



Quality Assurance Policy for Awarding for 2021-22

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Contents

1.0 Introduction	3
2.0 Quality assurance arrangements.....	3
2.1 Late Teacher Assessed Grade(s) (TAGs).....	3
2.1.1 What we need from you	4
2.1.2 What you can expect from NCFE	4
2.2 Completed qualifications which were via Direct Claim Status (DCS) or had sampling delayed in 2020-21	4
2.2.1 What we need from you	4
2.2.3 What you can expect from NCFE	5
2.2.4 Mid-flight learners.....	5
2.3 Qualifications being delivered in 2021-22 with or without adaptations.....	5
2.3.1 What we need from you	5
2.4 Adaptation guidance.....	6
3.0 Preparing for your EQA review.....	6
3.1 Internal quality assurance	6
3.2 What you can expect from NCFE	7
3.3 Cancellation of an EQA review	9
3.4 Centre risk rating	9
4.0 Enquires about results for internal assessment decisions	10
5.0 Additional information and support.....	10

1.0 Introduction

The purpose of this policy published on 23 September 2021 is to set out NCFE's approach to Quality Assurance for Awarding for 2021-22. We operate robust external quality assurance arrangements, which help us ensure the fairness and validity of the qualifications we award and centres' compliance with the requirements we set out.

This policy confirms what is required from you and what NCFE will do to support this process. This includes what we require in relation to internal quality assurance, preparing for your review and what you can expect from NCFE in relation to external quality assurance.

Following the outcome of Ofqual's consultation on '[Arrangements for the assessment and awarding of vocational, technical and other general qualifications in 2021 to 2022](#)' minor changes to the VCRF for 2021-22 have been confirmed, which will determine which quality assurance arrangements apply to you:

- proposal to move category B qualifications into category A, to enable adaptations to apply to all qualifications and move away from results being based on Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs) as used in 2020-21. However, category B provisions will be retained for:
 - the progress of appeals where results are based on TAGs
 - the determination of results for any learners eligible for a TAG who did not receive one in the summer
- results for 2020-21 mid-flight learners based on TAGs will carry forward into 2021-22, or later for longer study programmes
- the requirements and guidance on adaptation will be updated to reflect the 2021-22 context, in line with policy steer from the Department for Education (DfE).

To view guidance on individual qualification adaptations, please visit [QualHub](#).

2.0 Quality assurance arrangements

2.1 Late Teacher Assessed Grade(s) (TAGs)

Qualifications in Ofqual categories B1 and B2 that have been awarded by a centre through Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs) but have been submitted after 31 August 2021, are deemed as late TAGs. **We will only accept late TAGs until 29 October 2021.**

If you have already had TAGs sampled for the qualification for which you are submitting late TAGs, and/or you hold Direct Claim Status (DCS) for this qualification, you will not need additional EQA sampling for these submissions, unless:

- TAGs being claimed are for learners who were registered after your last EQA review
- you are submitting a significantly high number of late TAGs (eg 25+) on one qualification
- the EQA requires a further sample based on the grades submitted compared to those agreed this year or those achieved in previous years.

If you are submitting late TAGs for a qualification that does not hold DCS and the batch of learners has not been previously sampled for TAGs, you will be required to have an EQA review prior to grades/claims being approved.

2.1.1 What we need from you

For qualifications being submitted late (after 31 August 2021), you will need to follow the instructions for submission which you can find in our [Portal User Guide](#). You will need to ensure your centre's Teacher Assessed Grade (TAG) policy has been submitted, approved and, if applicable, that you have completed the eligibility process for Functional Skills qualifications.

You will need to provide a detailed narrative when applying to submit late TAG submissions; this will allow the External Quality Assurance team to understand why the submission is late and support in future sampling.

Once you have approval to submit your late TAG submissions, you must do this within two working days. If this window is exceeded, the portal access will be closed.

Late TAG requests received after 29 October 2021 will be reviewed by our Compliance team and may be subject to an investigation.

2.1.2 What you can expect from NCFE

Where qualifications have previously been sampled for Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs) and/or they hold Direct Claim Status (DCS), your EQA will complete a quality assurance check via a desktop review. An additional EQA review with the centre will not be required unless any of the outlined concerns arise.

If the qualification does not hold DCS and/or the batch of learners your late submission is part of has not been previously sampled, your allocated EQA will arrange an EQA review with you within 20 working days.

2.2 Completed qualifications which were via Direct Claim Status (DCS) or had sampling delayed in 2020-21

In line with Ofqual guidance, centres are required to keep all evidence used in the determination of a Teacher Assessed Grade (TAG) until six months after the later of: the results issue date, or the conclusion of any appeal in relation to that result.

2.2.1 What we need from you

For qualifications awarded during the 2020-21 summer session, which had no Teacher Assessed Grade (TAG) evidence sampled, we need you to, in line with Ofqual and NCFE guidance, retain this information until an EQA review and sample has been completed. You will be required to provide assessment evidence used to determine the TAG awarded for both internal and external components of each individual qualification.

2.2.3 What you can expect from NCFE

For qualifications that have been awarded through Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs) via Direct Claim Status (DCS), your EQA will be in contact to arrange a retrospective sample of the assessment evidence used to determine the TAGs for both internal and external components.

We will complete all retrospective sampling within the first six months of the session in line with Ofqual guidance. Where possible, we will combine this with your scheduled EQA review. If this is not possible, this additional review will not impact the two free EQA reviews you are entitled to for this session.

2.2.4 Mid-flight learners

The above guidance also applies to those learners who are mid-flight. For these qualifications, you should expect an EQA review to be arranged before the end of October 2021.

2.3 Qualifications being delivered in 2021-22 with or without adaptations

For qualifications being awarded in the 2021-22 session completed in the standard way or through adaptation, our usual EQA process will be in place.

2.3.1 What we need from you

In line with the NCFE Centre Agreement, centres should work in line with the quality assurance processes specified in any documentation made available by us in relation to delivery, assessment, or grading and assist us in carrying out any reasonable monitoring and quality assurance activities.

For each sector quality assurance (QA) group, you'll be allocated a dedicated EQA who'll complete up to two EQA reviews per QA group, covering all the qualifications with active registrations. Your EQA will be allocated once you have registered your learners; do this early in your delivery to ensure that you and your learners receive the best support from us.

You should agree with your EQA the date for your review well in advance of your learners requiring certification.

Your EQA will email your Programme Contact to arrange a review date and will let them know what to prepare in advance. It is important that you let your EQA know who will be responsible for coordinating the EQA review for all qualifications in the QA group to ensure that we're contacting the most appropriate person.

2.4 Adaptation guidance

Learners must only access permitted adaptations where they are needed to mitigate the impact of learning loss, continued disruption and / or ongoing public health restrictions. This will be monitored through our external quality assurance process to support the validation of any adaptations adopted, ensuring they are only applied where needed. Where adaptations are applied unnecessarily, centres may be given an action or downgraded in their EQA reviews; therefore, you need to be sure to check with your allocated EQA on the application of any adaptations.

Adaptation reporting will be incorporated with feedback given in Section 5: Assessment of the EQA report *5.8: Assessment methods used are valid and reliable and allow access to assessment for learners*.

For specific qualification guidance centres should refer to our [Adaptation blueprint for 2021-22](#).

3.0 Preparing for your EQA review

To get the most out of your EQA review, it will be necessary for delivery staff involved in all qualifications within the QA group to organise and plan together, so that the required documentation for all qualifications is presented and available for the review.

Your EQA will send you information via email to ensure you're well prepared prior to the visit date and the following documents and forms will support you in your preparation:

- [Section 12 feedback form](#)
- [Centre information form](#)
- [EQA review centre guidance](#)

Your EQA review will take place either face-to-face or remotely. The type of review will be determined by previous EQA reviews, the size of your centre and the number of qualifications offered.

If a centre is deemed high risk based on outstanding actions, poor assessment and internal quality assurance practice, or any other concerns highlighted to us, we will schedule a face-to-face review.

If you are having a remote EQA review, we recommend watching the following webinar, [preparing for a remote EQA review](#).

3.1 Internal quality assurance

Internal quality assurance should be completed for all internal assessments as per your centre's assessment and internal quality assurance strategy. This practice is expected to incorporate a sample of assessments that have been adapted as part of the VTQ Contingency Regulatory Framework (VCRF).

The purpose of internal quality assurance is to provide Assessors with confidence in the grades they have awarded, to ensure fairness and objectivity of decisions and to confirm consistency in the application of assessment criteria and standards. All internal quality assurance (IQA) processes should be completed prior to any grades being submitted for EQA approval.

There are a number of documents available to support your centres IQA process which can be located within the [course file documents](#) section on QualHub.

We also hold training sessions each year to support centres with assessment and internal quality assurance. These dates will be published on [QualHub](#) once available.

3.2 What you can expect from NCFE

Our external quality assurance model will support centres throughout the 2021-22 session awarding process.

EQA reviews will be completed following our standard external quality assurance process but will include discussions around any retrospective sampling of Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs) and adaptations.

During the external quality assurance review, your EQA will sample a range of learner portfolios from the qualifications you deliver in each Quality Assurance (QA) group. This will include learners who have completed as standard, any retrospective sampling TAGs and those who have completed using an adaptation.

EQAs will make it clear in the report if they sample TAGs or adapted evidence as part of the review and all discussions will be recorded in the report.

The table below shows the additional questions that EQAs will ask in relation to TAGs and adaptations. Generic information on each section of the EQA report can be found in the [User Guide to the External Quality Assurance Report](#).

Section 3	<p>Additional questions for Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How has the delivery team adapted their approach for TAGs? • Are all relevant staff familiar with the TAG process? • Have all staff involved in TAGs completed training, including avoidance of bias, understanding of evidence? • Has the centre held any additional team meetings or standardisation sessions in support of TAGs? • How has the team ensured that the amendments to centre policies have been adhered to through the TAG process? <p>Evidence of the above will be required to support discussions and will be recorded in the report.</p>
Section 4	<p>Additional questions for Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the centre recruited any new staff during the pandemic? • What training have Assessors/IQAs completed to ensure they are competent in the TAG process?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Throughout the pandemic, how has the centre adapted to online learning for the purpose of assessment? <p>Evidence of the above will be required to support discussions and will be recorded in the report.</p>
Section 5	<p>Additional questions for Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs) are included in the Approach to Awarding 2020-21 but should be considered in line with the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stage 1 – Consider what has been taught (discussions should be held with the centre around what content they have been able to deliver) Stage 2 – Collect the evidence (what forms of evidence has the centre used to assess and award the TAG?) Stage 3 – Evaluate the quality of the evidence (how has the centre determined the grade based on the available evidence?) Stage 4 – Consider what has been taught, not what is missing (discuss and confirm that the centre has only awarded TAGs based on taught content rather than learner achievement predictions) Stage 5 – Assign the grade (how were final grades reached/has consistent grading logic been applied to arrive at a fair assessment?) <p>Functional Skills qualifications – eligibility checks for TAGs at learner level will be completed during the EQA review and recorded in this section of the report.</p> <p>External Assessment only qualifications – will be included in the above discussions and recorded in this section of the report.</p> <p>Additional questions if adaptations have been used for any learner/qualification.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EQAs will make it clear in the report if they sample adapted evidence and all discussions will be recorded in the report. We will also document whether an additional sample is required and provided. EQAs will want to know why the adaptation was required and how it was applied. They will also ensure that the adaptation applied is in line with the NCFE Adaptation blueprint for 2021-22.
Section 6	<p>Additional questions for Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How has your IQA sampling plan / strategy been amended for TAGs? How has IQA standardisation been approached differently for TAGs? How have any special assessment requirements been applied within the TAG process? Have IQA records accurately recorded judgements and commentary against TAGs? Have external assessment only qualifications been included in your IQA sampling and standardisation? <p>Additional questions if adaptations have been used for any learner/qualification.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How has your IQA sampling plan /strategy been amended to incorporate adapted qualifications/components

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has IQA standardisation been approached differently for adapted qualifications/components?
Section 7	<p>Learner sample sizes will remain the same, but the learners chosen for sampling will be based on the information received from the centre. For example, if 50% are Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs) and 50% are adapted, learners will be chosen in that ratio to ensure sufficient sampling is carried out across the cohort of learners.</p> <p>When recording learner sampling, the EQA will make it clear in the units sampled box whether the learner was TAG or adapt to allow for a clear audit trail.</p>

3.3 Cancellation of an EQA review

Visits and reviews with our EQAs are a vital part of our quality assurance process and, as such, should go ahead as planned.

If a planned review (approval, EQA, support or additional) needs to be cancelled by the centre for whatever reason, it is a requirement that a minimum of 10 working days' notice is provided.

Whilst we acknowledge that today's work environment is a very busy one, the Programme Contact or another centre contact would be expected to inform the EQA and/or our Customer Support team if they need to cancel a review.

If visits / reviews are not cancelled within 10 working days, we reserve the right to charge the centre in line with our published [fees and pricing list](#).

Repeated cancellation of external quality assurance reviews may incur sanctions. See our [Sanctions Policy](#) for further information.

3.4 Centre risk rating

At the end of last academic year, each centre's risk profile was updated following the outcome of the awarding arrangements used in the 2020-21 session and reviewed to help identify those centres that may require additional scrutiny and support.

The risk profile is based on several factors, including historic Direct Claims Status (DCS), assessment and internal quality assurance performance scores from past EQA reviews, and any recorded instances of malpractice or maladministration.

The risk rating will not dictate changes to grades; rather, it will be used to identify the level of EQA support required, including requiring further EQA reviews in the 2021-22 session and beyond.

4.0 Enquires about results for internal assessment decisions

EQAs will provide feedback on whether the learner evidence presented is sufficient and the grade or pass mark is in line with the required criteria. If not, the assessment decision may be rejected until sufficient evidence can be obtained. If the centre and the EQA cannot reach an agreement on this, they can follow our [enquiries about results and assessment decisions policy](#) as a last resort.

An enquiry about the decisions of an internally marked assessment allows you the opportunity to question if the assessment criteria, adaptation and/or Teacher Assessed Grade (TAG) guidance were fairly, reliably, and consistently applied during the external quality assurance process. We will appoint a member of staff who was not involved in the original assessment decision to conduct the enquiry.

5.0 Additional information and support

We have a range of events and training running throughout the year to further support you. You can find more details on these by using the links below.

- [Functional Skills events](#)
- [Functional Skills training](#)
- [V Cert events](#)
- [V Cert training](#)
- [T Level events](#)
- [T Level YouTube](#)
- [EDSQ events](#)

We stand ready to support you and your staff this year, and our Customer Support team is available to answer any questions you may have – call us on 0191 239 8000 or email us at customersupport@ncfe.org.uk.

You can also contact your allocated EQA or visit our [approach to awarding for 2021-22 hub](#).