</p> <p>2.3</p> <p>2.0</p> <p>2.1</p> <p>3.0 – 3.5</p> <p>3.1, 3.2</p> <p>1.7</p> <p>3.3</p> <p>1.4</p> <p>3.6</p> <p>4.3, 5.0 – 5.2</p>	<p>Level 1</p> <p>Entry in Action Plan</p>	<p>Non-compliance with centre approval criteria but no threat to the integrity of assessment decisions</p>
<p>2.1 Assessors have insufficient time, resources or authority to perform their role</p> <p>2.2 Decisions of unqualified assessors have not been countersigned by qualified assessor</p> <p>2.3 Assessment decisions are not consistent</p> <p>2.4 Insufficient qualified internal verifiers</p> <p>2.5 Decisions of unqualified internal verifier have not been countersigned by qualified internal verifier</p> <p>2.6 Records are insufficient to allow audit of assessment</p> <p>2.7 Previously agreed corrective measures relating to level 1 are not implemented</p>	<p>1.5</p> <p>4.4</p> <p>4.1</p> <p>2.0</p> <p>4.5</p> <p>4,2</p> <p>5.2</p>	<p>Level 2</p> <p>Removal of direct claims, i.e. claims for certification must be authorised by the external verifier</p>	<p>Close scrutiny of the integrity of assessment decisions required</p>

Non-compliance issue	Approved centre criteria that apply	Sanction	Rationale
<p>3A.1 Assessment process disadvantages candidates</p> <p>3A.2 Assessment decisions are unfair</p> <p>3B.1 No qualified internal verifier</p> <p>3B.2 Assessment does not meet national standards</p> <p>3B.3 The centre fails to provide access to requested records, information, candidates and staff</p> <p>3B.4 Assessed evidence is not the authentic work of candidates</p> <p>3B.5 Records of assessment show serious anomalies</p> <p>3B.6 Certification claims made before all the requirements of assessment are satisfied</p> <p>3B.7 Previously agreed corrective measures relating to level 2 non-compliance are not implemented</p>	<p>3.0 – 3.5</p> <p>1.1, 3.0 – 3.5, 4.1</p> <p>2.0</p> <p>1.7, 3.3, 4.1, 4.4</p> <p>1.9</p> <p>1.8</p> <p>1.6, 1.8, 4.2, 5.3</p> <p>1.6</p> <p>5.2</p>	<p>Level 3A/3B</p> <p>Suspension of registration/certification</p>	<p>3a – threat to candidates</p> <p>3B – loss of integrity of assessment decisions – danger of invalid claims for certification</p>
<p>4.1 Significant faults in the management and quality assurance of the NVQ programme, which result in an ongoing failure to meet the core requirements for the conduct of assessment.</p> <p>4.2 Previously agreed corrective measures relating to a level 3 non-compliance have not been implemented</p>		<p>Level 4</p> <p>Withdrawal of centre approval for specific NVQs & SVQs</p>	<p>Irretrievable breakdown in management and quality assurance of specific NVQs & SVQs</p>
<p>5.1 Significant faults in the management and quality assurance of all NVQ programmes</p> <p>5.2 Previously agreed corrective measures relating to a level 4 non-compliance not been implemented</p>		<p>Level 5</p> <p>Withdrawal of centre approval for all NVQs & SVQs</p>	<p>Irretrievable breakdown in management and quality</p> <p>Irretrievable breakdown in management and quality</p>

Appendix 6: Realistic Working Environments

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

There are – mostly exceptional - circumstances where the delivery and assessment of these qualifications may be undertaken in a simulated environment as permitted and published by the relevant Sector Skills Council or Standards Setting Body for the sector concerned.

This provision is published in documents variously titled as ‘Assessment Strategy’, ‘Assessment Requirements’ and ‘Assessment Principles’, as examples.

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

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

Definition of a Realistic Working Environment

For NVQs, SVQs and competence qualifications the following criteria must be applied to the delivery and assessment environment for the occupational skills to which these qualifications attest. These criteria must be consistently and rigorously applied to ensure that all learners are being taught and assessed in a RWE that properly reflects the environment found in a commercial workplace.

This is to ensure that learners taught in this environment are not disadvantaged and are able develop fully occupational skills that are equivalent to those developed in the workplace.

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

9. Public and customer experience and perceptions of the RVE must properly reflect that for the occupation concerned such that learners meet the requirements for effective and acceptable:
 - written and verbal communication
 - use of Personal Protective Equipment as required by the occupation
 - punctuality and time-keeping
 - customer service
 - personal conduct, appearance and hygiene
10. At all times the RVE and the conduct of learners must fully comply with Health and Safety Legislation as it applies to the sector concerned.