

Systems Verification



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.



*** There are other quality assurance criteria that only cover qualification verification. Qualification verification is how we ensure that centres are assessing their candidates in line with national standards, and that assessment decisions comply with our quality assurance criteria. The qualification verification criteria are not included in this guide, but the full criteria are available in the quality assurance section of the SQA website. Where there are gaps in the numbering of criteria in this document, this is because qualification verification criteria have been excluded.**

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 candidates 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

Discussions with staff and candidates

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

Candidates

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

Assessors/IV

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 candidate entries, results and certification.

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/verifiers (2.1)
- Assessor/verifier induction (2.2)
- Contracts/agreements for sub-contractors (2.2)
- Candidate induction (3.1)

Providing your evidence

- By uploading documents to the SQA Centre Hub
- By providing remote access to your electronic files (eg LMS, staff intranet, candidate 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, on the basis of need or continuous improvement, 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 are not required to print out evidence but must ensure the verifier can access the files easily.

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

The Verification Meeting

If the verifier is visiting your centre, you should allow a full working day for the meeting, although it may be slightly shorter.

As far as possible, you should provide a quiet area where the verifier can review your evidence and talk to staff and candidates without interruption.

If there are specific health and safety rules (eg compulsory health and safety equipment, restrictions on use of electronic equipment) make these known to the verifier in advance.

If the verification meeting is to be conducted virtually, the verifier will agree with you in advance who will attend and will send an invite to an online meeting at the agreed date and time.

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 sufficient. 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.

Required action points, recommendations and good practice

Required action points	are given when a judgement has been made that there is either insufficient 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	We define good practice as 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.

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 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; our aim is the same as your aim: for your SQA centre to be running 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, but this could result in your risk rating being increased and further 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

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.

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.

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 additional 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 look out 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/IVs (2.2)
- staff experience and CPD records (2.1)
- contracts /agreements for freelance assessors / IV's (1.4)
- assessment arrangements (3.5)
- standardisation activities (4.1) (e.g. minutes, sampling plans, emails, decision log)
- data processing activities (category 6)

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Note any questions you'd like to ask the verifier on the day.