



Quality Assurance of Assessment Arrangements in Internal and External Assessments: Information for Colleges

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Quality assurance of assessment arrangements

SQA has a responsibility to ensure that the process of assessment is rigorous and fair for all candidates and for this reason SQA must ensure that assessment arrangements are appropriate and only provided to those disabled candidates who are eligible.

This guidance is to support staff in colleges to ensure that appropriate assessment arrangements are provided for those disabled candidates who need them. The information in this guidance document must be read in conjunction with the [Assessment Arrangements Explained: Information for Centres](#) (Publication code: FA4378) which details the key principles that should be followed when making a decision about assessment arrangements and [Systems Verification Process: Guidance for Centres](#) & [Systems Verification Criteria: Guidance for Centres](#).

Your college must have an effective internal quality assurance system for identifying and verifying candidates' eligibility need for assessment arrangements in all SQA qualifications. You must ensure that you are fully conversant with all relevant assessment arrangements guidance on SQA's [website](#), and that your own college's policies and processes align with this guidance.

[Quality Assurance Criteria](#) criterion 3.5 already requires that your college has policies and procedures in place for managing assessment arrangements for both internal and, where applicable, external assessments, however, your college must also have appropriate documentary evidence which demonstrates the implementation of your assessment arrangements policies and procedures and which specifically cover your processes for:

- ◆ identifying, as early as possible, any difficulty a disabled candidate might have in demonstrating their attainment through the published assessment procedures
- ◆ determining the most appropriate assessment arrangement for the candidate
- ◆ verifying the candidate's need for the assessment arrangement in an internal or external assessment
- ◆ authorising assessment arrangements

All of the processes outlined above and explained below must be documented, implemented and monitored to meet SQA requirements. At all stages, professional dialogue is essential between teaching staff, extended learning support staff, those responsible for quality assurance, and those responsible for submitting requests for assessment arrangements to SQA. In some cases, evidence from other key professionals, such as therapists, disability practitioners

or educational psychologists, may also form part of the college's wider evidence base. This could assist in deciding whether or not an assessment arrangement is appropriate for an individual candidate and, if so, the nature and extent of that arrangement in the individual case.

However, in all cases, SQA co-ordinators must work closely with staff in extended learning support to ensure they are aware of the assessment arrangements that may be required for candidates.

Quality Assurance Processes: College

Identifying, as early as possible, any difficulty a disabled candidate might have in demonstrating their attainment through the published assessment procedures

Wherever possible, a candidate's likely difficulties in accessing an assessment should be identified before he or she embarks on the qualification. In some cases, however, the candidate's difficulties may only become apparent, or be disclosed, during the candidate's course of study. The candidate's difficulties could be identified by the candidate, by extended learning support/equality and inclusion staff, or by the curriculum staff/subject lecturer.

Determining the most appropriate assessment arrangement for the disabled candidate

This is the stage in your internal quality assurance system where you determine what assessment arrangements will be required. Any such assessment arrangement should adequately assist the candidate to demonstrate their attainment without compromising the integrity of the assessment. This could be quite straightforward (for example, the provision of a braille question paper for a blind candidate in the external examination) or it could require more detailed discussion with SQA (for example, where the competence standard in a Higher National Unit could potentially be compromised by the proposed assessment arrangement).

Formally verifying the disabled candidate's need for an assessment arrangement

This is a key stage in your college's own internal quality assurance system. It ensures that there is an evidence base which clearly demonstrates the candidate's need for the assessment arrangement and that this evidence has been formally confirmed by the college.

Documentary evidence of your formal assessment arrangements verification process, and the personnel involved, must be available to SQA. Verifying the candidate's assessment needs is extremely important for two reasons:

- ◆ you need to be satisfied that your decision to provide, or not to provide, a particular assessment arrangement can be justified, and that it accords with both SQA guidance and relevant equality legislation

- ◆ we need to be satisfied that colleges have in place their own robust internal assessment arrangements verification system, which ensures that all relevant information and evidence has been gathered and fully considered. The evidence requirements are set out in more detail below at “Documentary evidence to support the provision of assessment arrangements”.

Authorising assessment arrangements

A member of senior management in the college is responsible for authorising the provision of an assessment arrangement in an internal assessment or any request to SQA for an assessment arrangement in the external examinations by the published deadline date.

In providing an assessment arrangement in an internal assessment or in submitting a request for an assessment arrangement in an external examination, your college is confirming that SQA’s quality assurance procedures have been adhered to and that it has met its responsibilities in terms of quality assuring the eligibility of the candidate and the appropriateness of the assessment arrangement.

In addition, by submitting a request for an assessment arrangement to SQA, the college is confirming that it has discussed the assessment arrangement (s) with the candidate and made them aware that as part of the process to request their assessment arrangement (s), the college share information about them and their assessment arrangement (s) with SQA.

Quality Assurance Processes: SQA

The focus of SQA’s quality assurance is on assisting colleges to comply with SQA’s requirement for the college to operate an effective internal quality assurance system for the provision of assessment arrangements for candidates in both internal and external SQA assessments.

To this end, colleges are selected for a quality assurance visit based on a number of factors, these might include:

- ◆ length of time since last quality assurance visit
- ◆ prevalence of assessment arrangements requests submitted through SQA’s Assessment Arrangements Request (AAR) system
- ◆ prevalence of late requests
- ◆ compliance with closing dates

If you are selected for a quality assurance visit, your access to the software for submitting assessment arrangements requests in external assessments, the Assessment Arrangements Request (AAR) system, will be temporarily placed on hold until the conclusion of your quality assurance visit. During this time, if you wish to seek any advice regarding the assessment arrangements that you are planning to request in external assessments, or the assessment arrangements

that you are planning to provide in internal assessments, you should contact the Assessment Arrangements Team at aarequests@sqa.org.uk.

SQA will initially contact your SQA co-ordinator (or college contact) to inform you of the proposed visit and to negotiate a mutually convenient date for the visit. Ongoing contact will also be with your SQA co-ordinator (or college contact), who should take responsibility for informing all relevant staff about the date of the visit, requirements for documentary evidence, and for arranging for the required staff to be available during the visit.

The length of the visit will vary and be dependent on many factors. On average it will take about three hours. All documented processes and supporting evidence, which you should have available on the day, will be reviewed. Appendix 1 is a blank template that you may wish to use to list the actual evidence you have available to support the provision of an assessment arrangement.

Verbal feedback will be provided at the end of the visit to the SQA co-ordinator and to any other staff you choose to have present. The feedback will cover the findings against every type of evidence requirement, any recommended or required actions, comments on the sufficiency of your evidence and any points of good practice. There should be nothing included in the final written report to SQA, and copied to you, that you were not made aware of on the day of the visit. Recommendations are made so that a college can enhance its existing provision. They are not mandatory and you do not need to act upon them. However, required actions must be acted upon and are given when a judgement has been made that there is either insufficient evidence, little evidence or no evidence. The actions should also be clear and specific, with an agreed date for achievement. Once these actions are met you will be able to access the AAR system.

In the unlikely event that your systems and processes do not meet our requirements by the agreed date and as noted in your Action Plan, we will contact you to discuss the issue further. We may ask you to submit the documented evidence for all your candidates for whom assessment arrangements are being proposed. We will consider the supporting evidence and make a decision on a case-by-case basis.

Note: Appeals against decisions involving assessment arrangements are covered in our general guidance on appeals, [The Appeals Process: Information for centres](#) (publication code: AA7708, April 2018).

Your SQA co-ordinator will be sent a link to a feedback questionnaire, along with the report of the visit. Please take the time to complete this feedback and send it back to SQA, as it will provide SQA with valuable information to help to make future improvements and help us to further improve our quality assurance processes.

Documentary evidence to support the provision of assessment arrangements

The quality assurance visit is based around seven key types of documentary evidence. Documents may be held electronically or in hard copy but should include (i) evidence of your college's quality assurance processes and (ii) the evidence used to assess a candidate's eligibility for a particular assessment arrangement.

1 Evidence of your college's internal assessment arrangements verification meetings

You must have documentary evidence of the meetings/discussions at which all relevant candidate information and evidence was considered and assessed before the provision of an assessment arrangement in an internal assessment and/or before submitting the request to SQA for an assessment arrangement in an external assessment. This might be the minutes or agreed notes from the assessment arrangements verification meeting(s). They must be signed and dated.

2 Evidence that your candidates have agreed to the provision of assessment arrangements.

You must have confirmation from candidates that they have been involved in discussions about, and have agreed to, the assessment arrangements being provided, and that they intend to use them. For some candidates, you may wish to involve parents/carers in this discussion.

You must also have confirmation from the candidate(s) that they have been made aware that information about them and their assessment arrangement(s) will be shared with SQA as part of the request process. You may wish to use the SQA candidate proforma which can be found [here](#).

3 Evidence of your candidates' disabilities/additional support needs and how this affects them in the learning and teaching situation

In all cases, there must be documentary evidence of the nature and extent of the candidate's disability or difficulty, and how it has impacted on teaching and learning. Information, where relevant, from professionals (for example, therapists, specialist sensory impairment support staff and educational psychologists) may also be available. The evidence might include a working file, (for example a personal learning support plan), containing information about the candidate's disability and/or additional support needs (including for example, relevant medical reports, results from screening assessments, minutes of meetings, notes of case conferences, ongoing consultations on current intervention strategies etc.)

4 Evidence of your candidates' need for current assessment support, how this is met, and how it relates to the arrangements being requested or provided

In nearly all cases, candidates requiring specific assessment arrangements will need similar arrangements to be made during their course to ensure they are not disadvantaged. There must be documentary evidence that links this ongoing curricular support to the assessment arrangements needed for the SQA assessment. The evidence might include plans and records of support from extended learning support staff in class and/or in support base and/or details of support regularly required from subject lecturers in class.

5 Evidence that varying needs across curriculum areas have been taken into account

As needs may vary across curriculum areas, there must be documentary evidence that the need for assessment arrangements has been considered on a subject-by-subject basis. Evidence might include records of consultation and negotiations with subject staff, their comments and observations, which takes into account the assessment demands of different subjects.

6 Evidence for specific types of assessment arrangements

For some candidates, the evidence for their need for a particular assessment arrangement will be well established, for example, for a visually impaired candidate using braille, a deaf candidate using BSL. However, for some types of assessment arrangements, for example, a candidate's need for extra time, a scribe, a reader or for the use of assistive technologies, there must be additional documentary information/evidence of the need for the specific assessment arrangement concerned.

7 Evidence of a system for the management of SQA assessment arrangements which is supported by college senior management

You should have documentary evidence of a whole-college approach to the provision of assessment arrangements, for example, as part of wider inclusive practices/policy, etc.

The following checklist, based around these seven types of evidence, is designed to help prompt you to find out if you have the appropriate evidence for the audit visit.

Quality assurance of assessment arrangements checklist

Reference	Key questions	(✓)
1 Documentary evidence of the internal assessment arrangements verification meeting(s)¹	Do you hold a formal assessment arrangements verification meeting or meetings to ensure that all relevant information and evidence has been gathered and considered in determining the provision of assessment arrangements for candidates in both internal and external assessments?	
	Do you have a formal minute/note of the meeting(s) that has been signed and dated?	
	Is it clear which assessments your assessment arrangements verification meeting(s) is for?	
	Are the meetings held at an appropriate time in the year?	
	Are appropriate personnel present?	
	Are requests for or the provision of assessment arrangements formally authorised by a senior member of staff?	
	Is this senior member of staff independent of the learning support structure in the centre?	
	Do you have a procedure for making late decisions?	
2 Documentary evidence of confirmation from the candidate that they have agreed to (i) the provision of assessment arrangements, (ii) the college submitting the request on their behalf and have been made aware that personal information will be shared with SQA	If your candidate is under 16, does an appropriate adult (for example parent, carer, etc.) countersign for them?	
	Have your candidates signed in all cases?	
	Is it clear which assessments this agreement refers to?	
	Do you have a record of any candidate refusals of assessment arrangements?	

¹ The assessment arrangements verification meeting is the **key stage** in your internal quality assurance procedures. You need to be confident that your decisions to provide, or not to provide, an assessment arrangement in both internal and external assessments are in line with both SQA guidance and the relevant equality legislation. This is why having a senior member of staff who is independent of the support-for-learning process in your college is so important; it adds rigour to the process.

3 Documentary evidence of the candidate's disability/additional support needs and how this generally affects the learning and teaching situation	Do you have the relevant information/evidence of the nature and extent of the disability or difficulty?	
	Do you have evidence of how the disability/difficulty has impacted on teaching and learning in the classroom and that subject staff are involved in relevant discussions and in recording relevant information?	
	Is your evidence current?	
4 Documentary evidence of need for current support, how this is met, and how it relates to the assessment arrangements requested	Does your evidence show that decisions are made on the actual assessment arrangement proposed and based on the current support provided in normal teaching and learning?	
	Do you have evidence that subject lecturers are involved in relevant discussions and in recording relevant information?	
	Do you have evidence to show that the assessment arrangement is effective and removes the disadvantage?	
	Is your evidence current?	
5 Documentary evidence that varying needs across subjects have been taken into account	Do you have evidence available for each subject?	
	Do you have evidence that subject staff have been involved in gathering evidence?	
	Do you have evidence that subject staff support the arrangement proposed?	
6 Documentary evidence for particular assessment arrangements	Do you have appropriate evidence of how a particular assessment arrangement has been determined? For example, for extra time, does this include (i) evidence indicating that extra time is appropriate and (ii) evidence that a specific amount of extra time is appropriate?	
7 Documentary evidence of a whole-college system for the management of SQA assessment arrangements which is supported by senior management	Do you have evidence that there is a whole-college policy in relation to the provision of assessment arrangements?	
	Do you have evidence of dissemination of this policy to all relevant staff?	

Appendix 1: Suggested checklist for internal verification process

Checklist of evidence to support the provision of an assessment arrangement

Centre	
Candidate	
Assessment arrangement	
Date	

Types of evidence	✓
Documentary evidence of the internal assessment arrangements verification meeting.	
Documentary evidence of confirmation from the candidate that they have agreed to (i) the provision of assessment arrangements and (ii) the college submitting the request on their behalf.	
Documentary evidence that the candidate has been made aware that personal information will be shared with SQA as part of the request process.	
Documentary evidence of the candidate's disability/additional support needs and how this generally affects the learning and teaching situation.	
Documentary evidence of need for current support, how this is met, and how it relates to the assessment arrangements requested.	
Documentary evidence that varying needs across subjects have been taken into account	
Documentary evidence for particular assessment arrangements	
Documentary evidence of a whole-college system for the management of SQA assessment arrangements which is supported by senior management	

Appendix 2: Sources of support

If you have a query about a particular assessment arrangement, please contact the Assessment Arrangements Team on 0345 213 6890 or e-mail them at aarequests@sqa.org.uk.

For further up-to-date information on assessment arrangements, please visit www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements.

If you have a general enquiry about SQA or its qualifications, please call our Customer Contact Centre on 0345 279 1000 or e-mail them at customer@sqa.org.uk.