

Systems Verification



Systems Verification Process Guide

First published: 2021

Version 2.0

Last updated: September 2025

Published by the Scottish Qualifications Authority

The Optima Building, 58 Robertson Street, Glasgow G2 8DQ

Lowden, 24 Wester Shawfair, Dalkeith, EH22 1FD

www.sqa.org.uk

The information in this publication may be reproduced in support of SQA qualifications. If it is reproduced, SQA should be clearly acknowledged as the source. If it is to be used for any other purpose, written permission must be obtained from the Communications and Engagement Team at SQA. It must not be reproduced for trade or commercial purposes.

© Scottish Qualifications Authority

This document can be produced, on request, in alternative formats, including large type, Braille and numerous community languages. For further details telephone SQA's Customer Contact Centre on 0845 279 1000. SQA is committed to using plain English. We will try to make our publications as easy and straightforward to understand as we can, and will try to avoid all unnecessary jargon. If there's any language in this document that you feel is hard to understand, or could be improved, please write to Editor, Editorial Team, at the Glasgow address or email: editor@sqa.org.uk.

Contents

Change log	5
1 What happens during systems verification?	6
2 What happens after I am selected for systems verification?	7
2.1 Agreeing a date	7
2.2 Format of your visit	7
2.3 If your centre is no longer active	8
2.4 Failure to comply	8
3 How should I prepare for systems verification?	9
3.1 Discussions with staff and learners	9
3.2 Preparing your evidence	10
4 The verification meeting	12
4.1 During the meeting	12
4.2 Feedback	12
4.3 Required action points, recommendations and good practice	13
5 After the meeting	14
5.1 The report	14
5.2 Appeals	14
5.3 Your feedback following the visit	14
Appendix 1 : Preparing for a systems verification visit	16

Change log

Version	Description of changes	Revision date
2.0	Changes to document layout and formatting to improve accessibility. Inserted new section: What happens after I am selected for systems verification? Updated wording in section 4 to improve accuracy and clarity.	02/09/2025

1 What happens during systems verification?

A verifier will review your policies, procedures, resources and practice, to ensure you are managing them in a way which meets our quality assurance criteria. Unlike qualification verification, it is not subject specific — the verification will focus on your underpinning quality assurance systems.

Guidance on each quality assurance criterion for systems can be found in the document [Systems Verification Criteria: Guidance for Centres](#), which contains:

- the reason why each quality criterion is included in systems verification
- the specific SQA requirements you must implement
- examples of types of evidence
- sources of information and guidance

As an SQA-approved centre, you must be fully aware of our quality assurance criteria and make sure your own organisation's policies, procedures and practices align with these.

During a systems verification event, the verifier will review your quality assurance systems, policies and procedures against the systems verification criteria and consider your evidence of the ongoing implementation of your policies and procedures. The verifier will consider your context to provide information and advice on improvements you could make and will highlight any examples of good practice.

Please note that there are other quality assurance criteria that only cover qualification verification and are not covered in this guide. More information on the qualification verification criteria can be found in the document [Qualification Verification Criteria: Guidance for centres](#).

2 What happens after I am selected for systems verification?

2.1 Agreeing a date

When you are selected to have your systems verified, the assigned verifier will contact you, either by phone or by email, to let you know your system verification is now due and to agree a date for the visit. You will have at least four weeks' notice of a verification visit but the agreed date should be within the allocated quarter.

You will also be asked whether there are any barriers to staff or learners participating in the systems verification activity to allow reasonable adjustments to be made.

Once a date has been agreed, you will receive full details of the systems verification process and what evidence you will need to prepare.

2.2 Format of your visit

Virtual meeting

Verification meetings are usually conducted virtually. The verifier will agree with you in advance who will attend and send an invite to an online meeting at the agreed date and time.

In-person meeting

The verifier may arrange a face-to-face visit if they feel it would be beneficial, for example if:

- it is your first systems verification, and your approval meeting was virtual
- you have physical rather than electronically stored evidence
- there are IT connectivity or user issues

You should allow at least a full day for an in-person meeting, although it may be slightly shorter.

If you have any questions or concerns about the format of the meeting selected, then please contact the verifier.

2.3 If your centre is no longer active

If your centre is no longer active or you are intending to close as an SQA centre, please inform the verifier.

2.4 Failure to comply

If, despite reasonable efforts, we cannot carry out our systems verification because we are unable to reach you or our meeting is repeatedly postponed without good reason, sanctions may be issued against your centre. These could include placing a hold on entries and resulting, or ultimately initiating the centre closure process.

3 How should I prepare for systems verification?

The SQA co-ordinator should:

- inform all relevant staff about the date of the verification meeting
- arrange for staff and learners to be available for interview
- ensure that all documentary evidence is available for review
- if the verifier is visiting your centre: ensure they know how to find and access your premises

3.1 Discussions with staff and learners

While it is desirable for the verifier to meet staff and learners during the verification meeting, it is not essential if this is difficult to arrange. Discussions can be arranged at a mutually convenient time and conducted remotely, such as by telephone, if this is easier.

Learners

It is valuable to talk with learners, individually or in groups, to learn about the support they receive and how procedures are applied from their perspective. The names of learners will not be recorded in reports.

Assessors and internal verifiers

Discussions with assessors and internal verifiers will give the verifier valuable insight into how your processes and procedures are managed in practice.

Administration

Discussions with staff who deal with data management will help the verifier to understand how you manage learner entries, results and certification.

3.2 Preparing your evidence

The verifier may ask you to provide some evidence electronically at least 10 days in advance. This will allow them to prepare and leaves more time during the meeting for discussion, clarification and development. The verifier will provide an agenda which lists the documents you must provide, but this is likely to include:

Policies and procedures

- Malpractice policy (1.5)
- Conflict of interest procedure (1.6)
- Equal opportunities policy (3.4)
- Assessment arrangements procedure (3.5)
- Complaints policy (3.6)
- Internal verification policy (4.1)
- Assessment appeals procedure (4.8)

Evidence

- Roles and responsibilities for the SQA co-ordinator, assessor, internal verifier and administrator (1.4)
- Centre communication (1.7)
- Recruitment / selection of assessors and verifiers (2.1)
- Assessor / verifier induction (2.2)
- Contracts / agreements for sub-contractors (2.2)
- Candidate induction (3.1)

You can provide your evidence to us by:

- uploading documents to the SQA Centre Hub, or
- granting us remote access to your electronic files (such as Learning Management System (LMS), staff intranet, learner portal)

You must have a documented policy or procedure, and evidence of implementation, for each of the systems verification criteria.

If you regularly review your policies and procedures against our criteria you will have good evidence to present to the verifier.

Examples of the type of evidence you might present have been provided under every criterion in [Systems Verification Criteria: Guidance for Centres](#). These are only examples, and it is perfectly acceptable to provide different evidence reflecting the actual practice in your centre, providing it clearly meets the relevant quality criterion. You may use different terminology to the terms used in our guidance.

If the verifier is visiting your centre, evidence may still be in the form of electronic files rather than paper documentation. You do not need to print out evidence but must ensure the verifier can access the files easily.

For more information on how to prepare for a systems verification, please see Appendix 1.

4 The verification meeting

4.1 During the meeting

If your meeting is held virtually, the verifier will review your evidence in advance. The meeting will provide an opportunity for the verifier to ask for further clarification or more evidence of your systems in practice if needed.

If the meeting is held in person, the verifier will review your evidence in your centre.

4.2 Feedback

The verifier will provide verbal feedback at the end of the meeting to the SQA co-ordinator and any other staff you choose to have present. The feedback will cover the verifier's findings against every criterion and any required actions. You will be informed of a 'traffic light' rating for each criterion:

Green: You have provided evidence that fully meets the criterion. There are no required action points.

Amber: You have provided some evidence in support of this criterion, but it is not enough. Required action points will be set.

Red: The evidence you have provided falls well short of meeting the criterion. Required action points will be set.

The verifier will explain how they reached each decision and inform you of the overall rating for each of the categories: management of a centre; resources; candidate support; internal assessment and verification; external assessment (if applicable); and data management.

The criteria have different impact levels, which affect the overall rating for each category.

The verifier will calculate the outcome for each category, which will be one of the following: high confidence, broad confidence, reasonable confidence, minimal confidence or no confidence.

4.3 Required action points, recommendations and good practice

Required action points are given when a judgement has been made that there is either not enough evidence, little evidence or no evidence. They must be acted upon.

Recommendations are made so you can enhance your existing policies, procedures or practices. They are not mandatory but we encourage you to consider and adopt them.

Good practice is effective practice that is over and above expected practice, and may demonstrate a particularly creative approach.

An amber or red rating against a criterion will result in a required action point. The verifier will explain why your evidence does not meet our requirements and what you must do to fix this. If the outcome rating for a category is 'minimal confidence' or 'no confidence', the verifier may ask for your head of centre to be present during the feedback session. The verifier will agree a timescale with you within which you must submit evidence of how you have addressed each required action. They will also tell you how to submit your evidence electronically or agree a date for a further meeting, if necessary.

5 After the meeting

5.1 The report

You should receive your report within 10 working days of the meeting. It will reflect the feedback you were given on the day and there will not be anything included that you were not made aware of.

Depending on the outcome of the verification, sanctions may be imposed on your centre. These could range from an entry in an action plan to address the agreed required actions, through to suspension or removal of centre approval. It is important that you submit evidence of how you have addressed each required action on or before the agreed date. Please remember that your systems verifier is on hand to offer advice and guidance. We share your aim of having your SQA centre run smoothly with efficient and effective systems that make your job more straightforward and meet our quality criteria.

If, in exceptional circumstances, you have difficulty meeting the agreed action date, it is important to contact your verifier at the earliest opportunity. If you submit incomplete or insufficient evidence to address the required actions fully, you may be given another opportunity to submit. However, this could result in your risk rating being increased and more sanctions being applied if you do not address the action plan to the satisfaction of the verifier within the revised timescale. If you want to query anything in your report, contact your systems verifier or ASV@sqa.org.uk.

5.2 Appeals

If you disagree with the outcome of the verification, you can appeal. For more information, see [The Appeals Process: Information for Centres](#) on our website.

5.3 Your feedback following the visit

We are keen to hear from you about your experiences and any suggestions you have for us to improve our practice. We will send you a link to a feedback

questionnaire along with your visit report. Please take the time to complete this as your feedback matters to us.

Appendix 1: Preparing for a systems verification visit

1. Download [Systems Verification Criteria: Guidance for Centres](#).
2. Consider each criterion carefully, bearing in mind that there may have been changes to SQA requirements since your last verification, or your systems approval, if this is your first systems verification.
3. When reviewing your policies and procedures, please be aware that all SQA requirements, and if applicable, the requirements for regulated qualifications, must be clearly documented and evidenced.
4. In [Systems Approval and Verification: Support Materials](#), you can find more guidance on commonly queried topics to support you in writing or updating your procedures.
5. If you have been asked to provide evidence in advance, make sure this is with the verifier at least 10 working days before the meeting.
6. Along with your policies and procedures, don't forget to prepare evidence of:
 - the review of policies and procedures and resources you use (1.1 and 2.3)
 - completed induction checklists for candidates (3.1) and assessors / internal verifiers (2.2)
 - staff experience and CPD records (2.1)
 - contracts / agreements for freelance assessors / internal verifiers (1.4)
 - assessment arrangements (3.5)
 - standardisation activities (4.1) (such as minutes, sampling plans, emails, decision log)
 - data processing activities (category 6)
7. Note any questions you'd like to ask the verifier on the day.