Prior verification service for National Qualifications: guide for centres

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Introduction

This document provides information about SQA's prior verification service. Please contact the NQ Verification Team (email: nqpv@sqa.org.uk or telephone: 0345 213 6766) if you require any further information.

SQA will continue to accept prior verification submissions for any National Qualifications unit, but not for any internally assessed course components.

Centres need to ensure that assessments are designed in line with Curriculum for Excellence principles: supporting personalisation and choice, and embedding the assessment into the teaching and learning of the qualification. It is important to build an approach to assessment that does not rely too much on end-of-unit tests. If your centre is developing its own assessment, you should review the guidance published in the SQA's Guide to Assessment.

SQA will accept prior verification submissions from local education authorities (LEAs) on behalf of centres.

About this service

Prior verification is a free service offered to centres who devise their own assessments, or who **significantly** change SQA's assessments to suit their particular local needs. The service gives centres additional confidence that their proposed assessment is fit for purpose and that it allows candidates to meet national standards.

A 'significant change' is one that is considered to have altered the nature of the assessment, such that its validity, reliability, equitability and fairness, and practicability might be thought to be at risk. Amending the wording of an assignment so it better fits your centre's local context is unlikely to be a significant change, but adjusting an assignment so that it requires candidates to demonstrate their understanding and skills in a different way **is** a significant change.

Before developing an assessment and submitting it to SQA for prior verification, centres are strongly encouraged to consider the following points:

♦ Have you checked to confirm the approach you are taking is in line with the current unit specification? Unit specifications can be found on the SQA website.

♦ Have you checked to see if a suitable approach to assessment already exists? You can check SQA's secure website for exemplar approaches within the unit assessment support packs, and for prior verified materials created by other centres.

- ◆ How is the proposed approach to assessment different from existing approaches? If you are only making minor changes to SQA's assessment approaches or other assessments that have already been prior verified by SQA, there is no need to submit the proposed approach for prior verification, as it is unlikely that the proposed changes will make the approach invalid or unreliable.

- ◆ If you decide to submit a proposed assessment for prior verification, it must be subject to the centre's own quality assurance procedures before it is submitted. This will help you to ensure that you have confidence in its validity and reliability.

You can find more information on approaches to assessment and internal quality assurance by checking the Guide to Assessment and IV Toolkit on the SQA website.

SQA strongly recommends that any centre wishing to have their own assessments prior verified should **use this service before using the assessment with candidates**.

Submitting assessments for prior verification

SQA will accept centre-devised assessments of National Qualifications for prior verification within the published window periods.

We will work to complete requests within a six-week timescale, but we cannot always guarantee this during peak activity times for our appointees, particularly during the months of February and May.

Please complete a separate Prior Verification Request Form for each individual unit assessment requiring prior verification. For each combined assessment, please complete one form and list all the combined units within the form. Ensure you complete each section of Part 1 of the form, and email it to nqpv@sqa.org.uk together with the assessment material, information on judging evidence, and your centre's internal verification information. Please ensure all documents are in line with acceptable formats, and are clearly labelled and easily identifiable. You can find guidance on acceptable formats at http://www.sqa.org.uk/files_ccc/List_of_supported_electronic_file_formats.pdf

It is your centre's responsibility to indicate correctly the units, outcomes and assessment standards you wish to have verified. **Within your submission, you must identify clearly and consistently which assessment each page of your material relates to**. If an existing SQA assessment (eg a unit assessment support pack or centre-devised assessment from the SQA secure site) has been adapted, this must be identified on the form at the section headed Proposed Assessment on page 3.

The Prior Verification Request Form is in two parts to ensure transparency of the criteria that the appointee will examine. Part 1 is completed by the centre, and Part 2 of the form is completed by the SQA appointee.

In summary, before submitting assessments to SQA for prior verification please ensure that:

♦ You have referred to the most up-to-date unit specifications found on the SQA website, and the date and version of that unit specification is provided on the form.
♦ Your centre has checked the assessments already available on the SQA secure site.
♦ The assessments have been subject to your centre's own quality assurance procedures.
♦ Your centre will not use the materials with candidates before being 'Accepted' by SQA.
♦ Your centre is familiar with SQA's Guide to Assessment and IV Toolkit on the SQA website.
♦ You have completed every section of Part 1 of the Prior Verification Request Form. An incomplete form may result in a delay to the process.

Prior verification outcomes

Prior verification has two possible outcomes:

Accepted

This means the approach to assessment is fit for purpose and is suitable for immediate use with candidates.

Accepted outcomes, with recommendations do not need to be re-submitted for prior verification. However, if the prior verification outcome is 'Accepted' and there are recommendations, it is **strongly advised that these recommendations are adopted before the assessment is used**.

When the outcome is 'Accepted', your centre will be provided with an 'Accepted' certificate by SQA, which will remain valid while the date and version of the unit specification(s) quoted on the certificate remain current. **It is your centre's responsibility to keep up to date with changes to each unit specification. If there is a change to a unit specification at any time in the future, your centre should review, amend and if required re-submit its assessment material for prior verification.**

Not Accepted

This means the approach to assessment should not be used with candidates. There are 'Required Actions' to be taken before the approach to assessment is fit for purpose.

SQA will contact your centre two to three days after you have received the 'Not Accepted' outcome to ask if your centre would like further support from a subject specialist before re-submitting your request.

Once the material has been amended in line with the 'Required Actions', it can be re-submitted to SQA for prior verification. If you choose not to re-submit, the assessment should **not be used** with candidates.

Publishing

Where a centre gives permission in the Sharing of Assessments part of the request form, and the appointee deems the material suitable, prior verified assessments will be published on SQA's secure site. This means that, over time, there will be a range of assessments for centres to use.

The re-submission process

Where centres are given a 'Not Accepted' outcome, SQA recommends the centre makes the changes detailed in the 'Required Actions' section of the report and re-submits the request to nqpv@sqa.org.uk.

A new Prior Verification Request Form must be used for a re-submitted request. At the Re-submission part of the request form, please quote the reference ID of the original submission. You will find this on the front page of the original request.