

Quality Assurance Criteria 2015-18 - Changes to Requirements on Centres (July 2015, updated August 2016)

The following are changes to requirements on SQA centres which have come into force since the publication of the Quality Assurance Criteria in 2013, or areas where there have been identified trends of non-compliance. Compliance with these requirements will be checked through systems and qualifications verification under the revised Quality Assurance Criteria, which take effect on 1 August 2015. Required actions will be set to address any areas of non-compliance and sanctions may be applied if the required actions are not completed within the agreed timescales.

| New 2015 Quality Assurance Criteria | Specific requirements within the criteria | Change in policy or practice required in centres |
|--|--|--|
| <p>1.5 Suspected candidate or staff malpractice must be investigated and acted upon, in line with SQA requirements</p> | <p>The policies and procedures for malpractice must cover both malpractice by candidates and malpractice by centre staff. Procedures must include :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Reporting ◆ Investigation ◆ Communicating outcomes ◆ Sanctions ◆ Actions ◆ Appeals ◆ Record-keeping ◆ Retention of records of all investigations of malpractice to be provided to SQA on request (see criteria 4.7 and 6.4 below). <p>See <u>The Appeals process: Information for centres</u>.(published April 2015)</p> | <p><u>New requirement:</u> Centre procedures must include information on the right of appeal: Centres have the right to appeal a decision where a case of reported malpractice by the centre has been confirmed through investigation by the SQA. Centres also have the right to appeal a decision in the case of suspected malpractice by a candidate reported by the centre to the SQA. Candidates have the right to appeal to SQA where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The centre has conducted an investigation, the candidate disagrees with the outcome and has exhausted the centre's appeals process. • SQA has conducted an investigation and the candidate disagrees with the decision. |

| New 2015 Quality Assurance Criteria | Specific requirements within the criteria | Change in policy or practice required in centres |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| 1.5 continued | <p>Any suspected cases of centre malpractice must be reported to SQA. In addition, for those qualifications that are subject to statutory regulation by SQA Accreditation or Ofqual, centres are required to report any suspected case of candidate malpractice to SQA.</p> <p>Definition of centre malpractice</p> | <p>For qualifications subject to regulation by SQA Accreditation or Ofqual, candidates and centres have the right to request a review of the awarding body's process in reaching a decision in an appeal of a malpractice decision.</p> <p><u>New requirement:</u> All centres must make the necessary amendments to their own procedures for dealing with malpractice to state that all cases of suspected <u>centre</u> malpractice must be reported to SQA, and ensure that this is put into practice. This applies to all qualifications.</p> <p>Update August 2016 Revised definition of centre malpractice to be used in centre malpractice policy and procedures:</p> <p>Malpractice, which includes maladministration and non-compliance, means any act, default or practice which is a breach of SQA requirements and/ or which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Compromises, attempts to compromise or may compromise the process of assessment, the integrity of any SQA qualification or the validity of a result or certificate; and/ or |

| New 2015 Quality Assurance Criteria | Specific requirements within the criteria | Change in policy or practice required in centres |
|---|---|---|
| 1.5 continued | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Damages the authority, reputation or credibility of SQA or any officer, employee or agent of SQA <p>Instances of malpractice arise for a variety of reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Some incidents are intentional and aim to give an unfair advantage in an examination or assessment (non-compliance) ◆ Some incidents arise due to ignorance of SQA requirements, carelessness or forgetfulness in applying the requirements (maladministration). <p>Failure by a centre to notify, investigate and report to SQA allegations of suspected malpractice constitutes malpractice. Also failure to take action as required by SQA or to co-operate with an SQA investigation constitutes malpractice.</p> |
| 1.6 No-one with a personal interest in the outcome of an assessment is to be involved in the assessment process. This includes assessors, IVs and invigilators. | | <p>This is not a new criteria or requirement, but there is an identified need for centres to improve communication to assessors, IVs and invigilators about their responsibilities for reporting any personal interest in the outcome of an assessment and for centres to have a reporting mechanism in place.</p> |

| New 2015 Quality Assurance Criteria | Specific requirements within the criteria | Change in policy or practice required in centres |
|---|---|--|
| 2.1 Assessors and internal verifiers must be competent to assess and internally verify, in line with the requirements of the qualification. | Assessors and internal verifiers for regulated qualifications must undertake relevant continuing professional development activities, and keep records of this. | This is not a new requirement, but it has been identified that not all centres delivering regulated qualifications are holding up-to-date records to provide evidence of continuing professional development having been undertaken. |
| 3.6 Candidate complaints must be handled in line with a documented complaints procedure which meets SQA requirements. | <p>Centres' complaints procedures must explain that all candidates have the right to complain to SQA about assessment-related matters (but not assessment judgements), once they have exhausted their centre's complaints procedure.</p> <p>Candidates on regulated qualifications, also have the right to complain to SQA Accreditation or Ofqual once they have exhausted their centre's complaints procedure and the SQA Awarding body's complaints procedure. This must be stated in centres' procedures if they deliver regulated qualifications.</p> <p>Centres which are public services in Scotland must also include in their procedures information for candidates on escalating complaints to the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman, about issues other than assessment-related matters</p> | Clarification on these requirements has been published since the 2013 quality assurance criteria were written. Centres must ensure that their complaints procedures include information for candidates on these routes for appeals. |

| New 2015 Quality Assurance Criteria | Specific requirements within the criteria | Change in policy or practice required in centres |
|--|--|--|
| 4.5 Assessment materials and candidate evidence (including examination question papers, scripts and electronically-stored evidence) must be stored and transported securely. | | This is a new criterion, added to the Internal Assessment and Verification category. This is not a new requirement, but it was not previously included as a specific criterion relating to internal assessment. Transportation has been added as well as storage, to both this criterion and criterion 5.2, which relates to external assessment. |
| 4.8 Internal assessment appeals must be handled in line with a documented procedure which meets SQA requirements. | <p>Centres offering regulated qualifications must inform candidates that they have additional stages of appeal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appeal to SQA the awarding body, once the centre's appeals procedure has been exhausted • Appeal to SQA Accreditation or Ofqual if they feel that the centre and/or SQA (awarding body) has not dealt with the appeal appropriately. SQA Accreditation or Ofqual cannot overturn assessment decisions or academic judgements but may investigate the effectiveness of the centre and/or SQA's appeals process and require corrective action. | <p>Clarification on these requirements has been published since the 2013 quality assurance criteria were written. The SQA Regulatory Principles (2014), Version 2, 1 December 2014, contained supplementary information, which must be clearly communicated to centres.</p> <p>It had been identified already that many centres delivering regulated qualifications did not inform the candidates about their right to appeal to SQA the awarding body. Centres must also now ensure that they inform candidates on regulated qualifications about their right to appeal to SQA Accreditation or Ofqual if the centre and/or SQA has not handled the appeal appropriately.</p> |

| New 2015 Quality Assurance Criteria | Specific requirements within the criteria | Change in policy or practice required in centres |
|---|---|--|
| <p>5.3 The centre must submit, where appropriate, within published timelines, assessment appeal requests.</p> | <p>Qualification-specific requirements for qualifications with externally-assessed elements must be communicated and adhered to within centres.</p> | <p>Appeals procedures for HN and vocational qualifications with externally-assessed elements are being brought into line with the results services for National Course external assessments, which have replaced the appeals process. Centres and candidates undertaking external assessments have recourse to two services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exceptional Circumstances • Post Results Service <p>Centres should check qualification-specific instructions. Some qualifications with automatic marking of e-assessments may not have these challenge processes in place.</p> |
| <p>6.2 Data on candidate entries submitted by centres to SQA must accurately reflect the current status of the candidate and the qualification.</p> | <p>Centres must have a process in place to ensure that their centre is approved to offer the qualification before starting delivery and making entries, and to check that the correct unit and group award codes are used for entries.</p> <p>All qualifications, other than those subject to an examination diet with associated key dates, are subject to the requirement to submit candidate entries as soon as possible after their enrolment on the programme.</p> | <p>It is not a new requirement for centres to check the approval status of qualifications, but this was not previously stated explicitly within the quality assurance criteria.</p> <p><u>New requirement:</u> The former 2013 criterion referred to submitting entries “within published timelines”, but this does not apply to HN and vocational qualifications. It is now a stated requirement on centres to submit candidates entries as soon as possible after their enrolment on the programme to ensure that:</p> |

| New 2015 Quality Assurance Criteria | Specific requirements within the criteria | Change in policy or practice required in centres |
|---|--|---|
| 6.2 continued | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Results corresponding to the entries can be submitted, to ensure the accurate certification of candidates ◆ SQA can plan its qualification verification selection and activities effectively ◆ Learners undertaking SQA qualifications are entered as SQA candidates, with the associated responsibilities and entitlements. <p>Centres must now address this requirement within their documented data management procedures and in practice. Further guidance will be developed on how this will apply to different qualification types.</p> |
| <p>4.7 Candidate evidence must be retained in line with SQA requirements.</p> <p>and</p> <p>6.4 There must be an effective and documented system for the accurate recording, storage and retention of assessment records, internal verification records and candidate records of achievement in line with SQA requirements.</p> | <p>In the case of an appeal to SQA against an internal assessment result in a regulated qualification, the centre must retain records, including all materials and evidence, until the appeal has been resolved. Thereafter, assessment and internal verification records for appeals cases should be retained for five years.</p> <p>Where an investigation of suspected malpractice is carried out, the centre must retain related records and documentation for three years. In an investigation involving a criminal prosecution or civil claim, records and documentation will be retained for five years after the case has been heard. In the case of</p> | <p><u>Changed requirement:</u> The retention period for assessment and internal verification records related to appeals to SQA against internal assessment results in regulated qualifications has been extended to five years (it was previously three years, or five years in criminal cases).</p> <p>This is not a changed requirement, but the wording has been clarified regarding this relating to appeals to SQA against the outcome of a malpractice investigation.</p> |

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| | an appeal to SQA against the outcome of a malpractice investigation, assessment records must be retained for five years. | See <u>The Appeals process: Information for centres</u> .(published April 2015) See Policy and procedures for dealing with malpractice in internally assessed qualifications: Information for centres (published April 2015) |
|--|--|---|