



Quality Assurance for Higher National and Vocational Qualifications 2015–18

Guidance for Centres on Use of Assessment Sites Not Owned or Managed by the Centre

This guidance relates to Quality Assurance Criteria 1.4, 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5

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Four of the SQA Quality Assurance Criteria 2015–18 are relevant to this type of arrangement. See the extracts in the table below from the *Guide to Systems Verification for Centres 2015–18* and the *Guide to Qualifications Verification for Centres 2015–18*.

1.4 The roles and responsibilities of those involved in the administration, management, assessment and quality assurance of SQA qualifications across all sites must be clearly documented and disseminated. (Systems approval and verification)

Specific requirement: If applicable, centres must have documented agreements in place for sub-contracted services or partnership arrangements in relation to assessment and quality assurance of SQA qualifications.

2.3 There must be a documented system for initial and ongoing reviews of assessment environments; equipment; and reference, learning and assessment materials. (Systems approval and verification)

2.4 There must be evidence of initial and on-going reviews of assessment environment(s), assessment procedures, equipment, learning and assessment materials. (Qualifications approval and verification)

Specific requirement: Initial reviews must take place before the assessment of a qualification(s) begins to ensure all of the appropriate resources are in place. Ongoing reviews of resources are required thereafter to ensure resources continue to meet qualification requirements.

2.5 All sites where candidates undertake assessments for SQA qualifications must be safe and appropriately resourced, and must provide access for candidates, staff and SQA personnel. (Systems approval and verification)

Rationale for criterion inclusion: Some assessment sites may be **owned or managed by another organisation** that has its own separate processes, policies and procedures. These may be known as satellite sites. Centres must ensure that their quality assurance systems extend to all sites they are using to assess their candidates and ensure that all satellite sites have appropriate resources and processes and that candidates have a consistent experience wherever they are located.

Guidance on evidencing the criterion: If centres have, or intend to use, satellite assessment sites (as defined above), then they must provide a site checklist and/or a checklist of criteria that they will use to ensure the suitability of assessment sites. Access for SQA staff must be included in this.

A template for the site selection checklist is available on SQA's website. Centres can use this or their own version. They might also provide a signed agreement with the organisation that owns the site.

Any concerns raised by Qualification Verifiers relating to safety or access arrangements at an assessment site they have seen will be reported to SQA.

Introduction

Centres may deliver SQA qualifications in partnership with other organisations. One form of partnership arrangement is the use by SQA-approved centres of sites owned by another organisation for assessment purposes.

SQA's requirements are that the centre ensures that the site is suitable for assessment, both initially and on an on-going basis, and keeps up-to-date records of the agreement with the organisation which owns the site.

This guidance explains the requirements to be checked at all assessment sites and different types of records which could be used. Two versions of an exemplar site checklist are included. Centres can opt to use one of these, or their own records as long as they cover all the requirements.

Checklist of requirements at all assessment sites

- ◆ Is the assessment environment appropriate for assessing the award (reference should be made to the assessment strategy and any specific requirements for assessment of the specific award(s) being assessed at the site)?
- ◆ Are appropriate equipment and resources available for assessment?
- ◆ Is the assessment environment safe for candidates and staff?
- ◆ Do all candidates have equal access to assessment at this site?
- ◆ Is there agreed access to the site for centre assessors and internal verifiers?*
- ◆ Is there agreed access to the site for SQA QA staff (for all qualifications) and regulatory body staff (for regulated qualifications)?*
- ◆ Is there secure storage at the site for assessment materials and records?

If you have staff and/or candidates based entirely, or for part of their time, at a site not owned or managed by your centre, consideration must also be given to the following issues:

- ◆ Are candidates, assessors and internal verifiers based at this site given induction covering the requirements of SQA?
- ◆ Do candidates and staff have access to the relevant policies and procedures of the centre?
- ◆ Is the centre's quality assurance system being applied at this assessment site?
- ◆ Are there effective mechanisms in place for collecting, submitting and securely storing candidates' personal, entry and results data, in line with the centre's data management policy and procedures?

***Note:** There may be exceptional circumstances at some assessment sites that make physical access impossible, but there must be remote access to candidates and evidence in these cases, and confirmation of the other points on the checklist.

Centre responsibilities

At the qualification approval stage, centres must provide evidence that the appropriate checks of all assessment sites have been carried out. Colleges with devolved authority must establish this through their internal approval processes.

Thereafter, it is the responsibility of the centre to carry out site checks and keep up-to-date records:

- ◆ when a new site is being used for the first time
- ◆ if new qualifications are to be assessed at an existing and/or new site
- ◆ in order to review the on-going suitability of the site (at least annually, or if there is a changes of circumstances or key personnel at the site)

It is not necessary to send updated information on assessment sites to SQA, but up-to-date records must be retained and made available to SQA verifiers.

Records

One form of evidence of this process is a site checklist — SQA provides two templates for this (see appendices 1 and 2) — but other types of record can also be used, at the discretion of the centre, if they cover the issues required by SQA (see checklist above). These may be included as part of a wider document.

The site checklist, or other agreement document, must be signed and dated by representatives of both the centre and the organisation which owns the site.

The records used should be appropriate to the centre's needs and the type of assessment site, for example:

- ◆ a site regularly used for delivery and assessment
- ◆ a candidate's temporary work placement site
- ◆ a candidate's workplace (employed candidates)

Further guidance on records for different types of assessment site

Site regularly used for delivery and assessment

If your centre is hiring a site owned by another organisation, it is likely that you will have a formal rental agreement or contract. This may address responsibilities for the safety and maintenance of the site, and provision of certain facilities, but may not cover issues relating to assessment and quality assurance.

If candidates and/or your centre's staff are based at this site for all or part of their time, you must also ensure that they have the same rights and information as candidates and staff based at your main site (eg access to information about, and the mechanism for, making a complaint).

It may be appropriate in this circumstance to use the SQA exemplar site checklist in its entirety, or a similar document, **in addition** to any rental agreement or contract.

Colleges with devolved authority for qualification approval should carry out checks at the time of initial approval on assessment sites to be used. Checks must also be carried out on new assessment sites introduced after the approval stage for every qualification. The site checklist could be used as a record for both purposes.

Regular reviews should be carried out of the continued suitability of assessment sites. Outcomes of reviews and any actions to be taken may be recorded in the centre's own records of meetings or other quality review documentation. Site checklists or other documented agreements may need to be updated.

Site checklists are signed agreements and should have regular planned review dates. They should also be reviewed and updated if there are any significant changes at the assessment site (eg change of ownership, change of key personnel, changes to facilities).

Candidate temporary work placement site

It is likely that you will be carrying out a risk assessment on the site.

SQA's criteria come into play if there is any assessment to be carried out at the work placement site. If this is the case, you will need to ensure that the site is suitable for the assessment and that there is agreed access for assessors to carry out that assessment, if necessary. You may wish to combine relevant elements of the SQA site checklist with your risk assessment record.

Candidate's workplace (employed candidates)

If an employed candidate is being assessed for an SQA qualification in their usual place of work, their employer will already have responsibility for them as their employee.

However, your centre also has responsibility for them as a candidate. In particular, you must ensure that:

- ◆ the activities, environment and resources at the site will allow the candidate to be assessed in line with the assessment strategy for the qualification
- ◆ workplace assessors must be competent to carry out assessment
- ◆ there is agreed access to the site for your centre assessors and internal verifiers to carry out their roles, and also, if required, for SQA quality assurance personnel and regulatory body personnel (where regulated qualifications are being delivered)
- ◆ candidates must have equal access to assessment in any sites — including the provision of any agreed assessment arrangements
- ◆ any concerns about safety at the site are raised with the employer

For multiple workplaces, it may be appropriate to use a shortened and adapted version of the SQA exemplar site checklist, to ensure that you have a signed record of your agreement with the candidates' employers to meet these requirements.

These may be included in approval records, although this will probably only be if you are working with a few key employers from the start of the delivery of the qualification.

Colleges will not be able to approve themselves for regulated qualifications which are non-devolvable, so should have appropriate records available for SQA Qualification Verifiers.

Appendix 1: Site Checklist Form (full version — exemplar)

This form is for recording checks of sites to be used for assessment of SQA qualifications which are not owned, leased or managed by the approved centre.

Centre name	
Name of assessment site	
Organisation which owns the site	
Address of assessment site	
Postcode	
Phone number of site	
Contact name at site	
Qualification(s) being assessed at this site	

Comments on how site is used:

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Checklist

Section 1: Assessment requirements

Reference should be made to the assessment strategy and any specific requirements for assessment of the specific award(s) being assessed at the site when completing this section.

	Yes	No	Comment
Is the assessment environment appropriate for assessing the award?			
Are appropriate equipment and resources available for assessment?			

Section 2: The site

	Yes	No	Comment
Is the assessment environment safe for candidates and staff?			
Do all candidates have equal access to assessment at this site?			
Is there agreed access to the site for centre assessors and internal verifiers?			
Is there agreed access to the site for SQA and regulatory body QA staff?			
Is there secure storage at the site for assessment materials and records?			

Section 3: Support for candidates and staff

This section should only be completed if centre staff and/or candidates are based at the site.

	Yes	No	Comment
Are candidates based at this site given induction covering the requirements of SQA?			
Are assessors and internal verifiers based at this site given induction covering the requirements of SQA?			
Do candidates and staff have access to the centre's policies and procedures?			
Is the centre's quality assurance system being applied at this assessment site?			
Are there effective mechanisms in place for collecting, submitting and securely storing candidates' personal, entry and results data, in line with the centre's data management policy and procedures?			

Section 4: Declaration

We declare that, to the best of our knowledge, the information given in this form is correct:

Centre representative

Name	
Designation	
Signature	
Date	

Site representative

Name	
Designation	
Signature	
Date	

Date of next planned review	
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Appendix 2: Site Checklist Form (shortened version — exemplar)

Site checklists are used for recording checks of sites to be used for assessment of SQA qualifications which are not owned, leased or managed by the approved centre.

This shortened version is for use for employed candidates' workplaces.

Centre name	
Name of assessment site	
Organisation which owns the site	
Address of assessment site	
Postcode	
Phone number of site	
Contact name at site	
Qualification(s) being assessed at this site	

Checklist

Section 1: Assessment Requirements

Reference should be made to the assessment strategy and any specific requirements for assessment of the specific award(s) being assessed at the site when completing this section.

	Yes	No	Comment
Is the assessment environment appropriate for assessing the award?			
Are appropriate equipment and resources available for assessment?			

Section 2: The Site

	Yes	No	Comment
Is the assessment environment safe for candidates and staff?			
Do all candidates have equal access to assessment at this site?			
Is there agreed access to the site for centre assessors and internal verifiers?			
Is there agreed access to the site for SQA and regulatory body QA staff?			
Is there secure storage at the site for assessment materials and records?			

Section 3: Workplace Assessors

(Add information on induction, training, support for and qualifications of any workplace assessors.)

Section 4: Declaration

We declare that, to the best of our knowledge, the information given in this form is correct:

Centre representative

Name	
Designation	
Signature	
Date	

Site representative

Name	
Designation	
Signature	
Date	

Date of next planned review	
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