

Qualification Verification:

Guidance for schools





Qualification verification: Guidance for schools

Publication date: November 2024

Publication code:

Published by the Scottish Qualifications Authority
The Optima Building, 58 Robertson Street, Glasgow G2 8DQ
Lowden, 24 Wester Shawfair, Dalkeith, EH22 1FD
www.sqa.org.uk

The information in this publication may be reproduced in support of SQA qualifications. If it is reproduced, SQA should be clearly acknowledged as the source. If it is to be used for any other purpose, written permission must be obtained from SQA. It must not be reproduced for trade or commercial purposes.

This document can be produced, on request, in alternative formats, including large type, Braille and numerous community languages. For further details telephone SQA's Customer Contact Centre on 0845 279 1000.

SQA is committed to using plain English. We will try to make our publications as easy and straightforward to understand as we can, and will try to avoid all unnecessary jargon. If there's any language in this document that you feel is hard to understand, or could be improved, please write to Editor, Editorial Team, at the Glasgow address or email: editor@sqa.org.uk

Contents

Introduction	1
Changes for session 2024–25	1
What happens during qualification verification?	1
Modes of qualification verification	2
Virtual verification — key points to know:	2
Visiting verification — key points to know:	2
Remote verification — key points to know:	2
Central verification — key points to know:	3
Section 1: Verification of National Workplace qualifications, SVQs and Customised Awards	4
Allocation planning for qualification verification activity	4
Activity planning for qualification verification activity	4
Qualification verification process for your SQA co-ordinator	5
Feedback sessions — important points to note	5
Reporting for a qualification verification event	6
Section 2: Group award verification for Higher National qualifications, Professional Development Awards, National Progression Awards, National Certificates and Foundation Apprenticeships	7
Generic criteria	7
Allocation planning for group award verification activity	7
SQA co-ordinator for group award verification process	9
Graded unit activity	9
Feedback session for a group award event — important points to note	9
Reporting for a group award event	10
SQA Centre Hub	10
Section 3: Accepted methods of evidence	10
Ongoing support	11
Sampling: the risk-based approach	11
Rationale for sampling	12
Retaining candidate evidence for sampling	12
Referencing evidence	13
The three stages of internal verification	13
Before assessment	14

During assessment	14
After assessment	14
Important points to note...	14
Discussions with staff and candidates	15
Candidates	15
Assessors and IVs	15
The verification decision	15
Required action points, recommendations and good practice	16
Outcome ratings and sanctions	16
Appeals	17
Appendix: Higher National, Professional Development Awards, National Progression Awards, National Certificates and Foundation Apprenticeships	18

Introduction

This guidance document covers all models and approaches of qualification verification for all qualification types.

Section 1 of this document covers the qualification verification process applied to the following qualifications:

- ◆ National Workplace
- ◆ SVQs
- ◆ Customised Awards

Section 2 of this document covers the group award verification process applied, where applicable, to the following qualifications:

- ◆ Higher National
- ◆ Professional Development Awards
- ◆ National Progression Awards
- ◆ National Certificates
- ◆ Foundation Apprenticeships

Changes for session 2024–25:

Key changes for session 2024–25 are the introduction of the group award verification model for more of our qualifications, and the implementation of generic criteria for group award verification activity relating to the qualifications covered in Section 2. More information on the generic criteria and how we will implement them is provided in Section 2 below (under **Generic criteria**) and in the Appendix.

This guidance document will outline:

- ◆ the purpose of qualification verification
- ◆ what qualification verification looks like
- ◆ what qualification verification for a group award looks like
- ◆ how to work with SQA and the External Verifier(s) to plan, manage and take part in a qualification verification event

What happens during qualification verification?

Qualification verification is the process by which SQA verifies that centres are assessing candidates in line with national standards, and that assessment decisions comply with SQA's quality assurance criteria.

The SQA staff who are responsible for carrying out qualification verification are external verifiers (EVs). These are experienced subject experts who are appointed by SQA to undertake qualification verification for SQA.

There is specific guidance on each quality assurance criterion for qualification verification in our document [Qualification Verification Criteria: Guidance for centres](#) which you will find on our website. It includes:

- ◆ the rationale for each quality assurance criterion in qualification verification
- ◆ specific SQA requirements relating to each criterion
- ◆ examples of types of evidence required to demonstrate how you meet the criterion
- ◆ additional sources of information and guidance available from SQA

Modes of qualification verification

There are four main methods of qualification verification: virtual, visiting, remote and central. The key characteristics of each mode are described below.

Virtual verification — key points to know:

- ◆ we will liaise with your SQA co-ordinator to plan the virtual verification event
- ◆ during planning, you will agree:
 - the evidence submission date
 - method of evidence submission
 - a date and time for a virtual feedback meeting
- ◆ evidence should be submitted at least two weeks before the agreed virtual feedback meeting
- ◆ you may provide the EV with internal access to your own platform(s), such as your One Drive, to review the requested evidence
- ◆ during a virtual verification event the feedback meeting will be conducted using Microsoft Teams, and the EV will send you the meeting link for this
- ◆ your Quality Assurance (QA) report will be released 15 days after the virtual visit

Visiting verification — key points to know:

- ◆ the EV will contact your SQA Co-ordinator to arrange a visit date
- ◆ the EV will issue the visit plan at least six weeks prior to the agreed visit date
- ◆ verification is likely to be carried out in one day at your school
- ◆ evidence will be reviewed on the day at your school
- ◆ your QA report will be released 15 days after the visit

Remote verification — key points to know:

- ◆ remote verification will address criteria 2.1 (where applicable) and 4.2–4.7.
- ◆ the focus will be on internal assessment and verification and, where applicable, on the assessors' and internal verifiers' competence to assess and internally verify in line with the qualification requirements
- ◆ evidence will be submitted and reviewed remotely
- ◆ no feedback meeting will take place
- ◆ your QA report will be released 15 days after the verification event takes place

Central verification — key points to know:

- ◆ SQA will contact schools to indicate when and how central verification will take place for a specific qualification
- ◆ schools will receive clear instructions about the process and procedures to follow for the central verification event
- ◆ you will liaise with QA logistics officer on how to submit evidence
- ◆ where your school is found to be non-compliant in some aspect of assessment of the qualification, a virtual feedback event will take place
- ◆ your QA report will be released 15 days after the verification event takes place

Section 1: Verification of National Workplace qualifications, SVQs and Customised Awards

Allocation planning for qualification verification activity

The QA team will email you when you are selected for verification activity and ask:

- ◆ are you delivering the selected qualification?
- ◆ when will you have evidence available?

Once the QA team has received this delivery information from you, they will:

- ◆ release the allocation to the EV within the appropriate timeframe. For example, we may contact you in October with your selection information — if you advise us that evidence will not be available until March the following year, we will not release the allocation to the EV until nearer the time. Candidate evidence must be retained from when we first contact you until the verification event has been undertaken.

When the EV accepts the allocation, an automated email will be sent to them from our Quality Assurance Management System (QAMS)

Activity planning for qualification verification activity

The EV will then:

1. make initial contact with your SQA co-ordinator within 10 working days of the allocation being released to the school. The EV will not contact subject staff directly unless authorised to do so by the SQA co-ordinator.
2. use the information you provided about qualification delivery and evidence availability to inform their request for additional information in relation to:
 - ◆ names of assessors and internal verifiers
 - ◆ candidate SCN(s) and stage of progression
 - ◆ level of qualification of assessors and internal verifiers
3. confirm with the school:
 - ◆ for virtual verification: the method of evidence submission, the date and time of the virtual feedback session, and any candidate, assessor or IV interviews required
 - ◆ for visiting verification: the date and time of the visit, and any candidate, assessor or IV interviews required
4. send a completed visit plan to the SQA co-ordinator by the following date:
 - ◆ for visiting verification: two weeks before the event
 - ◆ for virtual verification: two weeks before the agreed evidence submission date

This visit plan will include:

- ◆ a list of the assessors, verifiers and candidates who are selected for interview — it is generally best for interviews to be conducted face-to-face, but other formats such as MS Teams, tele- or video- conference, and telephone interviews are also acceptable.
 - ◆ an outline of what will be covered during the event, and an indication of the running order.
 - ◆ an outline of the rationale for sampling (please see next section for further information on sampling).
 - ◆ a list of the standard documentation required for the activity (this is advised at the bottom of the EV visit plan).
5. arrange the verification event (eg using MS Teams for virtual verification)

Qualification verification process for your SQA co-ordinator

Your SQA co-ordinator should:

1. respond to the initial email from SQA and confirm:
 - if you are delivering the selected qualification
 - if so, when you will have evidence available
 - ensure that all relevant evidence is retained from the date of initial contact from SQA
2. respond to any requests for information from the EV.
3. for a virtual verification event, ensure that all documentary evidence is available for review electronically, within the time frame agreed with the EV. Schools can use their own electronic format or the HNVQ Centre Hub. To protect SQA systems, web links and downloadable systems such as Dropbox are not acceptable methods of evidence submission. If your school is 'paper-based', the EV will contact SQA for guidance.
4. for an in-person visiting activity, ensure that all evidence is available for the EV to review at the school on the agreed date.
5. ensure that the relevant evidence is submitted for review in line with SQA QA criteria. Please refer to the document [Qualification Quality Assurance Criteria](#).
6. tell all relevant staff the date of the activity.
7. arrange for assessors, internal verifiers and candidates to be available to be interviewed during the event or by telephone/MS Teams (where applicable)
8. ensure all requested staff are available for the feedback session.

Feedback sessions — important points to note

- ◆ for virtual verification: the EV will review the evidence before the arranged MS Teams feedback session
- ◆ for visiting verification: the EV will review the evidence while at your school and carry out the feedback session in person at the end of the visit
- ◆ for both visiting and virtual verification:
 - where required, you should arrange for any additional school staff to attend
 - at the end of the feedback session, the EV will provide you with an 'Outcome of Summary' form which summarises their findings.

Reporting for a qualification verification event

- ◆ for both visiting and virtual verification:
 - your QA report will be sent to your SQA co-ordinator within 15 working days of the visit
 - this report will detail your outcome ratings for each criterion
 - you have the right to appeal the findings of your report

Section 2: Group award verification for Higher National qualifications, Professional Development Awards, National Progression Awards, National Certificates and Foundation Apprenticeships

If your school is selected for qualification verification for any of these qualification types, your verification event will follow our group award verification process. A key change for the group award process this year is the implementation of 'generic criteria' which will reduce the repetition of criteria review between verifiers involved in the group award activity — this is explained in more detail in the section **Generic criteria** below and in the Appendix.

The main differences between the group award process and the qualification verification process outlined in Section 1 is that:

- ◆ group award verification looks at a qualification framework holistically, reviewing evidence from candidates across units within the selected group award.
- ◆ SQA internal staff will initiate contact with schools to obtain initial delivery information before allocating to verifiers.
- ◆ there may be more than one qualification verifier involved depending on the spread of subject areas within the selected group award. Where this happens, SQA will assign a primary verifier to coordinate the activity.
- ◆ the role of the primary verifier is to reduce the number of verifiers contacting schools during visit planning. The primary verifier will liaise directly with the school to gather information on behalf of all the verifiers involved.
- ◆ the primary verifier will also take the lead in the virtual feedback session, enabling all the verifiers involved to be part of the session to represent their individual subject areas.
- ◆ each EV will have their own event ID relating to their subject allocation — we will advise you of these event IDs via email when we release your allocation from our QAMS system. This is to ensure that each verifier has their own QA report to complete after the QA activity.
- ◆ when there is more than one verifier involved in the activity, the primary verifier will review the 'generic criteria'. Any additional EVs will review 'subject' criteria.

Generic criteria

Generic criteria will only apply if there is more than one verifier involved in the group award activity. This has been introduced to remove repetition across the verification activity and make for a more streamlined verification experience for schools. Details of the generic criteria, subject criteria and EV responsibility can be found in the [Appendix](#).

Allocation planning for group award verification activity

1. The QA team will email you when you are selected for verification activity and ask:
 - Are you delivering the selected group award?
 - Which units are you delivering as part of the group award?
 - Are any of the units being delivered for the first time?
 - Are there any units that you specifically wish to have verified?
 - When will you have evidence available for each unit?

Once the QA team have gathered the above information, they will:

2. establish whether there is enough available evidence to make an informed verification decision
3. release the allocation to the EV within the appropriate timeframe. For example, we may contact you in October with your selection information — if you advise us that evidence won't be available until March the following year, we will not release the allocation to the EV until nearer the time. Candidate evidence must be retained from when we first contact you until this verification event has been undertaken.
4. allocate a primary verifier (where applicable) to lead the verification process and secondary verifiers, where necessary, for additional subject areas
5. provide the EV(s) involved with all the information gathered during the planning process

The primary verifier will:

1. liaise with the SQA co-ordinator on behalf of all the EVs involved to arrange a time and date for the activity, and to confirm the evidence submission method for virtual verification
2. request additional information in relation to all selected units in the group award:
 - ◆ names of assessors and internal verifiers
 - ◆ the awards or units they are assessing or verifying
 - ◆ candidate SCN(s) and stage of progression
3. on behalf of all the EVs involved, discuss arrangements for assessor, internal verifier or candidate interviews where required
4. liaise with all the EVs involved to determine the appropriate candidate sample across all units selected
5. arrange the verification event (eg using MS Teams for virtual verification).
6. send a final visit plan at least two weeks before the agreed evidence submission date (for virtual verification) or two weeks before the in-person visit, including:
 - ◆ a list of the assessors, verifiers and candidates who are selected for interview
 - ◆ the arrangements for interviews using formats such as MS Teams, tele- or video-conference, and telephone interviews
 - ◆ an outline of what they would like to cover during the course of the event and an indication of the running order
 - ◆ an outline of the rationale for sampling (please see next section for further information on sampling)
 - ◆ a list of the standard documentation required for the activity (this is advised at the bottom of the EV visit plan)
 - ◆ Secondary EVs will:
 - ◆ review subject QA criteria as a result of the introduction of generic criteria. Please see the Appendix for further detail.
 - ◆ attend the feedback session.
 - ◆ complete their QA report to be submitted to SQA for review and release to the school.

SQA co-ordinator for group award verification process

Your SQA co-ordinator should:

- ◆ be contacted by the QA team about the group awards selected for verification.
- ◆ advise QA team if your school is not delivering any group awards you have been selected for
- ◆ ensure that all evidence for the selected qualifications is retained from the date of initial contact from SQA.
- ◆ liaise directly with the QA team to provide the necessary information as part of the group award process.
- ◆ liaise directly with the verifiers involved to finalise the visit plan and make arrangements for the feedback event or the in-person visit.
- ◆ ensure that all documentary evidence is available for review electronically using the school's own electronic format or the HNVQ Centre Hub. To protect SQA systems, web links and downloadable systems such as Dropbox are not acceptable methods of evidence submission. If your school is 'paper-based', the EV will contact SQA for guidance.
- ◆ ensure that the relevant evidence is submitted for review in line with SQA QA criteria. Please refer to [Qualification Quality Assurance Criteria](#).
- ◆ tell all relevant staff the date of the activity.
- ◆ arrange for assessors, internal verifiers and candidates to be available to be interviewed during the event or by telephone.
- ◆ ensure all requested staff are available for the feedback session.

Graded unit activity

Where a graded unit (GU) has been selected for verification, this will be included as part of the overall group award verification activity. If the delivery of the GU is taking place later in the session, we may undertake verification of this separately. This will be confirmed when you provide us with candidate SCNs and their stage of completion.

Where GU verification is separated, this will be treated as an independent activity with its own QAMS event allocation. It will no longer be included within the overall group award verification activity, which will continue as a standard verification activity. This will ensure that GU verification does not delay the overall group award verification activity.

Feedback session for a group award event — important points to note

- ◆ Feedback activity for the full group award will take place during one event, where possible.
- ◆ Where there is more than one verifier, the primary EV will chair the virtual event.
- ◆ Where possible, all EVs will attend the virtual event.
- ◆ The primary EV will feedback on behalf of any EV who cannot attend.
- ◆ The primary EV will feedback on outcomes against category of criteria and any potential sanctions.
- ◆ An Outcome of Summary form will be completed and submitted to the SQA co-ordinator.

Reporting for a group award event

- ◆ Each EV will have their own event ID relating to their subject allocation — we will advise you of these event IDs by email when we release your allocation from our QAMS system. This is to ensure that each verifier has their own QA report to complete after the QA activity.
- ◆ Each EV will complete a QA report — one report per event ID that was provided to you during the visit planning process.
- ◆ Each report will be issued to the school 15 days after the virtual feedback event.

SQA Centre Hub

The SQA Centre Hub is a Microsoft SharePoint platform, which can be used to upload evidence for virtual verification events. It can also be used to store policies and procedures that apply to multiple verification events. Please note that its use is not mandatory. If you would like a demonstration of the HNVQ Centre Hub, or to set up access, please contact operationshmvq@sqa.org.uk

Your school will have its own folder library within SQA Centre Hub. This will contain a 'qualification verification' folder arranged as follows:

For National Workplace, SVQs, Customised Awards qualification verification activity

The folder set up for these qualifications will be arranged by individual event ID folder within the 'Qualification Verification' folder in your centre library.

For Higher National, Professional Development Awards, National Progression Awards, National Certificates, Foundation Apprenticeship qualification verification activity

The Centre Hub folders for group award activity will be arranged in the following way:

- ◆ A folder will be set up for each event ID within the group award in your school's qualification verification folder, with the naming convention: '[group award name] [event ID] XXXX'
- ◆ Each verification group sub folder will have the standard set of folders relating to the criteria categories: 2. Resources 3. Candidate support, 4. Internal assessment and verification.
- ◆ Evidence specific to each of the verification groups should be placed within the respective verification group event ID folder.

Section 3: Accepted methods of evidence

Please note our preferred methods of submitting evidence:

- ◆ SQA Centre Hub (as discussed in the above section)
- ◆ Your school's own platforms: Microsoft Teams, OneDrive, Canvas, Moodle, other e-portfolio platforms. For schools using their own platforms, please ensure EVs are provided with access to the relevant evidence for their verification group

We cannot accept information shared using WeTransfer, Dropbox or any other third-party platforms.

Ongoing support

We are committed to supporting schools through their verification activities. If you have any questions regarding your activity, please do not hesitate to contact your QA Logistics Officer or email qav@sqa.org.uk to get in touch with the Qualification Verification Team.

Sampling: the risk-based approach

Responsibility for, and control of, sampling lies with the qualification verifier.

Factor	Risks
Assessors and internal verifiers	New and / or inexperienced
Qualification	New or revised qualification framework
Unit	New or revised units Lapsing units New assessments or marking guides
Locations	New location Remote location
Mode of attendance	Full time vs evening or infill
Class groups	High class numbers. Number of groups per assessor
Intelligence	Required actions or recommendations from the previous verification report. Information from senior EV, QA logistics team

The sampling approach is to sample over time:

- ◆ large numbers of assessors and IVs.
- ◆ assessment sites (locations).
- ◆ class groups.
- ◆ modes of attendance.
- ◆ range of qualifications (such as HN / VQ / NQ / Customised Awards / Regulated Qualifications).

There can be no one-size-fits-all approach. The sampling approach for each school will vary according to the needs of the school.

Rationale for sampling

The general purpose of qualification verification sampling is to:

- ◆ confirm that schools are interpreting standards correctly and that they have in place internal verification and assessment systems that allow valid, reliable and fair assessment decisions to be made.
- ◆ choose an appropriate range of assessment and verification decisions to verify, based on management of QA risk.
- ◆ vary the approach for each school according to the needs of the school and the type of qualifications being verified.

Unless candidate numbers are very small, the EV will rarely scrutinise all candidates' work on a single visit. Instead, they will select a sample of candidates' evidence. It will be the verifier, and not school staff, who decides (prior to the visit) which candidates' evidence will be scrutinised

For units in VQs and Regulated Qualification Frameworks (RQFs), the EV must adhere strictly to any sampling requirements detailed in the assessment strategy. If there are no sampling requirements in the assessment strategy, the sampling should be proportionate to the overall number of candidates enrolled and the numbers of assessors / verifiers involved in assessment / verification



Retaining candidate evidence for sampling

SQA requires schools to retain all candidate evidence for group awards and units until at least three weeks after the official completion date (the completion date you provided to SQA).

If you are contacted by SQA to tell you that you have been selected for qualification verification, whether before or after the completion date, all candidate evidence must be

retained from that point of contact until after the verification activity has taken place. Please refer to [Evidence Retention Guidance](#) on SQA website.

Referencing evidence

Referencing (sometimes called 'tracking') It is helpful for EVs if assessors show which parts of the assessment evidence relate to which of the unit outcomes. This is called referencing (or tracking) evidence, and makes it easier for verifiers to navigate evidence quickly and efficiently.

- ◆ If evidence is clearly referenced to each outcome or unit, it is easier for assessors and internal and external verifiers to make efficient judgements. How you reference evidence will depend on the approach taken by your school in terms of the detail and quantity of evidence being referenced — for example, the amount of holistic assessment taking place will have an effect on this.
- ◆ For Vocational Qualification (VQ) and Regulated Qualification Framework (RQF) units: the school must show how the evidence covers each component of the unit standard. This is normally broken down into units and outcomes, and sometimes further defined as evidence requirements, performance criteria and knowledge).
- ◆ At its best, referencing identifies the link between candidate evidence and assessment decisions. This also has benefits for candidates when they are collecting evidence to track their own progress and achievement. After verification is complete, referencing allows the tracking of evidence that has been assessed and accepted, which helps schools and their assessors with forward planning.
- ◆ Referencing should be a shared responsibility, agreed between assessor and candidate. There are no set rules about this. For VQ/RQF units at higher levels, candidates normally take more responsibility for gathering and referencing their evidence. At the same time, it is important that candidates are not overwhelmed with referencing responsibilities, as their main priority is to show that they have the necessary skills and knowledge to meet the standard being assessed.
- ◆ Assessors and verifiers must be able to show clearly in an electronic record that they have confirmed assessment or verification decisions and the identity of the candidate. This could be done by the assessor or verifier using a code, such as an appropriate password, PIN, electronic signature or symbol, or any combination of these. Whatever means is used, it must be secure and only be available for use by the assessor or verifier it belongs to, much as a hand-written signature would be.

The three stages of internal verification

There are three stages to internal verification, which means that the EV has a number of opportunities for the EV to sample and discuss different aspects of the verification process.

These stages are:

- ◆ before assessment
- ◆ during assessment
- ◆ after assessment

The EV will want to verify the three stages and to discuss with assessors and internal verifiers how the school's processes and procedures support the IV model.

Before assessment

- ◆ School staff members should check and agree their interpretation of assessment materials and requirements.
- ◆ Your school should also agree on how assessment should proceed, and check resources are up to date and sufficient.
- ◆ Evidence of your discussions and agreements should be included in a verification schedule, strategy or plan, showing proposed verification activities.

During assessment

- ◆ This stage keeps things on track and informs the internal verifier as to the quality of assessment coming through.
- ◆ A 'dipping-in' process helps identify where additional assessor support may be required.
- ◆ It is especially important where new units are being offered or where assessors are assessing units for the first time.
- ◆ Final verification is related to checking the quality of final assessment decisions on completed outcomes/units.

After assessment

- ◆ This stage encompasses the review and evaluation of the overall assessment.
- ◆ This stage contributes to continuous improvement of awards and units.
- ◆ It will normally involve the review of previous assessment and verification decisions, processes, practices and resources.
- ◆ Where an assessor or IV is unqualified, their work must be counter signed by a qualified assessor or IV. This must be recorded and easily identifiable in the evidence submitted.
- ◆ Any unqualified assessor or IV must be working towards the relevant assessor or IV qualification.

Important points to note...

- ◆ For visiting verification, you should allow a full working day for a verification event, while a virtual verification event may be much shorter, with electronic evidence being reviewed before the actual virtual event.
- ◆ At the verification event, the EV will check that all the school's QA policies and procedures, which may have been uploaded to the Centre Hub, are being reviewed as part of the qualification verification activity.
- ◆ Examples of the type of evidence you might present to the verifier have been provided in the SQA QA criteria document. You may provide different evidence reflecting the actual practice in your school, providing it clearly meets the relevant quality criterion. You may use different terminology to the terms used in our guidance.
- ◆ You should use the qualification verification activity as an opportunity to discuss with your EV any developmental or support requirements you have.
- ◆ You should receive your report within 15 working days of the visit or virtual event. It will reflect the feedback you were given on the day and will not include anything that you were not then made aware of.
- ◆ If you have difficulty meeting the agreed date for any action points in the report, it is important to contact SQA at the earliest opportunity.

Discussions with staff and candidates

While it is desirable for the EV to meet staff and candidates during the activity, it is not essential. Discussions can be conducted via telephone if this is easier.

Candidates

It is helpful to talk with candidates, individually or in groups. This will indicate the level of support they receive and their view of how procedures are applied.

Examples of areas for discussion include:

- ◆ frequency of contact
- ◆ induction to qualification
- ◆ support and guidance provided
- ◆ communication of progress and achievement

Assessors and IVs

Discussions with assessors and IVs will give the EV valuable insight into how assessment and verification takes place. This allows them an opportunity to get information that can't readily be found from looking at records of evidence and assessment. Example areas include:

- ◆ how standardisation is achieved
- ◆ maintaining CPD
- ◆ assessor support, candidate induction, internal verification methods and processes
- ◆ ensuring access to assessment
- ◆ how the process works

The verification decision

The verification decision you receive will include traffic light ratings — green, amber or red — for each criterion being verified:

Green

- ◆ You have provided evidence that fully meets the criterion.
- ◆ There are no required action points.

Amber

- ◆ You have provided some evidence in support of this criterion, but it is not sufficient.
- ◆ Required action points will be set.

Red

- ◆ The evidence you have provided falls well short of meeting the criterion.
- ◆ Required action points will be set.

Required action points, recommendations and good practice

Required action points are given when a judgement has been made that there is either insufficient evidence, little evidence or no evidence that a criterion has been met. They must be acted upon.

Recommendations are made so you can enhance your existing policies, procedures or practices. These are not mandatory, but we encourage you to consider and adopt them.

Good practice is over and above what might be expected, and may demonstrate a particularly creative approach.

An amber or red rating against a criterion will result in a required action point. The EV will explain why your evidence does not meet our requirements and what you must do to fix this.

If the outcome rating for a category is 'minimal confidence' or 'no confidence', the verifier will ask for your head of centre to be present during the feedback session. The verifier will agree with you a timescale within which you must submit evidence of how you have addressed each required action. They will also tell you how to submit your evidence electronically, or agree a date for a follow-up virtual event, if necessary.

- ◆ The verifier will explain how they reached each decision and inform you of the overall rating for each of the categories: resources; candidate support; and internal assessment and verification.
- ◆ The criteria have different impact levels, which affect the overall rating for each category.
- ◆ The verifier will calculate the outcome for each category, which will be one of the following: high confidence, broad confidence, reasonable confidence, minimal confidence or no confidence.

Outcome ratings and sanctions

Depending on the outcome of the visit, sanctions may be imposed on your school. These could range from entry in an action plan to address the agreed required actions, through to suspension or removal of qualification approval. It is important that you submit evidence of how you have addressed each required action on or before the agreed date. Please remember that your qualification verifier is there to offer advice and guidance; our aim is the same as your aim: for your SQA centre to be running smoothly, with efficient and effective systems that make your job more straightforward and meet our quality criteria.

Potential sanctions for non-compliance in qualification verification activity:

Outcome rating	Sanction in relation to qualification verification
High confidence	
Broad confidence	Entry in action plan
Reasonable confidence	Suspension of specific qualification certification: <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ by verification group◆ by qualification Suspension of approval application by verification group Suspension of direct certification claim status: <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ by verification group◆ by qualification
Minimal confidence	Suspension of specific qualification approval: <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ by verification group◆ by qualification
No confidence	Withdrawal of specific qualification approval: <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ by verification group◆ by qualification

If you submit incomplete or insufficient evidence to address the required actions, this could result in your risk-rating being increased and further sanctions being applied if you do not address the required action(s) within the revised timescale.

Where a school repeatedly has non-compliant QA outcomes, across multiple activities and consistently over a period of time, this may result in the severity of sanctions being increased.

Appeals

If you disagree with the outcome of the visit, you can appeal. The head of centre or their representative should contact the Head of HN / VQ delivery within 10 working days of receiving the written report to agree a time to discuss the matter.

If the outcome of this discussion is not satisfactory, you should submit your appeal in writing. For more information, see: [The Appeals Process: Information for Centres](#) on our website.

◆ If you wish to provide any feedback on your qualification verification experience, please complete the [online feedback form](#).

Appendix: Higher National, Professional Development Awards, National Progression Awards, National Certificates and Foundation Apprenticeships

Quality assurance criteria by role

Quality assurance criteria	Primary EV	Secondary EV and / or Primary EV (if additional VGs allocated)
2.1 Assessors and internal verifiers must be competent to assess and internally verify, in line with the requirements of the qualification.	Yes — for their allocated unit(s)*	Yes — for their allocated unit(s)*
2.4 There must be evidence of initial and ongoing reviews of assessment environments; equipment; reference, and learning and assessment materials.	Yes — for all units selected	No
3.2 Candidates' development needs and prior achievements (where appropriate) must be matched against the requirements of the award.	Yes — for all units selected	No
3.3 Candidates must have scheduled contact with their assessor to review their progress and revise their assessment plans accordingly.	Yes — for their allocated unit(s)	Yes — for their allocated unit(s)
4.2 Internal assessment and verification procedures must be implemented to ensure standardisation of assessment.	Yes — for their allocated unit(s)	Yes — for their allocated unit(s)
4.3 Assessment instruments and methods and their selection and use must be valid, reliable, practicable, equitable and fair.	Yes — for their allocated unit(s)	Yes — for their allocated unit(s)
4.4 Assessment evidence must be the candidate's own work, generated under SQA's required conditions.	Yes — for their allocated unit(s)	Yes — for their allocated unit(s)
4.6 Evidence of candidates' work must be accurately and consistently judged by assessors against SQA requirements.	Yes — for their allocated unit(s)	Yes — for their allocated unit(s)

Quality assurance criteria	Primary EV	Secondary EV and / or Primary EV (if additional VGs allocated)
4.7 Candidate evidence must be retained in line with SQA requirements.	Yes — for all units selected	No
4.9 Feedback from EVs must be disseminated to staff and used to inform assessment practice.	Yes — for all units selected	No

*where the qualification stipulates assessor or IV qualification requirements