Quality Assurance 2010-2011

Centre handbook

English for Speakers of Other Languages

(Entry levels 1-3 and Levels 1-2)

Adult Literacy and Numeracy

(Entry Levels 1-3)

Functional Skills Maths, English and ICT

(Entry Levels 1-3)

Skills for Life mission statement

We aim to reduce the bureaucratic burden of assessment and assessment-related processes on centres whilst maintaining the quality of provision. We will achieve this through effecting a change of focus from an Edexcel-driven model of 'Quality Control' to one of centre-driven 'Quality Assurance'.

Preface

This handbook is for Examination Officers and Programme Managers in centres.

It describes the quality assurance processes for ESOL, Entry Level certificates in Adult Literacy and Numeracy and Entry Level Functional Skills qualifications.

Information relating to registrations, entries and certification for these programmes is available in the Information Manual which can be accessed via our website.

Contents

To use the hyperlink take the cursor over the identified word and press 'ctrl' and left click on your mouse.

1 Introduction to this handbook

This handbook applies from 1 September 2010 until 31 August 2011 and describes the administrative arrangements and requirements for quality assurance of Entry Levels 1-3 Adult Literacy and Adult Numeracy (ALAN), Entry Levels 1-3 Functional Skills in English, Maths and ICT and Entry Levels 1-3 and Levels 1-2 English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).

This document provides the key information required for your centre to meet the quality assurance requirements for 2010-2011.

The handbook provides information on the internal and external verification procedures for centres. (It is also useful for Edexcel assessment associates.)

Access to this handbook and related information

All programme managers and internal verifiers for these qualifications should be made aware of this document which is available on the Edexcel website.

Access to the Information Manual and policy documents

The examinations officer should have access to the *Edexcel Information Manual*, which contains information relating to administrative arrangements for these programmes. Programme managers will also need to comply with these administrative requirements.

2 Key issues 2010-2011

Your communications with Edexcel

Effective communication between Edexcel and your centres is important, in order to ensure that the time schedules for quality monitoring are maintained. We communicate with your centre through letter, telephone and email. This requires you to maintain accurate details of your main contacts on the Edexcel Online system. All contact details held with us should be reviewed every 6 months to include new members of staff that will be using the centre accounts area of Edexcel Online.

New quality assurance arrangements

You will no longer need to complete the Centre Self-Assessment Reports (CSAR) and pass lists as these have been replaced with an annual standards verification visit that will focus on the quality policies and on quality standards for safe certification and internal verification processes in your centre as well as sampling of assessments.

3 Key dates and actions 2010-11

September 2010	Update contact details for the examination officer on Edexcel Online.
October – November 31st May 5th July	Standards Verifiers allocated to centres following registration. All Standards Verifiers must contact their allocated centres. This should be done, in the first instance, through the examination officer. The examinations officer should put the standards verifier in touch with the appropriate programme manager or internal verifier. Contact should be made immediately with the programme leader and the arrangements made for the conduct of standards verification. Standards verifiers discuss and agree with the programme manager the date for the visit. Final deadline for quality assurance visit and completion of sampling. Advised deadline for certification in August.
Late registrations	Examination officers' to check arrangements are in place for every programme to ensure standards verification has/is taking place by the end of the academic year.

4 Learner and centre administration

Edexcel Information Manual

The Edexcel Information Manual provides the guidance and information regarding approval, registration and certification. In order to ensure that learners' achievements can be formally recognised, you need to check the approval status of the programmes you are delivering and ensure that Edexcel registration and certification processes are adhered to.

For approval queries please contact the Approvals team, approvals@edexcel.com.

For registration and certification queries please contact the Service Operations team, servicexaminations officerperations@edexcel.com

Centre type and quality assurance arrangements

You must ensure you inform Edexcel of any changes to your centre structure. Where your centre operates from multiple sites, or is the member of an Edexcel collaborative partnership or consortium, there may a change to standards verification. The standards verifier will need to include all participating sites and you should provide access for this. Any changes to sample sizes required will be negotiated between the standards verifier, you and us when the standards verification is being arranged.

Recruitment of learners

You should use integrity when recruiting learners onto your programmes. You should offer some initial assessment to measure the levels of your learners so they are registered on the appropriate programme.

5 Quality assurance responsibilities for centres

You are required to:

- gain both centre and qualification approval prior to enrolling learners on to the programme

- register all new learners with Edexcel when they join the programme

- ensure all qualifications and a range of levels and components are sampled

- ensure all certification claims are correct

- ensure all quality policies and procedures are in place.

Role of your staff

Examination officer

The examination officer will receive details about the appointment of a standards verifier and will be requested to liaise with the appropriate programme managers and internal verifiers. The examination officer should ensure that the standards verification sampling progresses smoothly.

Programme Manager

The programme manager is responsible for:

- the secure downloading, copying, storing and delivery of all tests

- the management of the qualification

- ensuring that all tutors are familiar with the appropriate guidance documentation and assessment information

- liaising with the standards verifier

- preparing all relevant assessments and where a visit takes place arranging for a suitable room for the standards verifier to use

- arranging the feedback to the teaching team following sampling

- providing appropriate documentation and evidence that explains the quality standards for safe certification and the internal verification processes that are in place.

The programme manager must ensure that all tutors, assessors and those undertaking internal verification have access to:

- the full programme specification

- relevant information from this handbook, quality standards policies and centre procedures and other guides and policy documents issued by Edexcel.

Internal verifier

The internal verifiers check validity & consistency of assessment decisions across assessors.

Administrative notes for programme managers

Examination officers normally deal with the administrative arrangements for registration and certification of learners using the guidance given in the *Edexcel Information Manual*.

When registering learners, Programme Managers should check that a complete list of learners has been submitted and that the Examination Officer has been provided with estimated completion dates.

6 Internal policies

Centres policies for internal procedures

The standards verifier must be able to view the centres internal policies on their visit. These must be available to the Standards Verifier in written form.

The centre must have policies on:

- registration and certification
- internal assessment
- administration of tests, including security, invigilation
- internal verification
- assessment malpractice.

These must be in line with the Guidance and instruction for conducting tests available on the Edexcel website.

7 Internal assessment

Role of the programme manager

After registering learners on a programme you are provided with access to the test papers via a secure area of the Edexcel website. An Edexcel Online username and password are required in order to download the test papers. If you do not have an Edexcel Online account you need to contact Edexcel Online centre administrator at your centre or your exams officer.

The QPD team – QPD@edexcel.com if centres are experiencing problems downloading test papers from the Edexcel website the QPD team will arrange to send the requested test papers to centres.

You must conduct tests in line with the Guidance and instructions for conducting the tests document available from the Edexcel website. These documents outline your responsibilities for conducting the tests.

In order to conduct test you must ensure the main requirements are met, using the following criteria:

- rooms used for tests are set up appropriately
- there is a safe and robust process for drawing down tests
- there are secure storage facilities for tests
- learners are correctly registered with Edexcel prior to taking a test
- there is a process for accurately recording learner attendance during tests
- there is a clearly defined, executed and compliant invigilation procedure
- there is a log of unusual incidents that have occurred during tests
- Malpractice Policy is implemented during a test if required
- Special Requirements and Arrangements Policy is followed.

Role of the assessor

Assessors will be responsible and accountable for:

- planning when learners are ready to take tests, and making tests available to learners, marking tests
- allocation of invigilators
- implementing tests following the Guidance and instruction for conducting the tests
- ensuring that the correct mark schemes are used and applied fairly and consistently.
- maintaining accurate and verifiable learner test results.

8 Internal verification

Your centre must ensure that you have a robust system of internal verification to check that all assessments are secure. When the programme delivery is being planned, internal verification should also be planned. Internal verification should be carried out in a timely manner throughout the year. Effective internal verification will guide and support assessors and feedback from the Internal Verifier will aid their skills development.

Internal verifier role

The Internal verifier is a centre/team based role and it is a good idea to develop these skills across the team. The internal verifier cannot internally verify their own assessment decisions.

Internal verifiers are at the heart of quality assurance. The role ensures that assessments across the centre consistently meet National Standards, thus internal verifiers must be competent in the assessment of the qualification offered.

Internal verifiers will be responsible and accountable for:

- regularly sampling assessment decisions made by all assessors across all programmes and tests within your centre
- establishing procedures to develop a common interpretation of the test requirements between assessors

- monitoring and supporting the work of assessors within your centre
- maintaining up-to-date records of internal verification and sampling activity and ensuring that these are available for the standard verification aspects of the assessment, in order to monitor and ensure consistency in the interpretation and application of standards
- facilitating appropriate staff development and training for assessors.

Test marking

Your centre should have an internal verification schedule for each programme. Some centres have a Programme Manager to manage the process.

There are 3 strands to verifying assessment:

- standardising marked tests
- monitoring test delivery
- sampling marked tests.

Standardising test marking

Standardisation must be carried out when there is more than one assessor delivering and marking the same programme. This should happen before any marking or internal verification takes place. The function of standardisation is to fix the standard by discussing and mutually marking a sample of tests and reaching a consensus. Once agreement has been reached the assessors can then mark individually the learner work they are responsible for. The internal verification process should then take place sampling these assessors.

The simplest means of completing a standardisation review is to collate copies of completed tests and ask each assessor to make a judgement on them. Internal verification exercises should be repeated at regular intervals to ensure that messages are reinforced. If action to adjust marks is found necessary, a plan should be in place to ensure that this is completed before standards verification takes place. The Standards Verifier will wish to see this as part of their monitoring role.

The aim should be to put in place procedures that will provide ongoing feedback to assessors.

Monitoring the delivery and marking of tests

This is necessary to:

- ensure that marking meets the National Standards and are adhered to by all assessors
- identify problems or areas where assessors require advice/development
- ensure that learners are aware of, and satisfied with, the marking process.

Monitoring marking includes the internal verifiers sampling assessors. It also includes reviewing the internal verification records completed with each assessor and evaluating all aspects of their performance when conducting test marking.

The internal verifiers should record their judgements and give feedback, rather than just tick boxes. Rigorous Internal Verifiers will give actions on any improvements that can be made to the marking process.

Monitoring the administration includes the correct storage and transit of tests, and invigilation of tests.

Sampling test outcomes

Internal verification is based on a sampling of learners' performance. It should cover a wide range of achievement. It is recommended that a minimum of two learners per component per level for each assessor are sampled. Internal verifiers should also take into account:

- the experience of the assessor

- the size of the group of learners

- issues identified in previous samples

- if the tests/assessments are new to the assessor.

Internal verification should take place soon after the test is completed, and before the results are handed back to the learners so that any remedial action can be implemented.

Developing and supporting assessors

The Internal Verifiers must ensure that all assessors in the centre have:

- copies of test papers, instructions and mark schemes

- the identified resources/equipment/facilities, as specified on the test papers

- a copy of the Guidance and instructions for conducting the tests

- access to appropriate training and support.

Good practice

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

- across the centre there is a recognised team who meet regularly to ensure standardisation of procedures

- standardisation meetings are seen as pivotal staff development

- there are quality standards to make safe certification, an internal verification policy which promotes a rigorous commitment to quality improvement

- internal verification processes are agreed and published so that they are clearly understood by all members of the delivery teams

- all assessors are involved in, or understand, the internal verification role

- a programme manager is identified who manages the process and provides support

- the time required to carry out internal verification is recognised.

9 Standards verification

Standards verification is the quality assurance method that Edexcel uses to ensure that centres are assessing to the National Standards. The primary focus and role of the standards verifier is to ensure that centre staff involved in the planning, delivery and assessment of qualifications:

- maintain the national standard of qualifications awarded by Edexcel
- assess learners performance in accordance with National Standards
- maintain a robust mechanism for the internal verification
- have a clear commitment to assuring and improving quality.

Key tasks

The key tasks of the standards verifier are to:

- verify marking practice and procedures including test delivery to ensure that National Standards are applied consistently
- take action to deal with identified problems
- provide information, advice and support to centres
- maintain accurate records and provide feedback to Edexcel
- promote and improve the quality of Skills for Life qualification assessment.

The standard verification process

Standards verifiers are allocated only to those centres that have approval for ESOL, Entry ALAN and Entry Level Functional Skills programmes and on which there are registered learners.

Centres with queries regarding allocation of a standards verifier or enquiring who their Standards Verifier is should contact the Deployment team QAS@edexcel.com.

All centres with registrations will be visited by the standards verifier. The date of the visit should be agreed between the centre and the standards verifier. It should take place when a range of levels and components are available to be sampled.

Whatever the method of verification, the standards verifier should:

- agree a schedule for the verification which will normally include reviewing internal verification reports and records, assessment records, validating assessment judgements through sampling learners assessments and viewing delivery of the programme and/or test delivery
- validate the quality and consistency of assessor judgements against National Standards by sampling assessment decisions
- review the internal quality assurance for the qualification – checking internal verification records, sampling strategy and their feedback to assessors
- inform the programme manager (usually the Internal Verifier) promptly of any areas of weakness and agree an action plan for improvement
- provide positive feedback and encouragement when good practice is identified
- check that the centre's internal quality assurance systems are sufficiently robust to ensure that future claims for certificates will be valid and that problems will be identified quickly and resolved
- review the centre's processes for meeting the conditions in the guidance and instructions for conducting tests document
- recommend release or blocks to certification.

Schedule for the visit

Before each visit, the standards verifier should agree a schedule for the visit with the programme manager, including:

- a visit date to coincide with a test if possible
- programmes to be verified
- levels and components delivered
- evidence to be made available on the day (or in advance)
- evidence of learner work
- quality assurance policies to be reviewed, evidence of internal verification
- delivery of programmes
- review of testing requirements and test delivery
- feedback to the internal verifier/programme manager (and in some cases the assessment team).

In some cases it may not be practical or appropriate, for the standards verifier to complete their report whilst in your centre, but it is important that the main action points are agreed during the visit. Sufficient time should be allowed for this by both the programme manager and standards verifier.

The centre visit

The visit should follow the schedule agreed by the centre and standards verifier. The visit will enable the standards verifier to make a decision on whether or not to recommend access to certification. The criteria on the standards verifier (SV) Report Form provides the basis on which a decision will be made and the standards verifier will focus on these. Within the centre it is the programme managers' responsibility to provide evidence to demonstrate that the criteria are being met. Where there is more than one internal verifier on a programme, one should adopt the programme manager role and take responsibility for managing the programme information.

Internal quality assurance

The standards verifier should first review the quality of internal verification. If this proves to be rigorous and robust, the standards verifier should have confidence in the assessment process and the decisions made. The centre must, therefore, provide copies of all internal verification:

- test reports
- sampling plans
- sampling records, including feedback to assessors
- records of monitoring assessment practice, including feedback to assessors.

The standards verifier will want to be assured that all internal verifiers' understand quality policies and those they are knowledgeable about the standards, learners and their own role in quality assurance.

Sampling

Sampling of learners tests is the most vital part of the verification process, providing the standards verifier with an almost instant 'health check' on the quality of marking and verification. It is critical to enable a decision to be made on access to certification. Selecting a sample for each centre will vary according to the needs of the centre. It is vitally important that sampling is properly planned (rather than undertaken ad hoc) to optimise the information to be gathered.

You must make learner tests available for sampling. During the visit the standards verifier will sample:

- a maximum of 30 scripts for up to 200 learners registered, or

- 15 scripts for up to 100 learners registered, with

- 100% sampling where there are less than 15 learners.

  Centres with more then 200 learners will

- have additional sampling carried out by post with a sample size of 15 scripts per 100 learners registered.

  The standards verifier will select their sample based on:
- the range of levels the centre are delivering
- the number of assessors and sites the centre are delivering over
- assessment decisions which have been sampled by the Internal Verifier and those that have not.

It is the responsibility of the programme manager to ensure that the sample is representative.

The standards verifier will use the internal verification plans and records provided to ensure that at least 50% of the sample has been through the internal verification process.

When the visit will take place

The centre must liaise with your standards verifier early in the year to organise a suitable time for a visit when there will be a range of levels and components available to view. Standards verifiers' should make full use of retrospective sampling where necessary, and centres should be made aware that assessments should be retained for all certificated learners until the end of the academic year in order to allow the Regional Quality Manager to undertake some random sampling.

It is also important that feedback on the findings from sampling is given to the programme manager and they should be available throughout the day of the visit. Where possible a visit should be coordinated with a test taking place.

Meeting the team

The standards verifier will also meet with the assessment and verification team to discuss and advise on assessment issues and practices, and to check the learner suitability criteria.

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

Conclusion of the visit

The findings of the visit will be discussed with the programme manager or equivalent at the end of the visit. Actions for improvement will be identified through discussion before the standards verifier leaves the centre, where possible. It is important that any actions and target dates agreed are clear and realistic. The programme manager should ensure that they understand any required action and that they clarify any issues before the end of the visit.

Following the visit

The standards verifier will complete the SV Report Form within 10 working days of the visit. As all issues should already have been discussed by standards verifiers' with the relevant personnel at the centre, there should be no changes to the outcomes of the visit on the completed form.

After standards verification has taken place, if the centre has been given a release to certification, the centre will be able to continue to assess and verify the assessments for your learners for the remainder of the year. However, Edexcel reserves the right to re-visit centres and re-sample assessments after the standards verifier has allowed access to certification.

If your centre has had a block put on to your certification it means that there are serious issues identified by the standards verifier that must be addressed by the your centre before you are allowed to certificate your learners. The most likely remedial action may be a further sample of assessments to show that any issues with assessment or internal verification have been addressed.

Between visits – support for your centre

The second strand to the role of the standards verifier is to advise and support your centre in the delivery and assessment of ESOL, Entry ALAN and Entry Level Functional Skills qualifications both during the visits and throughout the academic year.

Standards verifier's should therefore be prepared to advice on:
- current requirements and procedures relating to the relevant qualification area(s)
- best practice in assessment and internal verification
- administration of tests.

Edexcel have a team of Regional Quality Managers who support centres. They will review approximately ten percent of centres per year to ensure that the assessments are secure and to check that any action plans are being implemented by centres.

10 Support available

Documentation

We communicate with the examination officer for administration and certification information. We do not issue any information directly to programme managers. However, a variety of qualification specifications, policy documents, and information books are produced to assist teaching teams.

Websites

Edexcel.com - www.edexcel.com

The Edexcel website pages are regularly updated with all the most current information and documents.

Edexcel Online

This web-based system allows centre administrators to register, manage and certificate learners.

Edexcel teams

Customer Services

Edexcel pledges to provide excellent service in all your dealings with us. We have a dedicated Skills for Life customer services team who can be reached on 0844 576 0031 and are able to answer your query or direct it to the appropriate team within Edexcel.

Regional Quality Managers

All centres have a dedicated Regional Quality Manager available to advice on quality assurance, including internal and standards verification. On Appendix 1 is a link to a map of the region each Regional Quality Manager looks after.

Assessment Associates

These are your standards verifiers' who were allocated to centres early each year to advise you of the quality assurance arrangements. For any queries regarding the allocation of a standards verifier you should contact the Deployment team QAS@edexcel.com.

Curriculum Development Managers

> Each centre has a Curriculum Development Manager who can provide general qualification advice and guidance across all qualifications. Your CDM details can be obtained from your regional office.

Appendix 1:   Edexcel contact list

Centre should contact the following individuals/teams for the following queries:

Approvals team – approvals@edexcel.com for gaining approval and approval queries.

Service Operations team – servicexaminations officerperations@edexcel.com for registrations & certifications issues, reporting of grades, amendments to names, grades entered incorrectly and reprinting of certificates.

Deployment team – QAS@edexcel.com to find out who is your standards verifier, to have a standards verifier allocated to your centre, standards verifier details, difficulty contacting standards verifier and report form queries including the logging of reports and release/block of qualifications.

Standards verifier – (contact details can be provided from the Deployment team). The standards verifier can assist with assessment Issues, provide information, advice and support, sampling size, mark schemes, specification queries, guidance for the conduct of exams

Assessment team – skillsforlife@edexcel.com for equivalencies, accreditation, issues with the content of test paper questions and mark scheme and general assessment queries.

Quality Standards team – qualitystandards@edexcel.com for special requirements, quality issues and appeals against qualification and certification blocks.

QPD team – QPD@edexcel.com if centres are experiencing problems downloading test papers from the Edexcel website the QPD team will arrange to send the requested test papers to centres.

Regional Quality Managers – all centres have a dedicated Regional Quality Manager available to advice on quality assurance, including internal and standards verification.
www.edexcel.com/quals/BTEC/support

Curriculum Development Managers (CDM's) - each centre has a Curriculum Development Manager who can provide general qualification advice and guidance across all qualifications.
Your CDM details can be obtained from your regional office.

SKILLS FOR LIFE STANDARDS VERIFICATION REPORT FORM 2010/2011

Name of centre contact(s)	
Job title of contact(s)	

Centre name	
Centre number	
Standards verifier name	
Standards verifier number	
Contact email address(es)	
Contact telephone number	
Planned/Agreed date of standards verification visit:	

Number of currently registered learners					
ESOL:		ALAN:		ELFS:	

Programme released

ESOL:	Date…………………	ALAN:	Date…………………	ELFS:	Date…………………
	☐ YES		☐ YES		☐ YES
	☐ NO		☐ NO		☐ NO
	☐ N/A		☐ N/A		☐ N/A

	Visit	Postal
Method of standards verification (tick as appropriate)		
Issues identified (list issues)	Standard of work (if yes please tick) ☐	Security/Processes (if yes please tick) ☐

ACTIONS FROM LAST VERIFICATION ACTIVITY

Action	Agreed Completion Date	Achieved Y/N

CENTRE VISIT REPORT

LEARNER MANAGEMENT

Criteria	Met	Not Met
Initial assessments of learners to establish appropriate programme & level.		
Learners recruited onto programmes with integrity.		
Centre maintains accurate learner records.		
Records show time between learner registration, assessments & certification.		
Comments:		

Qualification (list each or all)	Action	Agreed Date for Achievement

ASSESSMENT

Criteria	Met	Not Met
Mark schemes are consistently and correctly applied.		
Marks are correctly totalled.		
All learners sampled who are awarded a pass have met the required standard.		
Comments:		

Qualification (list each or all)	Action	Agreed Date for Achievement

INTERNAL VERIFICATION

Criteria	Met	Not Met
An active IV strategy covers all assessors, qualifications, levels & locations.		
IV sampling undertaken in line with the sampling strategy & records maintained.		
IV successfully identifies incorrect application of the mark scheme by assessors.		
Assessors are standardised and provided with feedback.		
Comments:		

Qualification (list each or all)	Action	Agreed Date for Achievement

RESOURCES

Criteria	Met	Not Met
The ratio of assessors to learners is appropriate.		
There are sufficient testing rooms/venues.		
Comments:		

Qualification (list each or all)	Action	Agreed Date for Achievement

TEST SECURITY AND ADMINISTRATION

Criteria	Met	Not Met

Rooms used for tests are set up appropriately.		
There is a safe and robust process for drawing down tests.		
There are secure storage facilities for tests.		
Learners are correctly registered with Edexcel prior to taking a test.		
There is a process for accurately recording learner attendance during tests.		
There is a clearly defined, executed and compliant invigilation procedure.		
There is a log of unusual incidents that have occurred during tests.		
Malpractice Policy is implemented during a test if required.		
Special requirements and arrangements policy is followed.		
Comments:		

Action	Agreed Date for Achievement

ASSESSMENT SAMPLING FORM

Qualification: _____

Learner	Level/ Component	Test	Centre mark	SV Mark	Agreed (Y/N)

Comments:

Programme released (Y/N):

Date:

If not released, please state the actions and second sample requirements