Internal Verification 2021/22

respect inclusion excellence resilience honesty

What is internal verification and how can it help you?

Internal verification is an approach to quality assurance based on peer support and review that enables you to integrate quality into internal assessment from start to finish.

Internal verification:

- helps to ensure that all staff understand national standards and can apply them
- facilitates collaboration between staff and with external colleagues
- enables and ensures fair, accurate and consistent assessment judgements
- supports the credibility of internally-assessed Units and Awards with parents, employers, higher education institutions etc.
- allows quality concerns to be captured and addressed
- helps to protect teachers against challenges to professional assessment judgements
- supports preparation for successful external verification

In this toolkit, the terms **'assessor'** and **'internal verifier'** are used for ease of reference.

'Assessor' refers to a teacher who marks internal assessments for Units or Course components. They may be using SQA Unit assessment support packs (UASPs) or may devise their own assessment approaches.

'Internal verifier' refers to a teacher who:

- supports other teachers as assessors in understanding and applying national standards
- checks assessment approaches which other teachers have devised to ensure that they are fit-for-purpose (before prior verification by SQA)
- samples the assessment judgements of other teachers to ensure that they are valid and reliable.

Internal Verifier Role

1.   Supporting Assessors (Pre-Delivery Stage)

The internal verifier must have an appropriate qualification and/or expertise in the subject area and must be familiar with the national standard.

The internal verifier is responsible for ensuring the chosen assessment instrument is valid, fair and practicable. This means that they need to have knowledge of different assessment methods and instruments and must have assessment expertise.

The internal verifier can have a developmental role for less experienced assessors' by offering advice and guidance.

2.   Checking assessments instruments to ensure validity. (Pre-Delivery Stage)

A valid assessment is one that is designed to allow candidates to produce evidence to show that they have the required knowledge, understanding and skills for the qualification they are aiming for.

All assessment instruments must be checked to ensure their validity before being taken by candidates. Even when assessments are taken from a national bank, the internal verifier must ensure that all assessors have a common understanding of the standards required. Meetings between assessors to discuss the planned assessment will help to minimise any differences in interpretation.

Agreeing a scheme for judging the evidence also helps assessors make consistent and accurate assessments in line with national standards. The internal verifier is responsible for ensuring that assessment schemes are clear and correct.

### 3.	Arranging standardisation exercises. (During Delivery Stage)

Reliability is a measure of the accuracy and consistency of assessors' judgements. Standardisation is an important part of ensuring the reliability of assessment decisions for all candidates.

Standardisation exercises identify any discrepancies between assessors in their judgement of candidates' evidence and allow adjustments to be made to remedy these. As well as reducing subjectivity among assessors, it helps to improve the consistency of their judgements and allows internal verifiers to identify and disseminate good practice.

There are different ways of carrying out standardisation and the internal verifier should make sure that the method used is the most appropriate for the nature of the evidence.

The following examples are standardisation exercises used by centres:

Dual Assessment: Two assessors assess the same candidates. The benefits for any assessor is in checking their judgement. It also encourages cooperative working.

Cross Assessment: Assessors exchange candidate evidence to check each other's interpretation of the standard.

Evidence Review: In this process the internal verifier collates assessed candidate evidence and asks a group of assessors to discuss any discrepancies between the individual judgements. This allows professional development as well as ensuring a shared understanding.

Double Marking: Generally used with written evidence, double marking is a form of cross-assessment in which assessors exchange the same candidate evidence to check each other's interpretation of the standard.

Blind Marking: Again, mainly used with written evidence, blind marking, is intended to reduce any bias, however unintentional, by an assessor. In one form of blind marking, evidence is marked by two assessors, but each is unaware of the other's mark. Discrepancies between the marks can then be resolved. In another form, evidence can be made anonymous by removing the candidate's details.

Standardisation exercises should take place throughout the assessment process to improve the consistency of assessors' judgements.

Records of standardisation exercises, including feedback to assessors, should be kept as evidence of internal verification activity.

4. Sampling Assessment Decisions. (During Delivery Stage)

The internal verifier should select a sample of candidate evidence to check that each assessor is making consistent decisions in line with national standards.

Sampling must be ongoing through the assessment process, not end-loaded. This allows the internal verifier to review assessment judgements before summative decisions are made. This identifies problems at an early stage and will allow support or training to be provided to assessors.

A range of assessment methods should be included in the sample. The critical aspect of any sample is that it must be sufficient to ensure consistency of assessment decisions across each qualification. Over time, all assessors and assessment methods should be included in the sample. It is good practice to document all sampling strategies in a written internal verification procedure and the outcomes of internal verification should be given as feedback to the assessors and used to refine assessment.

All assessment that leads to certification must be sampled and "signed off" by the internal verifier before candidates' results are sent to SQA. This can be done by countersigning the assessor's form, by using an internal checklist or by some other internally devised means.

5. Maintaining Assessment and Verification Records (Post-Delivery Review)

All assessment results leading to SQA certification must be signed by the internal verifier. This is commonly done by countersigning the assessor's form or by using an internal verification checklist. The important point is that clear and accurate records of effective internal verification activity are kept.

The records that are kept will include:

- Validated assessment material
- Records of observations of assessment
- Checklists/marking schemes
- Candidate records.

Records that must be kept and submitted to the SQA Coordinator are:

- Internal Verification – Assessor/Verifier Allocations Form (**Pre-Delivery Stage**)
- Understanding Standards **Pre-Delivery** Meeting Form.
- Record of Assessment Decisions – Faculty Format **(Delivery Stage)**
- Internal Verification Record of Sampling which includes a section to record feedback to Assessors and Action Points. (**Post-Delivery Stage**).

Models of internal verification

The model of internal verification used is at the discretion of the centre. The approach to internal verification that you choose needs to work within the context of your own centre.

There are three broad approaches:

- Allocating responsibility to named members of teaching staff for carrying out internal verification of particular Units, as part of a peer-review process. The internal verifier will sample assessments marked by other teachers.
- All members of teaching staff in a department taking responsibility for both assessing and internally verifying Units, as a peer-review process. All staff take part in understanding standards activities and carry out cross-marking of each other's assessments.
- A networking approach (Neighbourhood) to internal verification, allowing professional dialogue and cross-marking between teachers in different schools. This would be most likely to apply in single-teacher or small departments.

The stages of internal verification

Internal verification can be divided into three separate stages:

- pre-delivery — understanding standards
- ongoing support for assessor and sampling of student evidence
- post-delivery reflection and review

While most internal verification activity will be integrated within existing processes, it is important that key activities are documented. Primarily, this will support you in managing internal assessment and verification and planning for improvement, but will also allow you to demonstrate to SQA that an effective internal verification system is in place. The Faculty

Pre-delivery and Understanding Standards

The first stage of internal verification is the pre-delivery stage. This includes:

- planning the management and coordination of internal assessment activities
- planning the management and coordination of internal verification activities
- ensuring a shared understanding of standards

- agreeing on assessment approaches
- preparing learners

Pre-delivery tasks

Role of assessor	Role of internal verifier
Understand roles and responsibilities	Ensure assessor(s) and internal verifier roles and responsibilities are clear Define approach to internal verification, including sampling
Get familiar with standards and conditions	Collaborate with assessor(s) and with SQA Nominee to ensure shared understanding of standards and conditions
Propose assessment approach Assessors can use SQA provided assessment (UASPs or SQA prior verified assessment from the secure site) or devise their own assessments	Collaborate to ensure that assessment approach is valid, reliable, practicable, equitable and fair Where appropriate SQA's free Prior Verification service should be used
Prepare candidates	Confirm guidance to candidates Ensure that process is in place for candidates who require assessment arrangements

Support and Sampling during Delivery

The second stage of internal verification is the during delivery stage. This includes:

- standardisation activities
- sampling of learners' assessed work
- feedback by internal verifiers to teachers who marked assessments
- consideration of feedback from SQA external verification
- confirmation of results
- supporting assessors, responding to queries
- internal verifiers providing a second opinion in internal assessment appeals, cases of suspected

malpractice in internal assessments, and on assessment arrangements

During Delivery Tasks

Role of assessor	Role of internal verifier
Standardise assessment of candidates with colleagues	Participate in or lead standardisation activities Ensure standardisation activities have taken place
Raise any concerns or queries	Respond to queries, provide support and guidance to assessors
Make assessment judgements/respond to feedback from the internal verifier where required	Review assessment judgements and complete sampling of assessor(s). Provide feedback to assessor(s) Internal assessment appeals process Internal malpractice process
Feedback to candidates	Agree final results

Post-delivery Review

The third and last stage of internal verification is the post-delivery review stage. This includes:

- reflection creating a feedback loop, which can aid improved delivery of the Course
- agreeing and planning any necessary changes in assessment approach for the following session
- agreeing and planning any further understanding standards activities required
- agreeing and planning any changes to internal verification processes for the following session

Post-delivery Tasks

Role of assessor	Role of internal verifier
Reflect on assessment approach and judgements in relation to: validity, reliability, practicability and accessibility	Collaborate with assessor(s) in review of assessment approach, judgements and process
Reflect on assessment process	Reflect of effectiveness of internal verification process, including sampling
Reflect on support for candidates	Agree action plan
Agree action plan	

Internal Verification — Assessor/Verifier Allocations (Form 1)

Subject: _____

Qualification: _____

Session: _____

Unit/IACCA	Assessor(s)	Internal verifier(s)

Understanding Standards Pre-delivery Meeting Form (Form 2)

Course name: _____

Unit name(s): _____ **Unit number(s):** _____

Name(s) of assessor(s): _____

Names of internal verifier(s): _____

Documents and points for discussion	Discussed Yes/No/N/A	Comments/action points (by whom, by when)	Action completed (initial and date)
Unit Specification(s)			
Unit assessment support packs (UASPs) or IACCA assessment task (where relevant) ♦ Judging evidence tables ♦ Candidate assessment records ♦ Conditions for assessment ♦ Re-assessment			
Or			
Centre-devised assessments ♦ Judging evidence tables (or equivalent) ♦ Candidate assessment records ♦ Conditions for assessment ♦ Re-assessment			
Opportunities for combined, holistic			

Documents and points for discussion	Discussed Yes/No/N/A	Comments/action points (by whom, by when)	Action completed (initial and date)
and continuous assessment and naturally occurring evidence			
External verification and key messages from previous session			

Internal verification sampling criteria/plan	
Internal verification planned activities	
Sampling dates	
Meeting dates	

Copied to all assessors and internal verifiers

Signed: _____   (Internal Verifier)

Date: _____

Internal Verification Record of Sampling (Form 3)

Unit number	
Unit name	
Level	
Name of internal verifier(s)	
Name of assessor(s)	
Date of sampling	
Outcomes covered	

Reason for sampling (please tick)

Routine		New or inexperienced assessor		New assessment	
New unit		Action from previous verification		Action from external verification	

Number of groups	
Total number of candidates	
Number of candidates sampled (identify candidates on CAR)	
Correct unit specification used	
Up-to-date UASP/assessment used	
Assessor judgement of candidate evidence is fair and consistent	

Comments/feedback to assessor

Action Required	By whom	By when	Action completed and confirmed by IV	
			Initials	**Date**

Signed: _____ (Internal Verifier)

Guidance on Malpractice in Internal Assessment

SQA centres should have procedures for dealing with instances of suspected malpractice in internal assessments, as well as in externally-assessed examinations or coursework. **Internal verifiers may be asked to provide a second opinion during investigations of suspected malpractice.**

Candidate malpractice means malpractice by a candidate in the course of completing an assessment and can arise in:

* the preparation and authentication of coursework
* the presentation of practical work
* the compilation of portfolios of assessment evidence
* conduct during the assessment

Examples:

* Collusion — with others when an assessment must be completed by individual candidates
* Copying — from another candidate (including using ICT to do so)
* Frivolous content — producing content that is unrelated to the assessment in question
* Misconduct — inappropriate behaviour during an assessment that causes disruption to others. This includes shouting and/or aggressive behaviour or language
* Offensive content — inclusion of inappropriate, offensive, discriminatory or obscene material in assessment evidence
* Impersonation — pretending to be someone else
* Plagiarism — failure to acknowledge sources properly and/or the submission of another person's work as if it were the candidates own
* Unauthorised aids — physical possession of unauthorised materials (including mobile phones, MP3 players, notes etc)

Dealing with suspected cases of candidate malpractice

Pupils must be made aware of what malpractice and plagiarism are and the potential outcomes of committing malpractice.

Where a teacher suspects plagiarism or academic dishonesty, the internal verifier should be alerted in the first instance and asked for a second opinion.

If doubt remains over the authenticity of the pupil's work, then further investigation should be carried out by a senior member of staff. This may result in a pupil disciplinary process. Different sanctions may be applied for different categories of malpractice.

A log and records of all instances of suspected and confirmed malpractice should be retained for three years. SQA can request to see these records.

Centre malpractice

The following are examples of centre malpractice:
* Misuse of assessments, including inappropriate adjustments to assessment decisions
* Non-compliance with defined conditions for assessment for a qualification
* Failure to comply with requirements for accurate and safe retention of candidate evidence, assessment and internal verification records
* Failure to comply with SQA procedures for managing and transferring accurate candidate data
* Excessive over-direction to candidates on how to meet national standards
* Deliberate falsification of records in order to claim certificates

Staff must make every effort to avoid centre malpractice, and should report any concerns to the head teacher. Candidates or other members of the public can report any instances of suspected malpractice to the SQA, who will then investigate the matter.

The internal verification process should be used to ensure that the required conditions for assessment are in place and that correct assessment and resulting records are completed and

Glossary

Agreement trial

A process of standardisation where assessors work in a group with the internal verifier to consider examples of candidates' work and to reach a shared understanding on applying a common standard.

Assessment

The process of evaluating how effectively learning is occurring. For SQA qualifications the process of generating and collecting evidence of a candidate's attainment of knowledge, and skills and judging that evidence against defined standards for formal certification. SQA assessment can be internal, or external, or a combination of both.

Assessor

The person designated in a centre to be responsible for collecting evidence of candidates' competence, judging it and recording attainment.

Checklist

A means of recording the judgements made about activities performed by candidates.

Direct evidence

A term used to describe evidence of candidate performance according to the requirements laid down on the outcome that assessors have witnessed themselves. This can be performance or product evidence but, because the assessor has seen the evidence directly, it is a very reliable form of evidence.

Evidence

Materials provided by a candidate as proof of his or her competence against specified criteria.

Evidence Requirements

The mandatory evidence requirements for SQA Units. They state what candidates have to do, to what standard, and how much evidence they have to produce to demonstrate that they have achieved the outcome. The Evidence Requirements detail the full breadth of achievement of knowledge and/or skills required, the sampling required, and any specific conditions in which the evidence is to be produced.

External verification

The process of ensuring that national standards are maintained consistently across all centres.

External Verifier
A person appointed by SQA who is responsible for the quality assurance of a centre's provision and for ensuring that standards of assessment are applied uniformly and consistently across centres. An External Verifier is often appointed on a subject area basis or for verification groups of Units.

Indirect evidence
Something that someone other than the assessor has observed or said about the candidate. Corroboration is required for indirect evidence.

Instrument of assessment
A means of generating evidence of a learner's knowledge and/or skills.

Internal assessment
An assessment marked within the institution delivering the programme of learning, including by the person who has delivered the learning.

Internal quality assurance
The process of ensuring that the provision at centre and subject level conforms to the approved procedures and that consistency is being achieved within the centre.

Internal verification
The process of ensuring that standards of assessment are applied uniformly and consistently within a centre in line with national standards.

Internal verifier
Person or persons appointed by the centre to ensure that assessors apply standards of assessment uniformly and consistently.

Observation
A method of assessment in which the candidate is observed carrying out tasks that reflect the performance criteria given in outcomes.

Practicability
A measure of the feasibility or administrative efficiency of the assessment process. A valid and reliable assessment may not be practicable due to the cost or time required to carry it out.

Reliability
The extent to which an assessment's results are accurate and consistent and fair between different assessors over time.

Standard
The criteria for success at a particular level. A pre-determined national level of attainment for SQA certification.

Standardisation
Process to check, adjust and ensure that assessment criteria and processes (including both the administration of the assessment itself, and its marking) are applied consistently by assessors and verifiers. Standardisation can be carried out within centres (internal standardisation) as well as by Awarding Bodies.

Summative assessment

Assessment, generally undertaken at the end of a learning activity or programme of learning, which is used to make a judgement on the candidate's overall attainment. A key purpose of summative assessment is to record, and often grade, the candidate's performance in relation to the stated learning objectives of the programme or qualification.

Validity

The degree to which an assessment tests the actual abilities that it is supposed to test and the appropriateness of the interpretation and use of the results for any assessment instrument (eg a driving test where a candidate is observed driving is highly valid. A test where a candidate describes how they would drive is less valid). There are many different measures of validity.

Verification

The process of ensuring that quality assurance systems are being maintained. Verification can be either internal, ie within the centre, or external, ie undertaken by the awarding body