Internal verification:

A guide for centres

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About this guide

Internal verification is a crucial element of SQA quality assurance. It ensures that all candidates entered for the same qualification are assessed fairly and consistently to the specified national standard.

This guide provides support for everyone involved in the quality assurance of internally-assessed qualifications. This includes all internally-assessed SQA qualifications and those qualifications offered by SQA which are regulated by SQA Accreditation, Ofqual and Qualification Wales.

SQA's Governing Principles set out how SQA self-regulates its activities in relation to its own qualifications and those accredited or regulated by other organisations. The Principles are set out in our Awarding Body Code of Practice.

While we hope that this guide will be of interest to all involved in assessment and quality assurance, it is particularly aimed toward:

- Centres developing and operating their own internal verification processes
- SQA System Approvers and Verifiers considering centres' documented internal verification procedures
- SQA Qualification Approver and Verifiers considering the application of centres' internal verification procedures in specific subject areas.

This Guide complements the following SQA guidance documents:

Guide to Assessment

Systems and Qualification Approval Guide for Centres

Guide to Systems Approval for Systems Approvers 2015–18

Guide for Qualification Approvers 2015–18

Guide to Systems Verification for centres 2015–18

Guidance on Qualifications Verification for Verifiers

Guide to Visiting HN and Vocational Qualification Verification

The purpose of internal verification

SQA must ensure that internally-assessed qualifications are credible with users, partner organisations, regulatory bodies and the wider community. This requires an effective quality assurance system within centres and by SQA.

Every SQA-approved centre is responsible for operating an effective and documented internal quality assurance system. This is an essential requirement for all SQA-approved centres as is specified in SQA's *Systems and Qualification Approval Guide for Centres*.

SQA is responsible for implementing an effective external quality assurance system to ensure that centres meet our requirements and qualifications provide national and internationally-recognised standards of attainment. This system is based on our principles of assessment, which state that all assessments must be:

- valid
- reliable
- practicable
- equitable and fair

The purpose of internal verification is to ensure that these principles are met.

An effective internal verification system will ensure that:

- valid assessments are used for each qualification
- all assessments are as accessible as possible while maintaining the national standards for the qualification
- assessments are capable of generating sufficient evidence to allow candidates to demonstrate that they have met the national standard for the qualification
- all assessors are familiar with the national standards and can apply them
- assessors reach accurate and consistent assessment judgements for the same qualification for all candidates in their centre in line with the national standard of the qualification

Effective internal verification also brings additional benefits to centres. These include:

- facilitating collaboration between assessors and internal verifiers, ensuring that standards are met across all assessment sites
- allowing quality concerns to be captured and addressed
- checking that record-keeping and resulting of candidates is accurate
- supporting preparation for successful external verification
- helping to protect assessors from challenges to their professional assessment judgements

Effective internal verification is an ongoing process. It allows good practice to be shared, and can help identify problems at an early stage. Leaving internal verification to the end of the assessment process is poor practice and can jeopardise candidates' chances of gaining qualifications because there may not be sufficient time to carry out remediation or

re-assessment. Effective internal verification involves planning and reviewing as well as actually carrying out verification activity.

Models of internal verification

There are many different ways of operating effective internal verification processes. We have no wish to impose a particular system on centres, although all systems must meet our quality requirements that all assessors apply assessment standards uniformly and consistently.

Please note that where the term 'internal verifier' appears in this guide, it should be read merely as form of shorthand for any individual or team process by which the key objectives of internal verification are met.

Centres should choose a model for the allocation and deployment of internal verifiers that works in their situation and meets SQA's requirements. There are several broad approaches, including:

- Allocating responsibility to named staff for carrying out internal verification for particular Units/Awards. This has the advantage of giving the designated internal verifiers a view of all assessments relating to the units/awards they are responsible for quality assuring.

- Allocating responsibility to named staff for carrying out internal verification relating to particular assessors. This is particularly appropriate where the units/awards require a high degree of performance evidence, as is the case with many regulated qualifications. It makes good sense to use — at least as part of your internal verification approach — methods that gauge how assessors reach their judgements, by using dual assessment.

- All staff members taking responsibility for both assessing and internally verifying units. This has the advantage of promoting in-depth understanding of the unit/award requirements and facilitating standardisation.

Please note that under no circumstances can an internal verifier verify assessments which they have developed, or verify their own assessment judgements.

Centre responsibilities

All SQA-approved centres must document their internal verification system. This must include information on all assessment sites, all qualifications offered, and all modes of delivery, including schedules and methodologies. This will allow all assessors and internal verifiers to understand their centre's quality assurance process and their role within it. This document will be checked by our systems approvers and verifiers, and will also be used for reference by qualification approvers and verifiers.

Centres are responsible for ensuring that all internal verifiers are competent in their role and that they understand and apply the internal quality assurance system consistently. There must be an effective selection and induction process for internal verifiers. Any training or development needs for internal verifiers should be identified and met.

Internal verifiers must have the technical experience, skills and/or qualifications required by their sector, as set out in this document: *Choosing Appropriate Assessor and Verifier Qualifications*.

Internal verifiers: qualifications and experience

Higher National Units

Internal verifiers must have the required up-to-date occupational experience and/or subject understanding and, where stipulated, relevant qualifications and CPD. Such stipulations are set out in (depending on the qualification) the Assessment Strategy, the unit specification, the Operational Handbook, Arrangements documents, or the Group Award Strategy document.

A relevant qualification in verification would be best practice but is not essential unless specified in one of these documents. The following qualifications are acceptable for internally verifying HN Units, although this is not an exhaustive list:

- Teaching Qualification Further Education (TQFE)
- Professional Development Award: Conduct the Internal Verification Process (SQA code GF8R 48)

National Units in National Certificates and National Progression Awards

Internal verifiers must have the required up-to-date occupational experience and/or subject understanding and, where stipulated, relevant qualifications and CPD. Such stipulations are given in either the Unit Specification or the Arrangements documents/Group Award Specification.

A relevant qualification in verification would be best practice but is not essential unless specified in one of these documents. The following qualifications are acceptable for internally verifying National Units, although this is not an exhaustive list:

- Teaching Qualification Further Education (TQFE)
- Teaching Qualification Secondary Education (TQSE)
- Professional Development Award: Conduct the Internal Verification Process (SQA code GF8R 48)

Internally Assessed Components of Course Assessments (IACCAs)

Internal verifiers must have the required up-to-date subject knowledge and relevant qualifications and appropriate CPD. A relevant qualification in verification would be best practice but not essential unless specified in the Course Specification. The following

qualifications are acceptable for internally verifying IACCAs, although this is not an exhaustive list:

- Teaching Qualification Secondary Education (TQSE)
- Teaching Qualification Further Education (TQFE)
- Professional Development Award: Conduct the Internal Verification Process (SQA code GF8R 48)

Scottish Vocational Qualifications

Internal verifiers for SVQs, unless otherwise stated in an Assessment Strategy, must hold or be working toward the following qualifications within 18 months of commencing their role:

- Professional Development Award: Internal Verification of Workplace Assessment (SQA code GA2F 48)
- Previously-achieved Assessor and Verifier units (the A and V units) or the D units are acceptable, provided that practitioners undertake appropriate Continuous Professional Development to ensure that they are applying current national standards.

Customised awards

Details of the qualifications and experience required by internal verifiers is available in our guide: *Recognising Assessor and Verifier Skills and Knowledge*.

Internal Verifiers for Regulated Qualifications in England and Wales and other qualifications accredited by SQA Accreditation

Internal verifiers for these qualifications must have the technical experience and skills stated in their sector's Assessment Strategy. It is recommended that internal verifiers for these qualifications either hold or are working toward a nationally-recognised verifier qualification, but this is not mandatory unless required in a unit specification. Competence in internal verification can be demonstrated by either holding other qualifications that include relevant and sufficient verification components, or by providing evidence of having successfully practised as a verifier.

- Level 4 Award in the Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice (SQA code GA2P 78)
- Level 4 Certificate in Leading the Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice

There is fuller information on acceptable qualifications for assessing and internally verifying SQA's range on qualifications in our guide *Choosing Appropriate Assessor and Verifier Qualifications*.

That document also identifies instances where practitioners are required to undertake CPD to ensure that they are applying the current national standard.

Partnership arrangements and alternative assessment sites

Some centres use partnership or sub-contracting arrangements to deliver and assess qualifications. This will require careful planning of the internal verification process to ensure that assessment decisions are consistent between assessors working in different situations and contexts. In all partnerships or sub-contracting arrangements, the quality assurance arrangements must be documented, showing the roles and responsibilities of each partner. The information must be provided to SQA when required.

The same requirements apply if a centre is carrying out assessment at an alternative or satellite assessment site. An *alternative assessment site* is premises owned and operated by an organisation other than the SQA-approved centre. A *satellite site* is premises owned and operated by the approved centre under its own quality processes. Both alternative assessment sites and satellite sites can be in the same country as the approved centre or another country.

In all cases, overall responsibility for internal quality assurance lies with the centre which submits candidate entries and results to SQA.

SQA's responsibilities

- SQA is responsible for protecting the integrity of its qualifications and the interests of its candidates.
- SQA will check on the appropriateness of centres' internal verification processes through systems approval and systems verification.
- SQA will check on the implementation of centres' internal verification procedures through qualification approval and qualification verification.
- SQA will provide assessment exemplars for certain qualifications and offer a free prior verification service to approve assessments developed by centres. There is more information about this in our Prior Verification Request Form.
- SQA will determine through qualification verification whether the assessments used by centres are valid, reliable, practicable, equitable and fair.
- SQA will determine by sampling candidates and qualifications through qualification verification whether the centres' assessment judgments are in line with national standards.

Functions of internal verification

Internal verification is divided into three stages — before, during and after the assessment process. The internal verifier or verifier team is responsible for ensuring that internal assessments are valid, practicable, equitable and fair and that the assessors' judgements are reliable so they must be involved in each stage. This responsibility involves:

- supporting assessors
- checking assessments to ensure validity, practicability, equity and fairness
- ensuring reliability
- maintaining assessment and verification records
- reviewing internal verification

There is more information, together with a range of forms, in our National Qualifications Internal Verification Toolkit and our Internal Verification Toolkit for Higher National and Vocational Qualifications.

Before assessment: supporting assessors

Internal verifiers should ensure that assessors are familiar with the qualification standards and that their assessments are valid, practicable, equitable and fair. There should also be an appropriate scheme to judge the candidate's evidence. This check should take place **before** candidates take the assessment.

Support for assessors should also take place throughout the course of the qualification — it should not be left to the point of assessment for certification. This could involve internal verifiers observing assessment practice and providing constructive feedback to the assessors.

Internal verifiers should have a developmental role for less experienced assessors by offering advice and guidance. This means that an internal verifier needs to have assessment expertise and knowledge of different assessment methods.

There are three essential forms of assessment: observation, product evaluation, and questioning. An assessment may involve a combination of some or all three. All assessment methods, such as a project or performance, can be classified under one or more of these forms. Appendix 1 provides a list of the common methods of assessment used by SQA. You can find more detailed information in SQA's *Guide to Assessment*.

Before assessment: checking assessments for validity, practicability, equity and fairness

Internal verifiers are responsible for ensuring that all assessments, whether devised by the centre or provided by SQA, meet the requirements of validity, practicability, equity and fairness. This should happen **before** candidates take the assessment. The following checklist may be helpful:

Is the assessment appropriate for its purpose?*	☐
Does it allow candidates to produce sufficient evidence that they have the knowledge, understanding and skills to meet the national standards?	☐
Is there an appropriate assessment scheme/marking instructions/recording mechanism to check that the candidate's evidence meets the requirements of the national standard?	☐
Can the assessment be carried out effectively and efficiently within the resources of your centre or assessment site?	☐
Is the assessment accessible to all candidates?	☐
Does the assessment meet any specific requirements of the Unit/Award? For example, does the Unit/Assessment Strategy stipulate a time frame or permitted resources?	☐

*Some qualifications, such as SVQs, specify methods of assessment in the Unit Specification or Assessment Strategy.

SQA offers a free prior verification service to approve assessments that have been developed and are internally verified by centres. We strongly recommend that centres use this service. More information is available in our Prior Verification Request Form.

Before and during assessment: ensuring reliability

Reliability is a measure of the degree of consistency of the judgement of assessment evidence, ie assessors reach accurate and consistent assessment judgements for the same qualification for all candidates in their centre, in line with the national standard of the qualification. There are several steps that internal verifiers can take throughout the assessment process to ensure reliability.

Before assessment

Arranging meetings between assessors to discuss planned assessments will help to minimise differences in interpretation. It is not necessary to use the same assessment between different groups and/or assessment sites, but all assessments must be checked for validity, practicality, equity and fairness.

Agreeing a scheme for judging evidence also helps assessors to make accurate and consistent judgements in line with national standards. Depending on the method of assessment used, the scheme might be a checklist for observing candidate performance or a set of questions (with responses) to test underlying knowledge and understanding. The use of digital evidence, the protocols for professional discussion, and the procedures for any indirect evidence of candidate achievement, such as witness testimony should all be discussed and agreed.

The strategy for sampling assessments should be agreed and explained. The strategy will depend on the structure of your organisation and the range of qualifications offered, but it must take into account all assessors, candidate groups and assessment sites to ensure that sampling is appropriate.

During assessment: standardisation activities and sampling assessor judgements

Standardisation and sampling during the assessment process are both essential to ensure the reliability of assessment judgements for all candidates in a centre.

Standardisation activities support assessors in making consistent and reliable assessment judgements against the national standard.

Sampling is the process whereby the centre checks that all assessors are making consistent and reliable assessment judgements against the national standard. Standardisation and sampling are therefore linked activities. The findings from standardisation activities may lead the internal verifier to increase the sample or the scope of the sampling process to ensure that standards are maintained.

It is essential that standardisation and sampling are carried out for any alternative or satellite assessment centres — and in any partnership or sub-contractual arrangement — to ensure that assessment judgements are accurate and consistent for all candidates registered with your centre, regardless of where they took the assessment.

There is more about standardisation and sampling in the section 'Tools of internal verification: standardisation and sampling'.

During and after assessment: maintaining records

It is important that centres maintain accurate records. Centres must hold records of candidate assessment and internal verification and retain physical evidence of candidate assessment for specified lengths of time.

Records of candidate assessment

SQA as an awarding body, SQA Accreditation and the various regulatory authorities all have policies for the retention of the records of candidate assessment as they are the basis on which certification is made. The retention time varies according to qualification types. These records must include:

- a list of candidates registered with SQA for each qualification offered in the centre
- details of candidate assessment, including the name of the assessor, location, date and outcome
- candidate assessment results
- certificates claimed

These records must be made available to the external verifier, SQA and the accrediting and regulatory authorities on request. Records must be stored securely and in a retrievable format.

There are additional retention requirements relating to internal assessment appeals and malpractice cases. Full details for each qualification type are provided in our Retention of candidate assessment records table.

Retention of candidate assessment evidence

Centres must hold physical evidence of candidate assessment for a specific length of time. This retention time varies by qualification type and evidence type and whether or not the centre has been selected for external verification.

It is at the centre's discretion how candidate assessment evidence is held, but it must be stored securely in a retrievable format and be available to the external verifier on request. You will find details on the retention times, and when centres may dispose of actual assessment evidence, in our Evidence retention requirements document.

Internal verification records

Records of internal verification activity should include:

- the centre's documented internal verification policies and procedures
- reports of meetings with assessors to discuss assessment planning
- reports of standardisation exercises
- records of observation of assessment
- records of all sampling activity
- feedback to assessors and follow up of any identified actions

The means by which this information is held and updated is at the discretion of the centre, but it must be readily available to the external verifier, SQA and the accrediting and regulatory authorities as appropriate on request.

Internal assessment appeals

As part of their quality assurance system, centres must have a documented procedure for dealing with candidate appeals against their internal assessment results if they feel that they have been treated unfairly. If this appeal has not been resolved by the assessor, the internal verifier can have a role in providing a second opinion. There are details on internal assessment appeals in our Internal Verification Toolkit.

Malpractice

Centres must have procedures for dealing with instances of suspected malpractice in internal assessments. Internal verifiers may be involved in investigations of suspected malpractice. There is more Further information at https://www.sqa.org.uk/malpractice.

After assessment: reviewing internal verification

It is important to carry out regular reviews of the internal verification system to ensure that it is working effectively, and to identify possible improvements. It is also good practice to carry out a more formal evaluation after delivery has taken place as well as throughout the delivery stage. The internal verifier should lead this process, with the involvement of all assessors for each qualification delivered in the centre. This could include the following activities:

- reflection on the assessment approach and judgements in relation to validity, reliability, practicality, equity and fairness
- reflection on the assessment process — identifying instances of good practice and where there had been challenges
- analysis of the internal verification process in terms of its impact
- discussion of the sampling process in terms of improving reliability and providing support

These activities can allow you to identify changes or improvements to your procedures and develop an action plan with your assessors. The exemplar Record of Internal Verification During Delivery can also be used for recording discussions and actions from meetings at the end of delivery blocks.

Tools of internal verification: standardisation and sampling

Standardisation

The internal verifier should arrange standardisation exercises to support all assessors in their judgement of candidate evidence. These activities allow any subjectivity and/or discrepancies between assessors' judgements to be identified and allow adjustments to remedy these. They also allow the internal verifier to disseminate good practice.

There are different ways of carrying out standardisation. The internal verifier should make sure that the standardisation exercise used is appropriate for the type of evidence generated by the chosen assessment method — for example by observation, product evaluation, written/oral questions or a combination of these methods. Appendix 1 sets out the most common methods of assessment used by SQA, although some qualifications have specific rules on which methods must be used or are most appropriate.

Standardisation exercises

Each of these standardisation exercises encourages co-operative working and fosters professional development. They also lead to a shared understanding of national standards, thereby ensuring fair, accurate and consistent assessment judgements. There are benefits for any assessor in checking their judgement, particularly for new qualifications and awards. Teaming a new assessor with an experienced assessor is also an ideal way to provide support for a new assessor.

Agreement trial: This standardisation exercise is appropriate for product evidence. Assessors consider examples of candidate work, together with the assessment scheme. Any discrepancies or differences in judgement should be discussed to reach a shared understanding.

Blind marking: This standardisation exercise is appropriate for written evidence and aims to reduce any bias by an assessor, however unintentional. There are two ways to carry out blind marking. In one form, the evidence is anonymous as the candidate's details are removed. In the other, more commonly used form, two or more assessors mark the same evidence but are unaware of the mark awarded by the other. Any discrepancies in marks, or application of the marking scheme, are discussed to reach a shared understanding.

Cross assessment: In this standardisation exercise, assessors exchange candidate evidence to review, discuss and agree on the interpretation of the standard. The assessors may have used a different assessment or followed different procedures, but they should be judging candidate evidence against a common standard. Cross assessment can be particularly useful for centres with alternative or satellite centres, or who have a partnership or sub-contractual arrangement for qualification delivery.

Double marking: This is similar to blind marking as it generally used with written evidence. In this exercise, assessors exchange the same candidate evidence to check each other's

interpretation of the marking scheme and apply a common standard. It can be particularly useful to discuss any borderline decisions.

Dual assessment: In this standardisation exercise, also known as peer assessment, two assessors assess the same candidate. This type of standardisation is particularly appropriate for performance, practical activities and process skills. Each assessor should make an independent initial judgement, discuss any discrepancies and reach a consensus judgement.

Evidence review: In this exercise, the internal verifier collates a range of candidate evidence and asks a group of assessors to discuss any discrepancies between their individual judgements. This allows professional development as well as ensuring a shared understanding. It can be particularly useful for any new qualifications or awards.

Sampling

It is good practice to develop a sampling strategy that allows the internal verifier to check that each assessor is making consistent assessment judgments, in line with the standard, for each group of candidates over time.

During the assessment process, the internal verifier should select a sample of candidate evidence to check that each assessor is making consistent decisions in line with national standards. This allows the internal verifier to review assessment judgements and identify any inconsistencies at an early stage. The internal verifier can then ensure that action is taken to address these issues. This may involve expanding the sample, or sampling the work of these assessors again later in the delivery of the qualification. It is important that this should be a supportive activity that ensures confidence in the assessment process and provides professional development.

A range of assessment methods should be included in the sample, and the number of candidates sampled should be proportionate to the total number of candidate entries for that qualification in your centre, including any candidates at alternative or satellite sites. You may choose to use a defined percentage, or the square root of the total number of candidates taking that assessment. For each assessment selected, a minimum of 10% or five learners' work, whichever is the larger, would be an acceptable sample size to SQA. However, for a new qualification or one new to your centre, a higher level of sampling would be expected to reduce any quality assurance risks. The internal verifier should therefore sample assessments from every candidate group assessed by every assessor. This should include any instances of remediation, where the assessor has required the candidate to supply additional evidence because of a minor shortfall or omission. Such instances must be formally noted by the assessor.

The following factors should be considered in selecting the sample:

- new assessors – either new members of staff or new to the qualification
- a new qualification, or one new to your centre
- any changes to the qualification since the last delivery
- any issues previously identified by internal or external verification

- different methods of assessment used with different candidate groups

- different modes of delivery (full/part-time, online, partnership/sub-contracting arrangements)
- coverage over time to ensure that all assessments within a qualification are internally verified
- candidates in alternative or satellite assessment sites

Like standardisation, sampling should take place at different points throughout the delivery of the qualification, and not be left until assessment has been completed. This allows the internal verifier to address any concerns before external verification and the submission of candidate results, by expanding the sample or sampling again later at a later stage.

It is important that sampling is 'fit for purpose'. If the qualification is highly knowledge based, the records of that knowledge evidence and the associated assessment judgements should be sampled as part of the verification process.

If the qualification involves performance or practical activities, sampling should include not only evidence such as candidate logs and assessor observation reports, but also methods to gauge how the assessment judgments were made, such as the participation of the internal verifier in dual assessment exercises.

It is good practice to document your sampling strategy together with records of sampling activity. Such records should include the date at which sampling activity took place. SQA, and the accrediting and regulatory authorities, all have policies on record-keeping. These are set out in the section on maintaining records in this document. Evidence of your centre's policies and procedures is also very helpful to the external verifier.

Please note that **under no circumstances** may an internal verifier be involved in the verification of their own assessment judgements or any assessments which they have developed.

Monitoring assessor judgements

Observing assessment activities can be an effective means of sampling assessment judgements. It should be a supportive activity to ensure confidence in the assessment process for candidates and assessors. It can also provide professional development while assuring the internal verifier that assessors are maintaining standards.

SQA provides a number of exemplars to assist internal verifiers in monitoring assessors' practice and to sample Units and candidates. They are available on the online Internal Verification Toolkit at https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/74683.html and individually at

- Assessor Monitoring Record
- Internal Verification Record of Sampling of Units
- Internal Verification Record of Sampling of Candidates
- Record of Internal Verification During Delivery

Preparing for external verification

The internal verifier has an important role in ensuring that the external verifier's selected sample of candidate evidence and records of internal verification are available. The external verifier will scrutinise candidate evidence across as wide a range as possible, and over time will sample the work of all assessors and internal verifiers.

Procedures may differ depending on the qualification type, and internal verifiers should make sure that they are aware of SQA's requirements. There is more information on SQA's website at http://www.sqa.org.uk/qualityassurance.

Glossary of terms

Assessment: the process of evaluating an individual's learning. For SQA, accredited and regulated qualifications, the process of generating and collecting evidence of a candidate's attainment of knowledge and skills and judging that evidence against defined standards for formal qualification.

Assessor: the designated person in a centre who is responsible who is responsible for judging and recording candidate evidence.

Awarding body: an organisation or consortium which awards qualifications. Awarding bodies must meet the requirements of accrediting or regulatory bodies.

Candidate: the individual formally entered for a qualification with an awarding body.

Centre: an organisation or consortium accountable to an awarding body for assessment leading to a qualification. May operate alternative or satellite assessment site but is responsible for all quality assurance arrangements.

Certificate: the record of attainment in a qualification issued by an awarding body.

Checklist: a means of recording the judgements on activities performed by candidates.

Equitable and fair: an SQA principle of assessment. There should be no unnecessary barriers to assessment in the specification of knowledge, understanding and skills or in the development and delivery of the qualification.

Evidence: proof of candidate competence against the required standard.

External verification: process carried out by an awarding body to ensure that standards are maintained consistently across all centres.

External/Qualification verifier: person appointed by SQA to support and quality assure internally assessed qualifications in centres to ensure that standards are maintained across centres.

Internal assessment: an assessment carried out within the centre delivering the programme of learning and/or training.

Internal quality assurance: the process of ensuring that the provision at centre and qualification level conforms to approved procedures and that consistency is being achieved within the centre.

Internal verification: the process of ensuring that standards of assessment are applied consistently within a centre in line with national standards.

Internal verifier: person or persons appointed by a centre to ensure that assessors apply standards of assessment consistently to meet SQA's principles of assessment, ie that assessments are valid, reliable, practicable, equitable and fair.

Malpractice: any action or practice which threatens the integrity of qualifications.

Practicable: an SQA principle of assessment. An assessment may be valid and reliable but may not be practicable due to the resources or time required to carry it out efficiently and effectively.

Qualification verifier: see external verifier.

Quality assurance system: any system at local, regional, national or international level that promotes confidence in a qualification by guaranteeing the maintenance of standards.

Reliability: an SQA principle of assessment. The extent to which assessment results are consistent from one candidate to the next, and from one assessor to the next and from one occasion to the next, for example with a different assessor.

Remediation: the means by which an assessor can candidate responses, either by requiring a written amendment or by oral questioning, where there is a minor shortfall or omission in evidence requirements. All instances of remediation must be formally recorded and be made available to the internal verifier.

Standard: the criteria for success at a particular level.

Standardisation: process to check, adjust and ensure that the assessment criteria and processes (including the administration of the assessment itself and its marking) are applied consistently by assessors and verifiers. Standardisation is carried out by centres and by awarding bodies.

Validity: an SQA principle of assessment. The assessment is appropriate for its purpose, has been designed to allow candidates to show that they have the required knowledge, understanding and skills to meet the standards of the qualification and that any interpretation and use of the assessment results are supported and can be justified.

Verification: the process of ensuring that quality assurance systems are being maintained. Verification can be either internal, ie within a centre or external ie undertaken by an awarding body.

Witness testimony: information on candidate evidence supplied by someone other than the assessor. Weight given to witness testimony depends on the individual's specialist and assessment knowledge. The use of witness testimony rests with the assessor.

Appendix 1: Methods of assessment used by SQA

Method	Observation	Product evaluation	Questioning
Assignment: problem-solving exercise with clear guidelines, structure and length		x	x
Case study: describes a realistic situation. Candidates are prompted to analyse the situation, draw conclusions /make decisions/ suggest courses of action.		x	x
Dissertation: substantial written essay, treating a subject or issue in depth in a formal, methodical manner.		x	
Examination/written test: collection of assessment methods which samples a domain of knowledge and/or skills.			x
Listening test: assesses listening skills using live or recorded stimulus. Candidates demonstrate their understanding by oral or written responses.			x
Oral questions: assesses knowledge and understanding, may be linked to the assessment of a practical activity or performance		x	x
Oral test: of a candidate's listening and communication skills. It is often described as the 'assessment of speaking' or 'talking assignment'			x
Performance: assesses skills of which the evidence is ephemeral	x		
Portfolio: representative sample of candidate evidence		x	
Practical activity: any activity which involves a technical, artistic or creative skill	x	x	
Professional discussion: discussion of evidence already provided or demonstrated		x	x
Project: task involving research or an investigative approach		x	x
Simulation: structured practical exercise with specific objectives to simulate real-life conditions.	x	x	x
Questioning (includes: Alternative response; Assertion/reason; Cloze; Completion; Extended; Grid; Matching; Multiple choice; Multiple response; Restricted response; Short answer; Structured)			x