



# Centre Guide to Quality Assurance

Essential Digital Skills Qualifications (EDSQ)  
Entry Level and Level 1

2025 to 2026

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# Using this handbook

This handbook applies to the period from September 2025 until August 2026. It describes the administrative arrangements and requirements for quality assurance of the Essential Digital Skills Qualification.

This document provides the key information required for your centre to meet the quality assurance requirements for 2025 to 2026. It will include information on the internal and external verification procedures for centres.

This handbook is for the centres' Examination Officers, Programme Managers, Assessors, Internal Verifiers and Lead Internal Verifiers. It explains the quality assurance processes for the Essential Digital Skills Qualifications.

This handbook should be used in conjunction with the [Instructions for the Conduct of Controlled Assessment handbook](#).

All centre staff need to comply with these administrative requirements. The Programme Managers, Assessors, Internal Verifiers and Lead Internal Verifiers for these qualifications should be made aware of this document.

# Team Roles and Responsibilities

Centres are required to:

- gain both centre and qualification approval prior to enrolling learners on to the programme
- register all new learners with Pearson when they join the programme
- ensure all components and levels are sampled as per the centre's internal verification model
- ensure all certification claims are correct.

## Examinations Officer

Shortly after the registration of learners, Examinations Officers will receive notification and contact details for their allocated Standards Verifier for 2025 to 2026.

The Standards Verifier will liaise with the appropriate person at the centre to ensure that the external verification sampling process runs smoothly.

The same Standards Verifier may not be allocated to the centre as in the previous academic year. If the centre urgently requires standards verification to take place before the allocated Standards Verifier makes contact, please use the [Contact Us](#) portal.

Examinations Officers normally deal with the administrative arrangements for registration and certification of learners. When registering learners on Edexcel Online, Examinations Officers should ensure that Assessors submit a complete list of learners. Estimated completion dates should also be provided.

Only Examinations Officers and Examinations Assistants will be able to access the live assessments on the [Secure Tests](#) area of our website. As the live assessments are gold padlocked, only the Edexcel Online username and password for both roles can gain access.

Please [contact our Customer Support team](#), if your examinations office experiences difficulties accessing the secure website.

Centres must deliver live assessments in line with the Instructions for the Conduct of Controlled Assessment document available on the [Instructions for the Conduct of Controlled Assessment handbook](#). This document outlines the centre's responsibilities for conducting the live controlled assessments.

The Examinations Officer is also responsible for:

- the safe and secure storage of all assessments
- ensuring that all teaching and assessment staff are familiar with the appropriate guidance documentation and assessment information. This also includes the Assessor Guidance for each assessment Set
- ensuring assessors technical staff responsible for setting up and administering the Task component have access to the Assessor Guidance for each assessment Set in sufficient time to make suitable arrangements for the Task
- ensuring all teaching and assessment staff have the right access to the controlled assessment materials at the appropriate time
- ensuring assessments are carried out in accordance with JCQ Instructions for Conducting Examinations.

Centres must take note of the following points when conducting live assessments:

- follow the procedures described in the Instructions for the Conduct of Controlled Assessment document which outlines the process for safe storage, copying, distribution and archiving of the assessments
- accept the terms and conditions on the secure assessment website
- the assessment materials are downloaded for printing from the secure site no earlier than 2 weeks before the date of the assessment
- if the learner fails a component it must be retaken from a different Set. Pearson advises that this should not be within 14 days of the learner's prior attempt. However, the re-sit can be undertaken in less than 14 days if the centre believes that the learner has addressed their gaps and is now ready to resit the assessment.

## The Lead Internal Verifier

A Lead Internal Verifier is the person designated by the centre to act as the point of sign-off for the assessment and internal verification of the qualification. At small centres (with fewer than 15 candidates), it is acceptable to have one Internal Verifier who is also the Lead Internal Verifier. **Please note:** The Lead Internal Verifier and Internal Verifiers cannot verify their own work.

The Lead Internal Verifier should be:

- someone with the authority to oversee assessment outcomes. Ideally, this is the Programme Leader, as the Lead Internal Verifier is a key part of the role
- able to co-ordinate across Assessors and Internal Verifiers at Entry Level and Level 1.

For standards verification, the Lead Internal Verifier:

- ensures that records of assessments are maintained, including the Sample Report Form
- oversees the completion of the Centre Declaration Form and the Centre Remote Sampling Checklist
- liaises with the Standards Verifier to schedule appropriate sampling.

Lead Internal Verifiers must ensure that their centres have a robust system of internal verification to check that all assessments are secure. Internal verification should be included when the programme delivery is being planned. Internal verification should be carried out in a timely manner throughout the year.

Effective internal verification guides and supports Assessors. Effective feedback from the Lead Internal Verifier also aids the Assessors' skills development.

The Lead Internal Verifier is responsible for:

- liaising with the Standards Verifier
- arranging feedback to the assessment team following sampling
- regularly sampling assessment decisions made by all Internal Verifiers across all components, levels and sites. We advise that a minimum of 10% of all assessments are sampled.
- ensuring that all centre sub-sites follow the internal verification procedures set by the centre
- facilitating appropriate standardisation, staff development and training for Internal Verifiers and Assessors to ensure national standards are maintained
- ensuring that all teaching and assessment staff and those undertaking internal verification have access to:
  - the full programme specification
  - relevant information from this handbook, centre procedures and other guides and policy documents issued by us.

# Internal Sampling

Role	Responsibility
<b>Assessors</b>	Assess: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 100% of learner work</li></ul>
<b>Internal Verifiers</b>	Verify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• a minimum of 25% of all assessments</li><li>• a selection of learners work per component and level</li><li>• all Assessors</li><li>• all sites</li><li>• a sample based on risk (e.g. new/inexperienced assessors)</li></ul>
Lead Internal Verifier	Verify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• a minimum of 10% of all assessments</li><li>• a selection of learners' work per component and level</li><li>• all Internal Verifiers</li><li>• all Assessors</li><li>• a sample based on risk (e.g. new/inexperienced internal verifiers)</li></ul>

## The Assessor

Assessors are responsible and accountable for:

- planning when learners are prepared to take the live assessments, making the assessments available to learners and marking the assessments of learners for assessment, marking, and recording assessment decisions
- implementing assessments while following the Instructions for the Conduct of Controlled Assessment document
- contextualising the Entry Level Task, if necessary
- ensuring that the correct and latest Mark Scheme and Assessment Record for the Set is used and applied fairly and consistently
- maintaining accurate and verifiable learner assessment and achievement records.



# The Internal Verifier

The Internal Verifier is a centre/team-based role. It is good practice to develop these skills across the team as Internal Verifiers cannot internally verify their own assessment decisions. The appropriate size of the internal verification team depends on the number of learners assessed at your centre. A team of two is the minimum number of staff involved in assessment and internal verification at a centre. This is because no person can internally verify their own assessment decisions.

Internal Verifiers are at the centre of the quality assurance process. Internal Verifiers ensure that assessments across the centre consistently meet national standards. Therefore, Internal Verifiers must be at a competent level in the assessment of the qualification offered.

Internal Verifiers are responsible and accountable for:

- regularly sampling assessment decisions made by all Assessors across all components, levels and sites. We advise that a minimum of 25% of assessments are sampled across all Assessors and sites
- establishing procedures to develop a common interpretation of the assessment requirements between Assessors, e.g. standardisation meetings/activities
- monitoring and supporting the work of Assessors within the centre
- maintaining up-to-date records for internal verification and sampling activity on the appropriate Mark Scheme and Assessment Records
- monitoring and ensuring consistency in the interpretation and application of standards
- facilitating appropriate staff development and training for Assessors

# Introduction to Essential Digital Skills

The components within the qualification are available at Entry Level and Level 1.

Pearson provides assessments for both levels.

## Essential Digital Skills qualification structure

Level	Number of components	Format of components
Entry Level 3	3 components	Question Paper; Task; Observation
Level 1	2 components	Question Paper; Task

- Learners **must pass all components** to receive certification.
- **Please note:** These components are not units in their own right and each subject is a single-unit qualification.
- Certificates will show the qualification and level achieved, as well as the notification of performance and components achieved.
- The assessments are designed to be taken when the learner is ready.

The Examinations Officer has the appropriate access to download the Assessor Guidance and the live assessment materials as they are gold padlocked for each Set. The Sample Assessment Materials can be accessed on the [EDSQ Course materials page](#).

Marked assessments **must not** be handed back to learners under any circumstances, as this could jeopardise the security of the live assessment materials.

The pass mark for each component of the controlled assessment is stated in the Mark Scheme and Assessment Record.

Learners **must** pass each component. Learners may re-sit a failed component (using a different Set). Pearson advises that this should not be within 14 days of the learner's prior attempt. However, the re-sit can be undertaken in less than 14 days if the centre believes that the learner has addressed their gaps and is now ready to re-sit the assessment.

Completed assessments are marked by the centre and are subject to internal verification. We will sample marked assessments through an standards verifications process. In certain cases, a follow-up sample may be required.

## Centre adaptation of tests at Entry Level

Centres are permitted to adapt the context of the Entry Level Task in line with the Assessor Guidance document which will be provided to centres for each Set. Please note that this only applies to the Entry Level Task. Centres are not permitted to contextualise the Task at Level 1. The guidance provides clear instructions regarding what can be adapted. To ensure that assessment materials are accessible, and the contexts are appropriate for all learners, it is important that centres can make adaptations to the context if it will enable learners to access the assessment and demonstrate their skills more readily.

Centres are required to gain approval for any contextualisation beforehand with their Standards Verifier to mitigate the risk of any contextualisation having any advantage or disadvantage to learners.

## Learner and centre administration

For all queries e.g. approvals, registration and certification, please [Contact Us via the Support Portal](#).

## Registrations

Centres should utilise an initial assessment process to establish the level of the learner prior to their registration.

# Additional requirements and special considerations

Centres may apply any special considerations/access arrangements such as additional time, rest breaks, reader, scribe (for the Question Paper) which are learners' usual methods of accessing the curriculum. These should be recorded on the Mark Scheme and Assessment Record.

Learners with additional requirements in relation to their mode of learning or assessment can have their usual support unless this compromises the outcome of the assessment. Please see our [Access Arrangements webpage](#) for more information.

If you have any specific queries about access requirements, please contact us using the [Pearson Support Portal](#).

# Quality assurance arrangements and administration

## Your communication with us

Quality monitoring must be maintained by investing in effective communication with Pearson. It is important to ensure that time schedules are synchronised to avoid delays during the quality assurance process. Pearson will communicate with centres by letter, telephone and email. Centres must maintain accurate details of their main contacts on the [Edexcel Online](#) system. Centres should review all their contact details every 6 months. This should include any new members of staff who will be using the centre accounts area of Edexcel Online.

## Quality assurance arrangements

The centre must appoint a Lead Internal Verifier. Please refer to the Lead Internal Verifier section in this document for more information on the role.

The centre must complete a Sample Report Form so learners can be sampled.

This can be completed by listing learners who have 'passed' all components of the assessment. These learners would have had at least 25% of their assessments go through an internal verification process. At least 10% of their assessments would be signed off by the Lead Internal Verifier.

The Sample Report Form must be password protected when sent via email to the Standards Verifier. This ensures that the report complies with GDPR regulations.

The allocated Standards Verifier will request assessments based on the Sample Report Form. Please refer to both the 'Internal assessment' and 'Verification' section together with the 'Standards verification' section of this handbook for further information on sampling.

If the centre is delivering a qualification from more than one site, the Standards Verifier allocated to the centre will need to include all participating sites within the verification sample.

# Internal assessment and verification

## Internal Verification Journey

1. The centre registers learners to the qualification



2. A standards verifier is allocated to the centre



3. The centre will deliver the qualification content and carry out assessments



4. The centre conducts internal marking



5. Internal verification processes



6. The centre completes the sample report form, centre checklist and centre declaration form and emails these to the standards verifier



7. The standards verifier selects learners from the sample report form



8. The centre uploads the requested sample and documentation to SharePoint as requested by the Standards Verifier



9. A standards verification visit is arranged to discuss actions



10. The standards verifier emails SV report to centre



11. A follow-up sample is completed if required

## Internal standardisation

Standardisation must be carried out when there is more than one Assessor delivering and marking the same assessment. The standardisation process is designed to make sure that all Assessors mark learner work consistently and accurately.

## Internal verification

Internal Verification is necessary to:

- ensure that marking meets the national standards and that these are adhered to by all Assessors
- identify problems or areas where Assessors require feedback/development

The Internal Verifiers should record their judgements and complete detailed feedback on the Mark Scheme and Assessment Record. It is recommended that the Internal Verifier verifies a minimum of 25% of the total number of completed assessments per component and per level. The centre must implement an internal verification strategy to ensure all Assessors are sampled.

When selecting a sample for Internal Verification, Internal Verifiers should consider:

- the experience of each Assessor with the qualification
- the size of the cohort
- a range of marks allocated
- issues identified in previous samples (if applicable)
- various centre sub-sites (if applicable).

Internal verification should take place soon after the assessment is completed.

This ensures that any remedial action can be implemented.

**Please note** that learners **must not** receive results before the Standards Verifier has completed their sample.

We recommend that the Lead Internal Verifier verifies a minimum of 10% of the total number of completed assessments per component and per level. If the centre schedules assessments throughout the academic year, the Lead Internal Verifier should sample a minimum of 10% of the assessments taken during each session.

## Good practice

Internal verification can be undertaken in a number of ways, but the following are examples of good practice:

- there is a recognised team which meets regularly to ensure standardisation of procedures, across the centre
- standardisation meetings are seen as pivotal to staff development
- internal verification processes are agreed upon and published so that they are clearly understood by all members of the assessment teams
- all Assessors are involved in and understand the internal verification process
- the time required to carry out internal verification is recognised
- the Internal Verifier does not have to be an Assessor, but they must have a good understanding and experience of the assessment.



# Standards Verification

Standards verification is the quality assurance method that we use to ensure that our centres are assessing to the national standards. Standards verification is carried out during an standards verification visit. In certain cases, a follow-up sample may be required.

Standards Verifiers are allocated to centres that have approval and have registered learners on this programme.

Centres need to liaise with their allocated Standards Verifier to discuss the standards verification needed for the year. They must also agree on a suitable date for the standards verification visit, which will follow the sampling of assessments by the Standards Verifier.

Centres are advised to allow 1-2 weeks between providing the sample for verification and the 'standards verification visit' depending on the time of year. This is because the sample must be verified before adequate feedback can be provided by the Standards Verifier.

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

- maintain the national standards of qualifications awarded by Pearson
- assess learner performance in accordance with national standards
- maintain a robust process for internal verification
- have a clear understanding of the verification procedures.

The key tasks of the Standards Verifier are to:

- verify marking practice and procedures, including assessment delivery, to ensure that national standards are applied consistently
- provide information, advice and support to centres
- provide feedback to Pearson and the centres
- promote and improve the quality of qualification assessment
- monitor resolutions to any action points
- recommend release or blocks to certification.

If you have a query regarding the allocation of a Standards Verifier or enquiring who your Standards Verifier is, please contact us via the [Pearson Support Portal](#).

# The Standards Verification Process

## Sample Report Form

The Sample Report Form contains the information necessary for the allocated Standards Verifier to conduct the whole standards verification process. The template is available on the [EDSQ Course materials page](#) under Quality assurance.

Learners need to have a registration number at this stage, or the Standards Verifier will request for registrations to be made before sampling can take place.

## Sending samples

The annual sample for each centre comprises:

Component	Number Sampled for Entry	Number Sampled for Level 1
Question Paper	5	5
Task	5	5
Observation	5	N/A

The Standards Verifier reserves the right to request additional samples or increase the sample size at any time.

# SharePoint

The requested learners' work **must** be sent to the Standards Verifier using a secure facility i.e. SharePoint. We encourage centres to use SharePoint to make the sharing of learner work between centres and SVs as easy and streamlined as possible. By using the SharePoint Portal we also ensure the security and data privacy of any candidates work that is shared. As a centre you will have a folder created for you. Each centre only has access to their own folder and cannot see any other centres folders. When centres are ready for standards verification, centres can upload documents to their folder, which the SV will then be able to view and/or download. An email will be generated with information of how to access your centre folder. You should notify your Standards Verifier of the email address/es of the person/s who will upload the sample, so that access rights can be granted.

**Please note:** if you have not received a SharePoint folder, contact your SV. Assessment materials **must not** be emailed.

## Multi-Factor Authentication

Our SharePoint site uses Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) as a security measure. This means that when we share a folder with you, you will be prompted to set up Multi-Factor Authentication. Use this guide for [how to set up MFA for SharePoint](#). You will be asked to download an app, or alternatively you can set up a different method.

If you experience any issues with this, please [contact our Customer Services team](#).

## Standards Verification

There are two key purposes for standards verification:

- to check that national standards are being correctly applied in the marking and internal verification of assessments
- to check that the administration of assessments and associated record-keeping demonstrate that there are effective security and assessment procedures in place.

The Standards Verifier agrees on a schedule for the standards verification visit with the Lead Internal Verifier. This should include:

- discussion of the Centre Declaration Form
- time to feedback to the Lead Internal Verifier on the outcome of the sampling
- discussion of any action points following sampling.

The purpose of the standards verification visit is for the Standards Verifier to make a decision on whether or not to allow certification.

The centre is advised to wait 5 days after receiving confirmation of the programme approval on the Standards Verification Report before making any claims on Edexcel Online.

## Documentation required for sampling

Your centre must provide copies of:

- completed sampling report form
- date/s of internal standardisation, names of Assessors who attended including records of any discussion points or clarifications required
- assessment and internal verification plans
- internal verification records, including feedback to Assessors
- relevant learners' Mark Schemes and Assessment Record Sheets.

## Follow up sampling

If possible, the components and levels available prior to the standards verification visit will be sampled and released for certification. Any remaining components and levels will be sampled through follow up sampling at a later stage during the year.

The date for submitting the follow up sample is agreed between the centre and the Standards Verifier during the standards verification visit. However, all follow up sampling must be completed by 31<sup>st</sup> July to enable certifications before the cut-off deadline of 31<sup>st</sup> August 2026. The centre is advised to wait 5 days after receiving confirmation of the programme approval on the Standards Verification Report before making any claims on Edexcel Online.

# Following standards verification

After standards verification, if the centre is given a release to certificate by the Standards Verifier, they can continue to assess and verify the controlled assessments for the remainder of the academic year. However, Pearson reserves the right to re-sample assessments after the Standards Verifier has allowed access to certification. A certification release lasts for the academic year in which the standards verification visit takes place. The deadline to claim certification for learners completing the 2025-2026 assessments is 31 August 2026.

If there are serious issues identified by the Standards Verifier, these must be addressed by the centre. The centre will have a block put on certification while these action points are being addressed. Further sampling of completed controlled assessments will need to take place to show that any action points relating to assessment or internal verification have been addressed. It is therefore important to schedule standards verification with enough time between receiving the results of the standards verification and claiming certificates.

Standards Verification outcome	What this means
Yes	The centre has <b>met</b> the minimum sample requirement. No further action is needed the centre will be released for certification.
No	The centre has consistently <b>not met</b> their action points, or the SV is <b>not</b> happy to release the samples they have seen. immediate action required and centre certification will be blocked.
Limited release	The centre has <b>not met</b> the minimum sample requirement. Only the learners specified in the SV Report are released for certification.
N/A	No samples were seen for this qualification and level.

# Retaining assessments

For centres to monitor assessment decisions over time, they should retain all completed and marked controlled assessments until certificates are received, checked and issued to learners.

The following documents must be retained for a minimum of three years, for all learners whose assessments have been through the standards verification process:

- Mark Scheme and Assessment Record
- assessments submitted to the Standards Verifier
- records of internal verification meetings
- SV Reports.

# Communicating with us

Pearson communicates with centres by newsletter, telephone and email. To make sure we reach you, please ensure that you maintain accurate contact details on Edexcel Online.

You can submit any queries to us using the [Pearson Support Portal](#). By using the Support Portal, you can get in touch with Functional Skills Assessment directly. We aim to respond to you within 5 working days.

## Pearson Essential Digital Skills homepage

You can find all current information and documents on our [Pearson EDSQ qualification page](#). Our website pages are regularly updated with all the most current information and documents.

## Edexcel Online

Via [Edexcel Online](#), this web-based system allows centre administrators to register, manage and certificate learners.

## Customer Services

We pledge to provide excellent service in all your dealings with us. Each centre will have a dedicated Accounts Specialist that will be their first point of contact for administration matters relating to learner registrations, exam entries, claiming certification.

## Functional Skills Assessment Team

Our Functional Skills Assessment team is responsible for the production of papers, the assessment of externally assessed units and the administration of internally assessed units and can be contacted via the [Pearson Support Portal](#).

If you have a questions, please contact **FS Assessment** or your **Vocational Quality Assurance Manager** via [The Pearson Contact Portal](#).

In addition, you will find further information on our [Quality Assurance webpages](#).

# Appendix

## Standards Verification Checklist

Actions to complete prior to a standards verification visit taking place	Completed (please tick)
2025-26 standardisation of assessment team completed including support of new assessors, record of meetings with staff (and LIV compulsory standardisation training when available on the Pearson website)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Items to send to Standards Verifier prior to a standards verification visit	Emailed (please tick)
<b>Sample Report Form (SRF)</b> This must be sent via email to the SV so that a sample of assessments can be selected to verify, before any work is uploaded for sampling. Even if fewer than 5 learners have completed assessments, the SRF is required and must contain Pearson Learner Registration Numbers.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Centre Declaration Form</b> To be completed by the centre and submitted via email prior to samples being made available to the SV. SVs can offer support if a centre has any queries with any section on the form.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Items to upload to SharePoint for the Standards Verifier once sample has been selected	Uploaded (please tick)
The completed Mark Scheme and Assessment Record ( <b>MSAR</b> ) for each learner (completed by hand and scanned to PDF or completed and saved digitally).	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Entry level:</b> 5 samples of each component The completed <b>Question Paper</b> , scanned to PDF <b>Observation</b> record (as part of the MSAR) <b>Task folder</b> as used by the learner, containing data files and responses to tasks.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Level 1:</b> 5 samples of each component The completed <b>Question Paper</b> , scanned to PDF <b>Task folder</b> as used by the learner, containing folders, data files and responses to tasks.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Evidence of verification feedback on some of the assessments at each level (this can be recorded on the MSAR or the centre's own IQA documentation).	<input type="checkbox"/>

All boxes must be ticked prior to a remote sample being sent to your standards verifier (SV).

Please also tick here to confirm that you have notified your SV that you are sending the sample