



INTERNAL VERIFIER  
HANDBOOK

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## Exceptional Customer Service

NCFE is 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 easy to do business with, flexible and responsive.

The purpose of this handbook is to provide you with support in your role in relation to NCFE NVQs. We've put together some key points to make it clear what we need you to do so that you can be certain that you meet our criteria. If you'd like any advice about anything in relation to the quality assurance of NVQs please contact the Business Improvement team on 0191 239 8000.

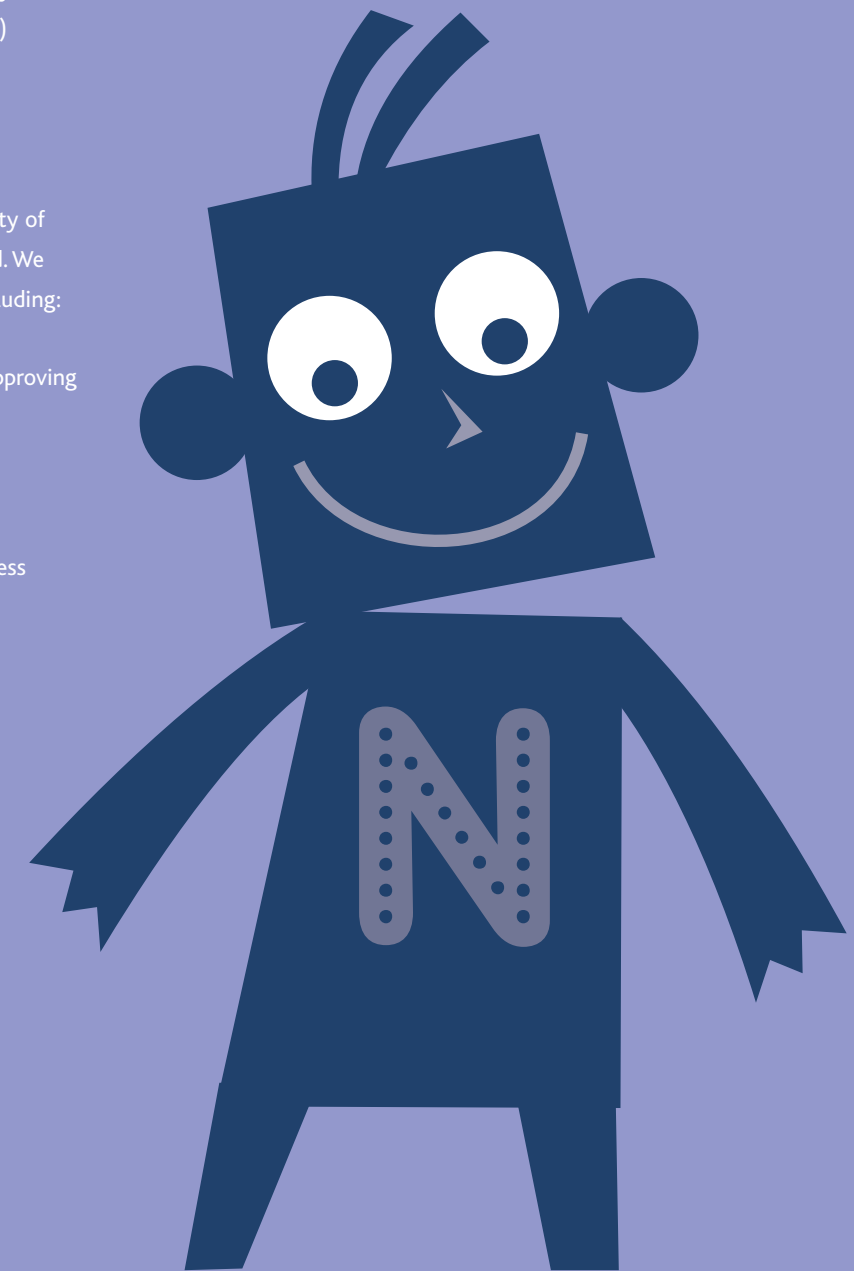
## Why do we quality assure?

We quality assure for 2 main reasons:

- To support you and offer any guidance to successfully deliver our National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs)
- We need to ensure that the integrity of our NVQs is maintained and that both us and centres work to the NVQ code of practice.

As an awarding body NCFE needs to ensure that the integrity of its National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) 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 NVQs
- monitoring the assessment decisions and internal verification systems used in approved centres
- training External Verifiers and monitoring their progress
- responding to centre queries regarding the content, assessment and verification of NCFE NVQs
- gathering and acting upon centre feedback.



## What is internal verification?

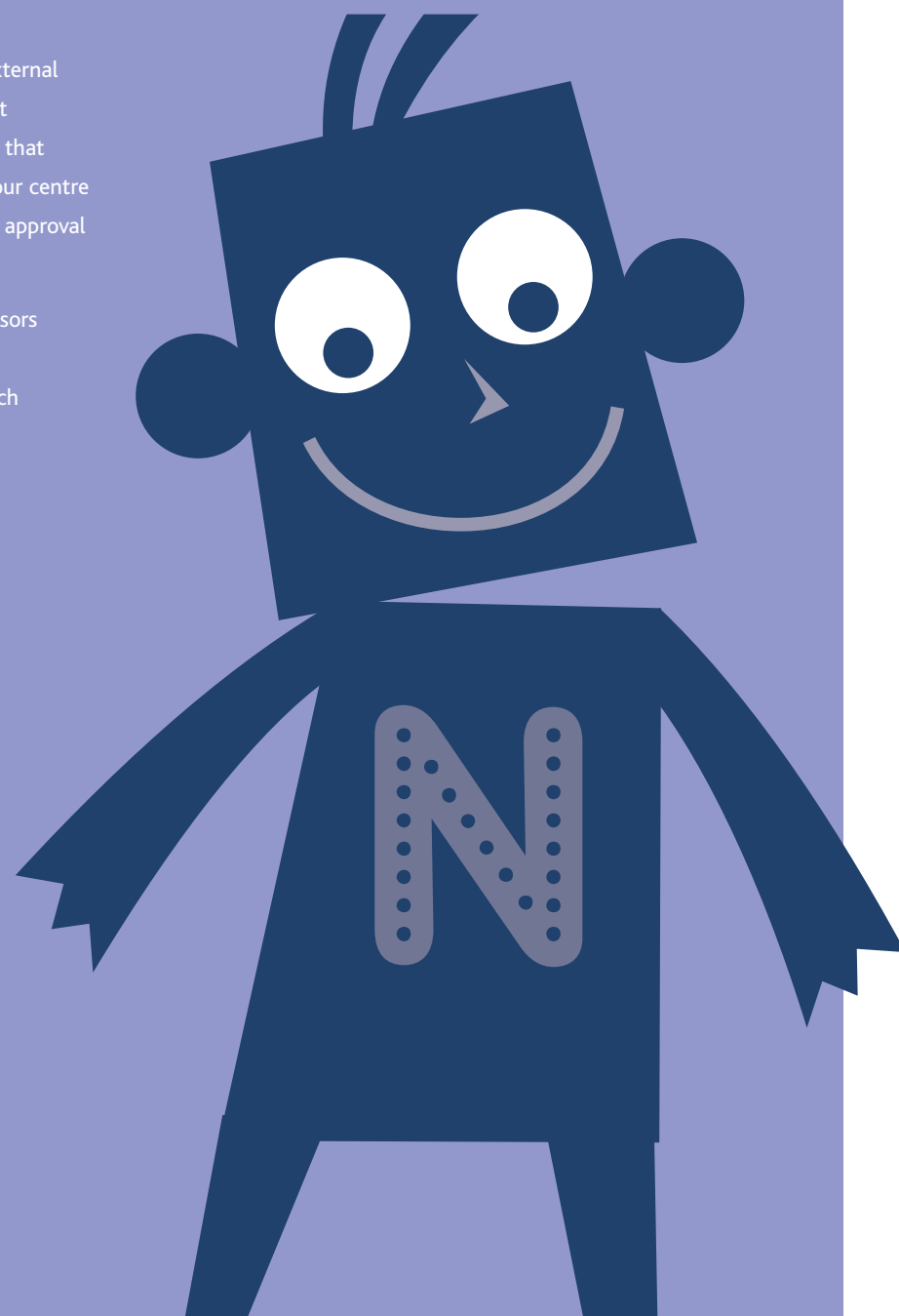
Verification is the process by which we confirm that assessment decisions in centres are:

- 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 NVQ as shown in the Qualification Specifications.

We do this by:

- Internal verification - that you carry out
- External verification – we carry out through our External Verifiers who by supporting you will make 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 [www.ncfe.org.uk](http://www.ncfe.org.uk).

The Internal Verifier forms the vital link between the Assessors and the External Verifier and acts as the centre's quality assurance agent. This handbook focuses on the way in which Internal Verifiers carry out their role.



## What makes an effective Internal Verifier?

### Internal Verifier competence

All Internal Verifiers must:

- have the appropriate and/or specified occupational and technical expertise in the areas they'll be verifying to enable them to make valid judgements about Assessor performance
- hold the relevant Internal Verifier qualification<sup>1</sup>. It's recommended that Internal Verifiers also hold the current Assessor qualifications<sup>2</sup>
- maintain their occupational and technical competence in a way that can be demonstrated through a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) record that relates to their occupational sector
- have a clear understanding of the standards to which the candidate is being assessed and ensure that any queries relating to the interpretation of the standards are brought to the immediate attention of the External Verifier.

Please refer to the relevant NVQ *Qualification Specification* for any additional requirements specific to individual qualifications.

### Trainee Internal Verifiers

All trainee Internal Verifiers must:

- have the appropriate and/or specified occupational expertise in the areas they'll be verifying to enable them to make valid judgements about Assessor performance
- have a clear action plan for achieving the current Internal Verification qualification<sup>3</sup> within 18 months of beginning verification where applicable
- maintain their occupational competence in a way that can be demonstrated through a CPD record that relates to the occupational sector
- ensure that their verification decisions are checked and countersigned by a fully qualified and occupationally experienced Internal Verifier.

It's recognised good practice to establish a mentor system to support trainee Internal Verifiers.

<sup>1</sup> D34 or V1 awards.

<sup>2</sup> D32/33 or A1/A2 awards.

<sup>3</sup> D34 or V1 awards.

## The role of the Internal Verifier

The Internal Verifier's role is to:

- develop, guide and support Assessors
- manage the quality of NVQ delivery
- monitor and verify assessment practice.

To help you do this there are a number of documents available to support you:

- NVQ code of practice
- Joint Awarding Body Guidance on Internal Verification of NVQs
- Qualification Specification
- Essential Guide
- National Occupational Standards
- ENTO Assessor Award Standards
- *Appeals and Enquiries about Results Policy*
- *Malpractice Policy*
- *Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy*
- *Equal Opportunities Policy.*

All of these are available to download at [www.ncfe.org.uk/nvq](http://www.ncfe.org.uk/nvq)

### 1. Develop, guide and support Assessors

You should be in regular contact with Assessors to provide guidance and relay information. This will include:

- supplying factual information
- offering support with interpretation of guidelines and policy
- providing help with specific queries about assessment

- supplying guidance on the appropriate use of different types of evidence
- assisting with any special arrangements that might be required for individual candidates
- providing assistance with all relevant documentation, records and guidance provided by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), NCFE and the centre
- delegating relevant duties and responsibilities according to the expertise of the Assessors and the needs of candidates. You'll also ensure that both Assessors and candidates are aware of these responsibilities
- inducting and training Assessors. You won't necessarily carry out the training of Assessors, but you'll be required to ensure that induction has occurred and that any training needs are identified and acted upon. The induction programme should ensure the Assessors' understanding of:
  - competence-based assessment
  - the particular requirements of the qualification
  - your centre's quality assurance policy and procedures
  - documentation for assessment records to be completed
  - an action plan for maintaining CPD.

### Team meetings

You're required to hold regular team meetings with the Assessment team according to the level of assessment activity within the centre, its satellite sites and partnerships (where applicable). These meetings should include:

- guidance on access and fair assessment
- health and safety issues

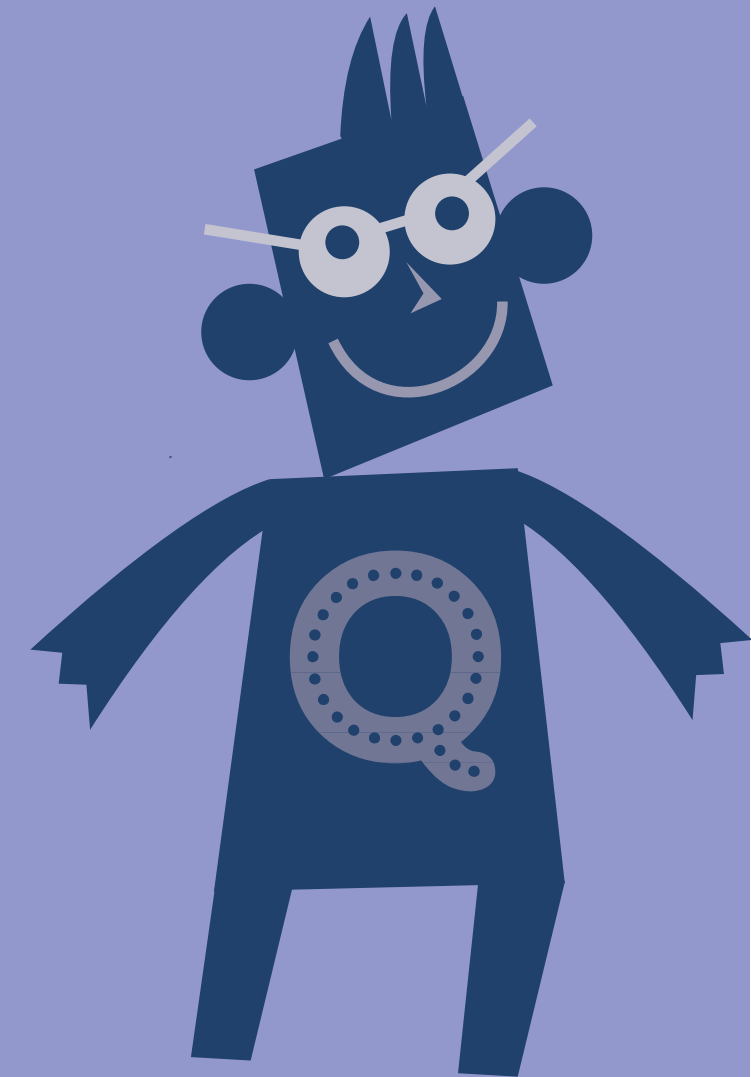
- monitoring, review and evaluation
- how new or changed policies impact on and are implemented in the centre and its satellite sites
- updates from NCFE
- discussion of any action points identified by our External Verifier or other quality assurance staff
- agreement of action to be taken by members of the Assessment team
- any administrative requirements, eg candidate registration and certification
- standardisation across Assessors
- roles and responsibilities within the Assessment team
- any issues arising from the Assessment team, eg workplace issues, assessment methods
- training and development needs of Assessors, including CPD updates.

Team meetings are vital to ensure that the centre's assessment practice meets our requirements. Minutes of these meetings must be kept so that they can be provided as evidence during the external verification visit.

### 2. Manage the quality of NVQ delivery

You're required to manage and maintain the NVQ systems within your centre. This will include:

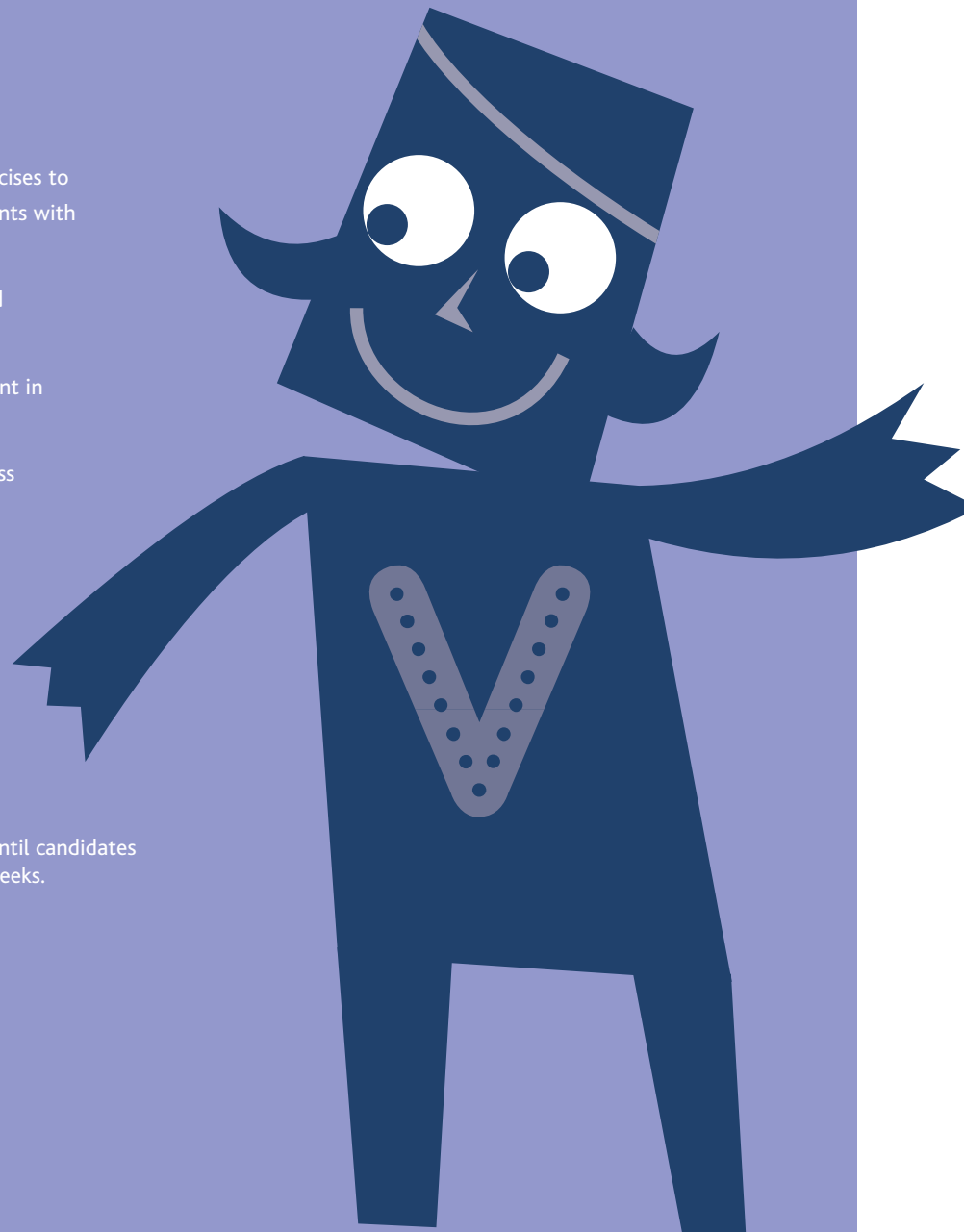
- keeping accurate records of assessment and internal verification activities, ensuring that Assessors use appropriate documents agreed with our External Verifier
- ensuring that documentation and administrative systems are fit for their purpose
- ensuring that candidate registration records and certification requests meet our requirements



- recording internal verification activities
- liaising with our External Verifier which will involve:
  - previous reports being circulated to relevant centre staff
  - managing and co-ordinating centre visit requirements
  - obtaining and sharing updates and guidance you receive from us
  - coming to agreement on relevant action plans
  - dealing with disputes or appeals (if applicable) in line with agreed procedures.

### You're responsible for:

- ensuring that Assessors are trained in the theory and practice of NVQ
  - providing support and advice to Assessors and other staff involved with the candidate's development
  - agreeing with Assessors appropriate evidence and assessment methods for the qualification requirements
  - allocating Assessor duties
  - ensuring the ongoing training, development and updating of the Assessment team
  - ensuring that Assessors are applying the qualification requirements by sampling assessment and internally verifying assessment decisions
  - providing prompt feedback to Assessors
  - holding regular team/standardisation meetings and maintaining meeting records and minutes
  - arranging and taking part in standardisation exercises to ensure consistency of own practice and judgements with other Internal Verifiers
  - contributing to the evaluation of assessment and verification procedures
  - monitoring and reviewing candidates' achievement in relation to access to fair assessment
  - arranging the checking and countersigning process
  - ensuring that qualified Assessors countersign the assessment decisions of unqualified (trainee) Assessors
  - ensuring that the recording of achievement and countersigning of recording documents is carried out accurately
- completing and signing the NCFE *Candidate Certification Claim Form* prior to submission to NCFE <sup>4</sup>
  - ensuring that all appropriate assessment and verification documentation, records and staff are available in the centre for our External Verifier's visit
  - ensuring that action points agreed with our External Verifier are implemented
  - ensuring that your NVQ Quality Assurance Policy and procedures are consistently monitored and implemented
  - providing formal feedback to our External Verifier on the effectiveness of assessment.



<sup>4</sup>Please note that certificates cannot be claimed until candidates have been registered with NCFE for at least 10 weeks.

### Standardisation

Internal Verifiers are required to hold regular standardisation meetings with the Assessment team including satellite or partnership site Assessment teams (where applicable). At the meetings the following should be discussed as appropriate:

- access to fair assessment
- health and safety
- qualification last registration and last certification dates
- issues arising from internal verification
- issues arising from external verification
- candidate achievement
- changes in qualification requirements
- resources
- workplace practice
- difficulties in interpretation of qualification requirements
- alternative assessment methods
- qualification-specific updates from NCFE
- Assessor workload including candidate to Assessor ratios.

### Internal Verifier meetings

You're are required to hold regular meetings with other Internal Verifiers (including those in satellite sites and partnerships as applicable) and/or the centre co-ordinator/senior manager(s). At these meetings the following should be discussed as appropriate:

- access to fair assessment
- health and safety matters
- monitoring, review and evaluation
- any matters of common concern and possible solutions
- issues arising from external verification reports
- examples of good assessment practice and their dissemination
- Internal Verification strategy, policy and implementation

- sampling strategies and rationale
- allocation of Assessors to candidates
- mentoring new Internal Verifiers and countersigning
- preparation for external verification visits
- standardisation activities, including standardisation across Assessors.

### 3. Monitor and verify assessment practice

It's vital that internal verification should occur throughout the assessment process. You'll need to look at a representative sample of assessment decisions to confirm their validity and reliability by:

- observing a wide range of assessment activities and providing constructive feedback to Assessors
- reviewing the collection of evidence in the candidate's portfolio which has been agreed by the Assessor as valid, sufficient, current and authentic
- observing formative and summative assessment interviews by an Assessor with a candidate
- organising and carrying out standardisation exercises with a group of Assessors which may include the following:
  - selecting specific or problem units
  - focusing on types or sources of evidence and assessment methods used
  - comparing the requirements between old and new or revised qualification requirements
  - considering alternative forms of evidence.

The External Verifier will expect to see evidence of this, so please make sure that records are kept and made available during your external verification visit.

For further guidance on standardisation, please refer to the *Joint Awarding Body Guidance on Internal Verification of NVQs*.

## Internal verification sampling strategy

The purpose of an internal verification sampling strategy is to ensure that assessment within the centre is consistent. In order to be consistent, sampling must include direct observation of assessment practice and candidate interviews. The overall sampling approach should be discussed and agreed with our External Verifier at or after the first visit but before the second and final visit has taken place so that you're confident that your chosen strategy is appropriate.

To provide flexibility, we don't dictate the sampling strategy that you must follow. We believe that you are the most qualified people to make that decision. However, to support you we provide the following examples of sampling strategies that you may choose to use. An overall strategy will probably combine a number of these at different times according to changes in circumstances:

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

For example, when the Internal Verifier is confident in the competence of Assessors, they can prioritise areas for monitoring according to the interaction of the different scenarios listed above; for example, the Internal Verifier must choose to sample an increased number of assessment decisions by new or newly qualified Assessors. Our External Verifier will expect to see records to show how a cross-section of these different scenarios has been verified specific to each qualification.

## Review and feedback

It's important to give Assessors clear and constructive feedback and use the opportunity to identify and agree training and development needs.

## Malpractice

Malpractice is defined essentially as any activity or practice which deliberately contravenes regulations and compromises the integrity of the assessment process and/or the validity of certificates.

If any of your centre staff or candidates suspect or find actual malpractice activity, they must report it to us immediately. We'll carry out an investigation and work with you to reach the appropriate conclusions. Please note that, if necessary, we may suspend claims for candidate certification or qualification or centre approval during the investigation. For more details, please download a copy of our *Malpractice Policy* from our website [www.ncfe.org.uk/nvq](http://www.ncfe.org.uk/nvq).

## Recording information

Candidate certification depends on effective and rigorous systems for recording internal verification activity accurately. Our External Verifier must be able to view the different stages of the verification process.

When setting up systems to record verification activity, it's essential that they are fit for their purpose - there may be existing reporting systems within your centre that can be adapted for use with our NVQs. It's good practice to evaluate the reporting procedure regularly in order to ensure that the information recorded is appropriate and useful.

Your records must show:

- induction and training of Assessors
- Assessor and Verifier competence
- team and standardisation meetings
- a list of all Assessors' allocated responsibilities, for example, candidates, qualifications, units
- an internal verification sampling strategy
- who verified whom, what and when
- feedback given to Assessors and action plans

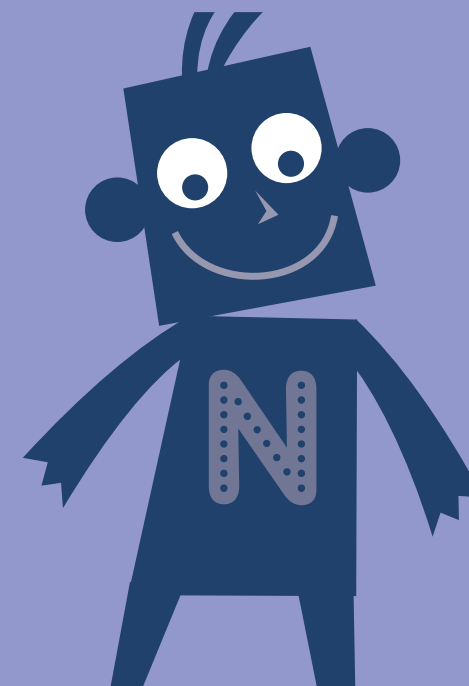
- candidate information including personal and work details and registration status
- certificates claimed (including unit certificates), who claimed the certificate for whom and when
- statistical information on achievement and certification rates analysed by factors such as ethnic origin, disability and gender.

Please refer to the relevant NVQ *Qualification Specification* for any additional requirements specific to individual qualifications.

Recording mechanisms should provide evidence that internal verification has been carried out regularly and systematically and should show that it has occurred across candidates, units and Assessors. To help you, we have put together a selection of Internal Verification and recording sheets in the appendices which are directly based on the templates published in the *Joint Awarding Body Guidance on Internal Verification of NVQs*. You may find these useful as a basis for designing your own forms. Our External Verifier can provide you with advice on this.

Internal verification records must be securely retained by you for a minimum of **3 years** following candidate achievement of the qualification. You must retain portfolios until the external verification process has taken place. Candidates who wish to appeal against our External Verifier's decision must follow the process as detailed in our Appeals and Enquiries about Results Policy. You should therefore retain the portfolios for these candidates for 3 months or until they receive the decision of the appeal.

Following final verification activity, you and your nominated centre contact should liaise with your Exams Officer to ensure that all *Candidate Certification Claim Forms* are completed accurately; these must then be signed off by yourself and then our External Verifier (unless you've been awarded Direct Claim Status). Please note that certificates cannot be claimed until candidates have been registered with us for at least 10 weeks. Please inform candidates of this requirement.



## External verification – what to expect

### Our External Verifiers are responsible for:

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

There will be 2 monitoring visits to each approved centre each year. In certain circumstances, eg low volume of candidates or when centres are awarded Direct Claim Status, this could be one visit.

NCFE and QCA 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 [www.ncfe.org.uk](http://www.ncfe.org.uk) or contact our Centre Support team on 0191 239 8000.

### Arranging visits

It's important that the Internal Verifier is present when the External Verifier carries out a visit so that they're available to discuss the internal verification process. When arranging a visit to your centre, our External Verifier 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 NVQ)
- the site to be visited
- the names of candidates, Assessors and other Internal Verifiers they wish to meet.

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

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

### The visit

The external verification visits also provide an important opportunity for you to seek support and guidance and for External Verifiers to update centre staff on emerging best practice in assessment and internal verification.

Our External Verifier 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 verification against the approved centre criteria, and make any further recommendations.

During the visit our External Verifier will look at:

The quality and consistency of assessment decisions and assessment practice. This involves:

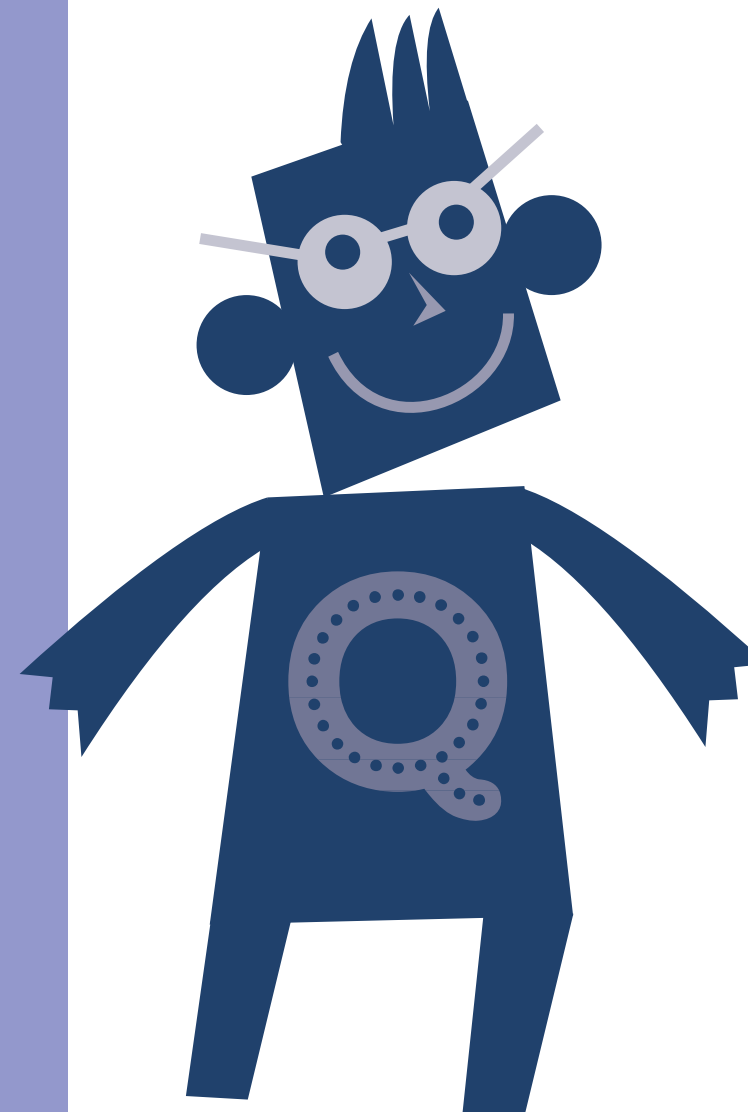
- sampling candidate assessments
- speaking with candidates and Assessors to ensure that evidence and records of assessment are both valid and authentic
- reviewing records of assessments, internal verification and team meetings
- reviewing procedures.

### Sampling

Our External Verifiers will sample both assessment and internal verification decisions. 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 candidates. Our External Verifier will highlight in the visit plan which candidates, Assessors and Internal Verifiers they wish to see. However, there may be additional candidates, Assessors and Internal Verifiers whom our External Verifier will wish to see on agreed additional visits. Please see page 10 and the appendices for more information about sampling models.

### Access Assessment

Our External Verifier will also check that candidates 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*.



### Reports

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

- management systems
- resources
- monitoring the assessment process
- internal verification
- centre's system for recording and using data.

A copy of the visit report template can be found on our website: [www.ncfe.org.uk](http://www.ncfe.org.uk).

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, including sanctions if applicable and formulating an action plan.

During the visit, there will be time for Internal Verifiers 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 Verifier is here to help you.

You'll receive a copy of our External Verifier's visit report no more than 5 working days after the visit took place.

If our External Verifier has agreed with you any immediate actions for improvement which may be preventing you from certifying candidates or operating effectively, they also discuss these with one of our External Quality Assurance Officers. Our External 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 Verifier will work with you to complete the actions in the agreed timescales.

# Appendices

## Independent Assessment

The assessment strategy for each sector outlines the independent assessment requirement. Additionally:

- every candidate has a piece of work independently assessed
- the assessment must be carried out by a sector-specialist Assessor who is qualified and occupationally competent and who is not directly involved in supporting or working with the candidate, whether in education, training or employment relationships
- the Assessor checks that the tasks meet the assessment requirements set out in the NVQ *Qualification Specification* and that the tasks are evaluated alongside associated assessment.

### Sampling Strategy Guidance

#### You need to consider . . .

How experienced is the centre?

How experienced are the Assessors?

Is centre activity increasing?

What problems have already been identified?

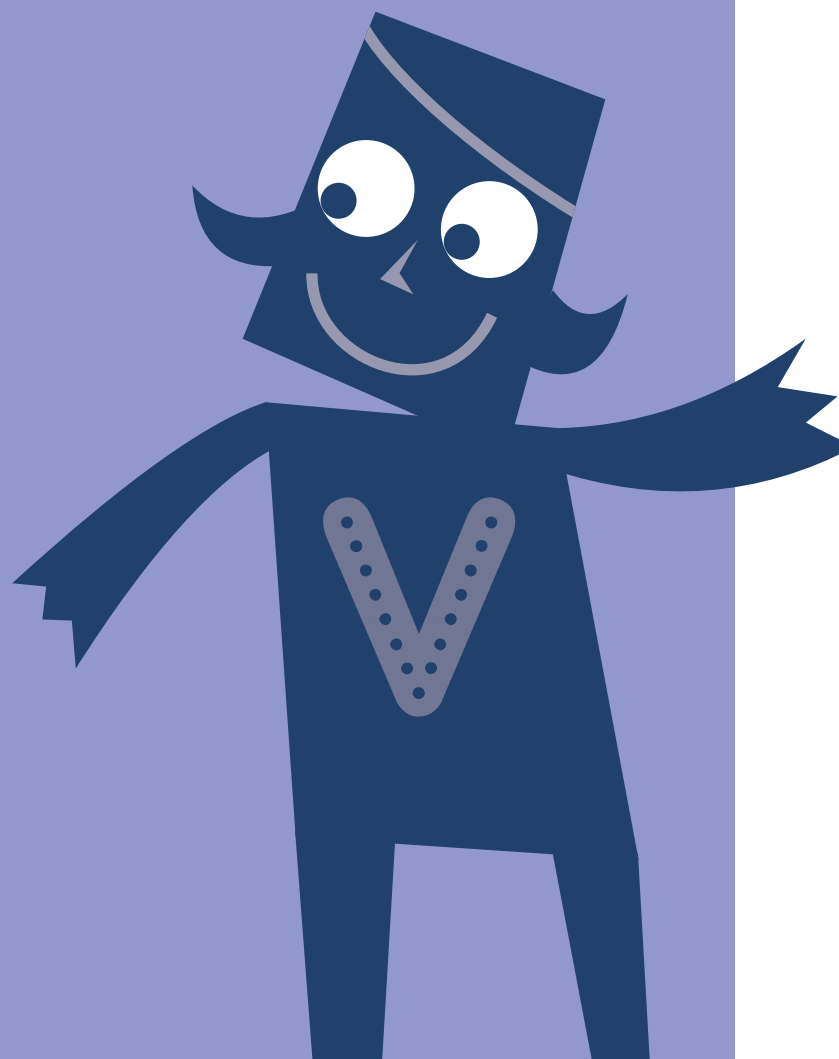
What assessment methods are being used?

What records of assessment are there, eg Assessor checklists, internal verification records?

What satellites/partnerships are being created?

### Examples of strategies

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



## Internal Verifier Record – Sampling Activity across Assessors

Assessor Name	TDLB/A 1 or A2	*Exp?	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec

\*Please indicate here whether the Assessor is experienced.

### Decisions

It's recommended that you also collate a written record to support the decisions you've made from sampling activity across Assessors. You'll be able to record more detailed, qualitative information and this can then be used, for example, to inform discussions at team meetings concerning standardisation, sufficiency and best practice.

## Internal Verifier Report – Feedback on Assessment Decisions

Assessor	Candidate	Unit/Element	Evidence presented	Comments	Assessment decision agreed?

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

(Internal Verifier) Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Observation of Assessor Form (Direct Assessment)

Qualification \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Unit/Level \_\_\_\_\_ Site: \_\_\_\_\_

Assessor \_\_\_\_\_ Internal Verifier: \_\_\_\_\_

Did the Assessor	Comments
provide clear information to the candidate on the assessment process?	
encourage the candidate to identify and present evidence?	
assess the candidate against only the specified performance criteria?	
use the standard course and assessment documentation?	
remain as unobtrusive as was practicable?	
use questions which were clear and did not lead the candidate?	
use sufficient questions to cover the required knowledge and to be able to infer competence?	

continued

Did the Assessor	Comments
communicate at a level appropriate to the candidate?	
involve the candidate in the assessment process?	
confirm success to the candidate promptly and as soon as evidence was sufficient?	
encourage the individual to ask questions?	
give feedback as soon as possible?	
record evidence and assessment decisions promptly and in accordance with requirements?	
Overall Comments:	Action Plan

Assessor signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Internal Verifier signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## Enquiries

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NCFE fully supports the principle of equal opportunities and opposes all unlawful or unfair discrimination on the grounds of ability, age, colour, culture, disability, domestic circumstances, employment status, gender, marital status, nationality, political orientation, racial origin, religious beliefs, sexual orientation and social background.

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.

## Data Protection

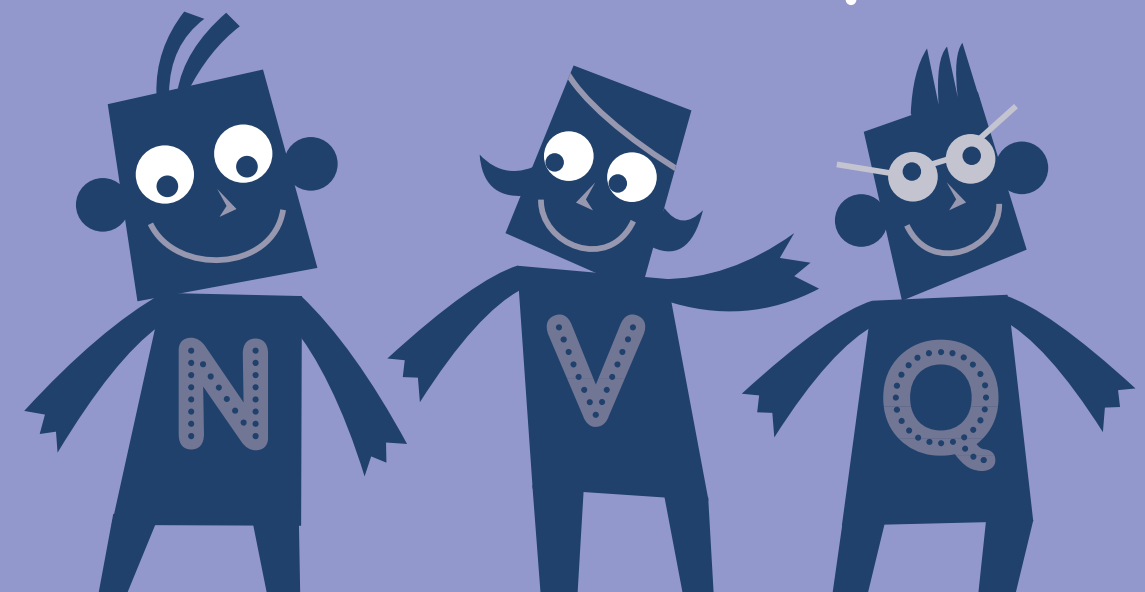
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other questions,  
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