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We're passionate about providing exceptional customer service. Every single NCFE employee is focused on not just meeting, but exceeding your expectations. We believe our approach to customer service makes us different, easy to do business with, flexible and responsive.

The purpose of this guide is to describe the quality assurance process so that you can be aware of what systems/processes you should have in place. If you'd like any advice about anything in relation to the quality assurance of NCFE qualifications please contact our Centre Support team on **0191 239 8000**.

We recognise that you'll deliver qualifications from other awarding organisations and may not use or be familiar with the quality assurance process.

Our qualifications require the learner to achieve against 100% of the learning outcomes and the associated range, and that assessment and internal quality assurance should be carried out regularly throughout the duration of the course.

Why do we quality assure?

We quality assure for 2 main reasons:

- to support you and offer any guidance to successfully deliver our qualifications
- we need to ensure that the integrity of our qualifications is maintained.

We do this through a number of quality assurance systems, including:

- thorough and stringent criteria and procedures for approving centres to offer NCFE qualifications
- monitoring the assessment decisions (including grading decisions if applicable) and internal quality assurance systems used in approved centres
- training External Quality Assurers and monitoring their progress
- responding to queries regarding the content, assessment and quality assurance of NCFE qualifications
- gathering and acting upon your feedback.

What is quality assurance?

Quality assurance is the process by which we confirm that assessment decisions (including grading decisions if applicable) in centres are:

- made by competent and qualified Assessors
- the product of sound and fair assessment practice
- recorded accurately and appropriately
- in accordance with the requirements of the qualification as shown in the Qualification Specification.

We do this by?

- Internal quality assurance - that you carry out
- External quality assurance - that we carry out. Our External Quality Assurers support you by making sure that assessments meet nationally agreed standards and that your quality assurance systems continue to meet our centre approval criteria. To download a copy of our centre approval criteria please visit **ncfe.org.uk**.

The Internal Quality Assurer needs to be occupationally competent and approves the assessment decisions (including the grading decisions if applicable) made by the Assessor(s). The Internal Quality Assurer must not quality assure their own assessment decisions. It's a good idea to use an Internal Quality Assurer who has not taught the group of learners that they're internally quality assuring.

Quality Assurer visits

The External Quality Assurer provided by us will be occupationally competent and will approve the assessment decision (including the grading decisions if applicable) made by Assessor(s) and the checks carried out by the Internal Quality Assurer.

The 2 main purposes of the role of the External Quality Assurer is to form a link between your centre and NCFE, acting as a quality assurance agent to ensure systems are maintained, and to offer support. This is a vital role in ensuring learners continue to achieve the national standard.

For the external quality assurance process to work efficiently and for you to get the maximum benefit from the support of the External Quality Assurer as early as possible, it's vital that you register your learners at the beginning of the course.

To deliver NCFE qualifications to the required standards, you must have an Assessor and Internal Quality Assurer in place who are occupationally competent in the relevant subject area.

Assessors must work towards the Learning and Development standards 2010 (Assessor and Internal Quality Assurance Awards). Assessment of learners must be ongoing throughout the delivery of the qualification.

Assessment decisions (including the grading decisions if applicable) and feedback to learners must be evidenced for the Internal Quality Assurer and the External Quality Assurer. Likewise, internal quality assurance should be ongoing throughout the delivery of the qualification, and feedback to Assessors must be evidenced for the External Quality Assurer.

External Quality Assurance Visits

All centres offering NCFE qualifications have been approved to do so on the strength of the resources available to support assessment, the competence of staff involved in the assessment process, and the systems and procedures in place in the centre.

In order to ensure that these criteria are maintained, the External Quality Assurer is required to visit your centre twice each year for each qualification delivered. This may vary depending on centre activity, the length of the qualification and whether the centre has been awarded Direct Claim Status (DCS). Please note DCS is not available for V Cert qualifications.

If you need them, additional visits can be requested via our website. There's a small fee to pay to cover our costs. These are detailed in our Fees and Pricing document available to download from the website.

Allocation of your External Quality Assurer

How do you find out who your External Quality Assurer is?

We allocate an External Quality Assurer to you when you register your learners with us. We'll send the details of your External Quality Assurer to your named programme contact so you can contact them any time. At the same time your External Quality Assurer will be sent your contact details. They'll contact you within 48 hours to introduce themselves and to arrange the date and time for your first visit.



Arranging visits

Please note that External Quality Assurers can't carry out quality assurance visits if no learners have been registered so it is important that learners are registered at the beginning of the course so that an early first visit can be arranged. An early first visit gives the External Quality Assurer an opportunity to guide and support you. In addition, for graded qualifications, there should be some unit grades submitted so that your External Quality Assurer can check your grading decisions are in line with the required standards.

Once your first visit has been arranged, your External Quality Assurer will confirm details in writing at least 3 weeks in advance of the visit, and may at this time indicate learners whose portfolios they wish to sample. Your External Quality Assurer may request portfolios to be photocopied for the purpose of standardisation, and if you are willing to do so will provide you with a portfolio release form to sign. This helps us in our training to ensure consistency and maintain national standards.

Our External Quality Assurers are responsible for:

- providing you with support and guidance in implementing and maintaining effective quality assurance systems and delivery
- ensuring that assessment (including grading if applicable) and quality assurance within centres are valid and reliable and continue to meet our approved centre criteria
- reporting to us on the performance of centres.

NCFE and our regulators have the right to make a visit to a centre at short notice or without prior notification. Additional visits to centres may be undertaken at our request and/or the centre's, for which a charge is made. Please refer to our Fees and Pricing document available to download from [ncfe.org.uk](https://www.ncfe.org.uk) or contact our Customer Support team on **0191 239 8000**.

Arranging visits

It's important that the Internal Quality Assurer is present when the External Quality Assurer carries out a visit so that they're available to discuss the internal quality assurance process. When arranging a visit to your centre, our External Quality Assurer will confirm:

- the date, time and approximate length of the visit (it's unlikely that the requirements of the visit could be met in under 3 hours per qualification)
- the site to be visited
- the names of learners, Assessors and other Internal Quality Assurers they wish to meet.

The date of the visit should be agreed between you and our External Quality Assurer, because we want you to get the most out of it. It shouldn't fall on the first or the last day of learners' involvement in the qualification, or on a day upon which no learners are present.

We recommend that you raise any issues or concerns you have with the External Quality Assurer prior to the meeting, in order that these can be included in the visit plan.

On the day of the visit...

Assessment and reports

The External Quality Assurer visits provide an important opportunity for you to seek support and guidance, and for External Quality Assurers to update centre staff on emerging best practice in assessment and internal quality assurance.

Our External Quality Assurer will need access to information on your activities so that they can:

- evaluate internal arrangements
- agree a sampling plan
- collect the information that we need to carry out our quality assurance monitoring
- report on all aspects of your assessment and quality assurance against the approved centre criteria, and make any further recommendations.

During the visit our External Quality Assurer will look at the quality and consistency of assessment decisions (including grading decisions if applicable) and assessment practice.

This involves:

- sampling learner assessments
- speaking with learners and Assessors to ensure that evidence and records of assessment are both valid and authentic
- reviewing records of assessments, internal quality assurance and team meetings
- reviewing procedures.

Where portfolio evidence has been captured on video, audio cassette, CD, USB or any other technological means, centres must provide the correct equipment to enable the External Quality Assurer to view learner work. Centre visits normally take place on one site and it's the responsibility of the qualification contact to ensure that the appropriate personnel, records and learner evidence are made available on that particular site. However, it's good practice for you to rotate the site visited on each occasion where more than one site is involved.

Sampling

Our External Quality Assurers will sample both assessment decisions (including grading decisions, if applicable) and internal quality assurance records. The sample will vary from centre to centre and will depend on how long the qualification has been approved at the centre, staff familiarity with the qualification and number of learners. Our External Quality Assurer will highlight in the visit plan which learners, Assessors and Internal Quality Assurers they wish to see. However, there may be additional learners, Assessors and Internal Quality Assurers whom our External Quality Assurer will wish to see on agreed additional visits.

Examples of sampling strategies:

- the use of all assessment methods across a range of units
- a selection of units (and grades if applicable) across a sample of learners' evidence
- a full qualification across a sample of learners' evidence
- a sample of units across all Assessors (individually or collectively)
- a certain percentage of learners' evidence in detail and a scan of the remainder
- sampling by a particular type of evidence
- a structured sample of learners according to a particular characteristic
- sampling of satellite sites and other assessment sites where applicable.

Assessment and Reports

Access to Assessment

Our External Quality Assurer will also check that learners have been given appropriate access to assessment. Where special arrangements are required, the centre should have followed the requirements specified in NCFE's Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy.

A copy of the policy can be found on our website [ncfe.org.uk](https://www.ncfe.org.uk)

Reports

Our External Quality Assurer will report on information and evidence under the following headings:

- management systems and administrative arrangements
- resources (physical and staff)
- assessment
- internal quality assurance.

A copy of the visit report template can be found on our website in the user guide to visit reports.

Feedback will be given at the end of the visit and will include:

- emphasising good practice
- encouraging the continuation of quality assessment
- discussing areas requiring further development and formulating an action plan.

During the visit, there will be time for Internal Quality Assurers and the rest of the Assessment team to raise issues or to ask questions about NCFE policies and quality assurance requirements. Don't forget our External Quality Assurer is here to help you.

You'll receive a copy of our External Quality Assurers visit report no more than 5 working days after the visit took place. For graded qualifications, your External Quality Assurer will also bank or reject the unit grades that you've submitted based on your external quality assurance visit. You'll receive confirmation of this within 5 working days of the visit taking place.

If our External Quality Assurer has agreed with you any immediate actions for improvement which may be preventing you from certifying learners or operating effectively, they'll also discuss these with one of our Quality Assurance Officers. Our Quality Assurance Officer will contact you to offer you any further support and guidance to enable you to achieve the actions. They and our External Quality Assurer will work with you to complete the actions in the agreed timescales.

Giving our support

In addition to this we've put together the following documents to help you in the preparation and delivery of your NCFE qualification/award. Please note that these are not mandatory documents and you can use your own versions if you choose to.

The benefit of using these documents is that NCFE staff and External Quality Assurers are familiar with their content and will therefore be able to interpret them easily and offer guidance on how they should be used. You can also find a full list of our useful documents by visiting our website at [ncfe.org.uk](https://www.ncfe.org.uk)

Individual units are broken down into:

- learning outcomes, these explain what the learner will understand or be able to do. They are referred to as 'the learner will'.
- assessment criteria, these are the actual tasks the learner will need to complete to prove that they have achieved a learning outcome. These are referred to as 'the learner can'.

If you need any advice on how to use any of these documents, please contact your External Quality Assurer or speak to the Quality Assurance team on **0191 239 8000** or email: externalqualityassurance@ncfe.org.uk

Assessment Method Planning Sheet

This sheet is completed by the Assessor to ensure that a broad range of assessment methods are used throughout the delivery of the qualification. This will help provide the necessary evidence but will also make the qualification more engaging and enjoyable for your learners.

Each NCFE qualification will have a **Qualification Specification** or **Qualification Overview** document. This will contain specific guidance on those assessment methods which are appropriate to each individual unit. If you're using the **Qualification Overview** document this might also refer you to the **Assessment Strategy** and Evidence Requirements documents, both of which are available on our website at [ncfe.org.uk](https://www.ncfe.org.uk). You can also get advice on this from your External Quality Assurer.



Assessment planning sheet

Qualification					
Name of Assessment	Unit(s)	Assessment criteria	Assessment Method (eg Simulation, Witness testimony)	Hand in Date	Name of Assessor
Eg: Q&A	1	1, 1.1,2,1.3	Question & Answer session	14/09/10	C. Bennett

Assessment tracking sheet

This document is used to keep a track of what evidence each of your learners has collected. Use each Evidence Produced section to record which of the qualification's units, learning outcomes and assessment criteria have been met through that particular piece of evidence. You should also record the date it was completed and the initials of the Assessor. It is useful to allocate a reference number to each individual piece of learner evidence so that it can be quickly and easily located.

Qualification							
Learner Name	Start Date	Evidence Produced*	Evidence Produced*	Evidence Produced*	Evidence Produced*	Evidence Produced*	End Date
Eg: Darren Ngoya	01/07/10	Q&A, ref #1 Unit 1: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 GB: 10/09/10	Q&A, ref #5 Unit 2: 2.1, 2.2 GB: 14/09/10	Observation, ref #16 Unit 2: 2.3 GB: 14/09/10	Witness Testimony, #20 Unit 2: 2.3 GB: 14/09/10		17/09/10

* For each piece of evidence produced, please indicate the units and learning outcomes being completed, evidence reference numbers, the initials of the Assessor and also the date of completion.

Assessor feedback to learner

Verbal feedback is great but you also need to provide evidence of written feedback. No doubt you will be providing feedback to your learners during the course, but it's essential that their Assessor records feedback following assessment. Assessment decisions should be clearly recorded. It's also important that you show that your learner has acknowledged and understood the feedback they've been given. Learners should understand why they are doing something and how it will contribute to achieving a particular unit.

This document can be used as a 'top sheet' for pieces of learner evidence. The assessor will indicate what the activity is and which learning outcomes and assessment criteria will be covered. When the evidence is assessed the Assessor will record their decision and feedback. There's also room for the learner to acknowledge the feedback and for the Assessor and learner to agree upon any outstanding actions.

For graded qualifications, centres should refer to the relevant qualification specification to determine the level of support and feedback they're permitted to give to learners.

Learner		Qualification	
Assessor		Unit/piece of evidence	

Please list the units, learning outcomes and assessment criteria which were covered by this activity and explain how each one has been met

Comments from Assessor to learner

Comments from learner

Assessor - Please tick to indicate that this evidence is:

Valid: Authentic: Current: Sufficient:

Any further actions? (Please initial and date once actions have been completed)

Learner Signature

Date

Assessor Signature

Date _____

Learner action plan and unit feedback

Before any learner begins a qualification they should sit down with their Assessor(s) and look at the content of the qualification and agree timescales for completion. This document is broken down so that you can identify which units the learner will complete and how they will be assessed. It will be agreed what the planned completion date is for each unit and a date will be agreed when this will be looked at and revised if necessary. Throughout the process the Assessor and learner can add their comments to this document until the qualification has been successfully completed. Using this document will show your External Quality Assurer that you have robust systems in place for assessment planning as well as formative and summative feedback. It's also encouraging for your learners to see how they are progressing towards achievement of their qualification.

Qualification	Learner	Assessor
Internal Quality Assurer	Start Date	Planned End Date

[illegible]

Internal quality assurance sampling plan

improvement early on. This document can be used to ensure that your Internal Quality Assurer is sampling across all units and all assessors. It should not be left until the end of the course as the idea is to identify areas for improvement early on.

You should also try to sample across different assessment sites and assessment methods.

When using this form the Internal Quality Assurer should record the date they plan to sample a unit assessment decision within the grid.

[illegible]

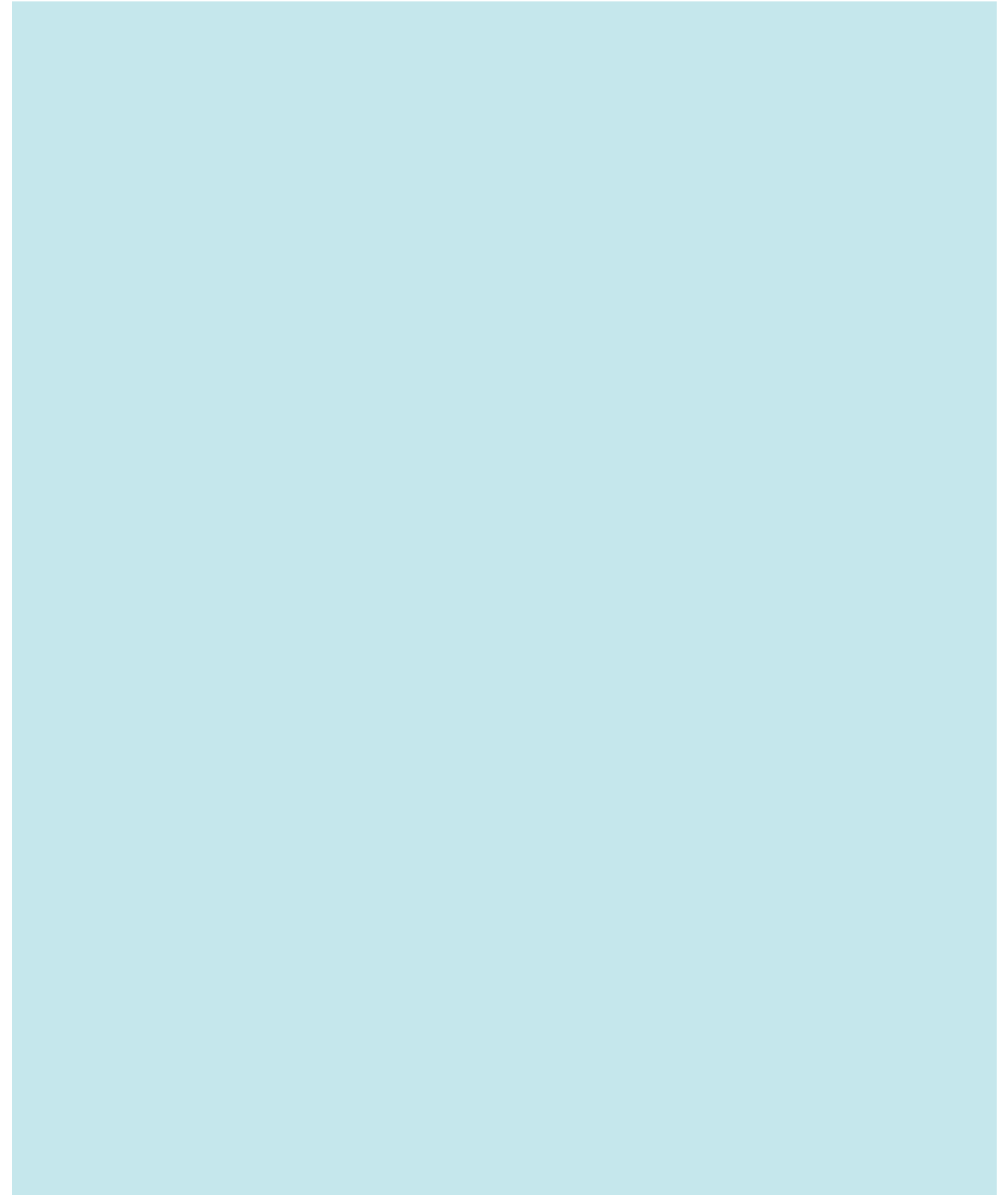
Internal quality assurance sampling plan and tracking sheet

This is used to give feedback to the Assessor. Feedback can either be given on a particular episode of assessment (such as a question and answer session) or on the assessment of a particular unit. The Internal Quality Assurer should note the assessment criteria being addressed, on their report. The Internal Quality Assurer should then comment on the validity and reliability of the assessment decision. They can also add areas of good assessor practice as well as areas for improvement. An action plan will help the assessor to address any issues noted by the internal Quality Assurer.

A deadline should be set for actions and also the actual date of completion. The Internal Quality Assurer should comment on the quality of the feedback given by the Assessor to the learner. The Assessor can also comment to show that they have read and agreed with the feedback from the Internal Quality Assurer.

Qualification	Internal Quality Assurer						
	Assessor						
<p>In the box below, please briefly explain your sampling strategy. you should take care to sample across:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a wide range of learners • all assessment methods • all units • all assessors • all grades • all assessment sites <p>Any new assessors to NCFE should have a higher proportion of their decisions and feedback sampled</p>							
		Do you agree with feedback (and grades if applicable)?	<div>Yes</div> <div>No</div>				
		Comments:					
Learner	Group No	Element	Interims	Final	Observation	Date	Quality assurance feedback
Signed (Assessor)						Date	
Signed (IQA)						Date	

Notes



Notes

Contact us

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NCFE aims to ensure that equality of opportunity is promoted and that unlawful or unfair discrimination, whether direct or indirect, is eliminated both in its own employment practices, and in access to its qualifications.

A copy of NCFE's Equal Opportunities Policy is available on request.

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