

SQA's Quality Framework: a guide for centres

partnership
quality management
verification
resources guidance
evaluation
support moderation





SCOTTISH
QUALIFICATIONS
AUTHORITY



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SQA's Quality Framework: a guide for centres

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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, Publications Team, at the Glasgow address above or e-mail: **editor@sqa.org.uk**.

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Introduction

SQA is committed to providing qualifications and support to match the needs of individuals, society and the economy of Scotland. We strive to maintain a balanced portfolio of qualifications that is inclusive, facilitates progression, and reflects Scotland's educational, economic, social and cultural needs.

We are pleased to be working in partnership with our approved centres to achieve our shared goals of excellence and consistency. This helps us to ensure that SQA qualifications continue to meet the requirements of the people of Scotland and all other users of our qualifications.

Our quality assurance framework covers all aspects of our qualifications, from initial design and development through to assessment and certification of candidates. Its principal aim is to ensure that standards are set and consistently maintained.

At the heart of our approach to quality assurance is our commitment to ensuring that all our qualifications are accessible to all candidates who have the potential to achieve them.

We are equally committed to maintaining an assessment and quality system that is easy to understand, effectively administered, publicly accountable, and cost-effective to operate.

We have now reviewed and revised our quality assurance framework to take account of changing legislation, new technologies and our changing portfolio of qualifications. This publication is for staff in SQA approved centres and aims to provide a summary of our mutual responsibilities for quality assurance. Please read it in conjunction with our other publications which give operational guidance.

Freedom of Information

The Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 came into force on 1 January 2005. This Act means that any person or organisation, anywhere in the world, now has the right to have access to records of information that SQA holds. As part of our duties under this Act, we may disclose information obtained from third parties, other than personal data, to anyone who makes a request.

If a third party considers that any of the information given to SQA should not be disclosed under the terms of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, the information should be marked as sensitive and discussed with SQA. SQA only will determine whether such information is to be exempt or not. We will, though, consult with the third party in considering any request received under this Act.

SQA's Quality Framework

In this document, we describe SQA's quality framework, and summarise your responsibilities as an SQA centre.

Our quality assurance monitoring of the way you carry out your responsibilities depends on which SQA qualifications you offer and how they are assessed:

- ◆ Where assessments are externally marked by SQA, we are responsible for quality assurance.
- ◆ For internally-assessed qualifications, we share responsibility with our centres, so we use a different range of quality assurance measures.

We also know that the assessment processes of education authority schools and further and higher education colleges in Scotland are subject to the quality assurance procedures of a number of external bodies, and we will recognise this as part of our overall quality management.

For some other organisations, including those outwith Scotland, SQA may be the only body which externally monitors the reliability of assessment decisions, and we will develop processes to take account of quality systems needed to underpin the successful delivery and assessment of SQA qualifications in these centres.

The most important objective of our assessment and quality assurance processes is to ensure that candidates who have demonstrated the competences required by an SQA qualification receive certification.

To achieve this, we have to be confident that assessment of SQA qualifications is valid and reliable, and that it consistently meets national standards. This has to be done in a way that is practical and cost-effective for us and our centres. We work in close partnership with our centres, to provide you with support and guidance in achieving our mutual goal of excellence. We make every effort to keep the quality assurance demands on our centres to the minimum by adopting a risk-based approach to our monitoring activities.

In this publication, we give you an overview of our quality assurance framework and an introduction to how we carry out quality assurance in the various contexts in which SQA qualifications are assessed. It also provides an outline of the good practice which we expect you to offer as a minimum, by summarising your responsibilities as an SQA approved centre.

SQA's quality assurance processes

All our qualifications are designed, validated, supported and maintained to the same high standards, and take account of progression within, and across, our three qualification families. We recognise that our qualifications have a 'lifecycle', and we are committed to reviewing them on a regular basis.

We have identified six key *processes* that support the quality framework. These processes underpin all SQA qualifications, and are the mechanisms through which we establish and maintain national standards.

There are requirements or *criteria* for each of these processes. Maintaining a high quality of provision requires an effective partnership between ourselves and those we work with, based on these quality assurance criteria. The criteria are given in full at the back of this guide.

processes

1 *management of an SQA centre*

2 *approval to offer specific SQA qualifications*

3 *internal verification of internal assessment*

4 *external verification of internal assessment*

5 *quality control of external assessment*

6 *validation of SQA qualifications*

criteria

the criteria relate to the management procedures which underpin the implementation and assessment of SQA qualifications in centres

the criteria relate to resources required of centres for the implementation and assessment of specific SQA qualifications

the criteria relate to the processes by which SQA and centres ensure that all internal assessment is valid, reliable, practicable and cost-effective

the criteria relate to external processes by which SQA ensures that internal assessment is in line with the national standards set out in the qualifications

the criteria relate to the processes by which SQA and centres ensure that external assessment is in line with the national standards set out in the qualifications

the criteria relate to ensuring that SQA qualifications are fit for purpose

Overview: assessment and quality assurance

Approval

Management of an SQA centre

If your organisation wishes to offer SQA qualifications, you need approval as an SQA centre. This will normally involve a visit to ensure that you have the potential to become an SQA centre and to offer SQA qualifications.

We will check that you meet our centre approval criteria, and that you have the staff and resources you need to offer the qualification (see the table entitled ‘Summary of your responsibilities as an SQA centre’). We will take account of the quality indicators of any other organisations who have carried out quality audits or inspections on your centre.

For example, all Scottish secondary schools and colleges fully registered with the Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED), including independent schools, are deemed to meet centre approval criteria. We will also take account of achievement of Scottish Quality Management System (SQMS) accreditation or approval by another awarding body.

Our approval criteria apply to all centres, whether they are in Scotland, the rest of the United Kingdom, or overseas.

We are committed to providing you with an efficient approval service which meets your needs. We will help you with your centre approval application and subsequent applications for approval to offer specific qualifications. As far as possible, we will fit in with your own timescales for gaining approval.

Approval to offer specific qualifications

In approving you to offer specific SQA qualifications, we take into account your experience of delivering and assessing qualifications in the area from which the qualification is drawn.

If you are a new centre, or have not offered qualifications in the specialist area before, we will normally arrange for an approval visit.

If you have successfully offered qualifications in the specialist area, and have made an approval submission which provides sufficient information, then we may be able to approve you directly on that basis.

Centres can apply for devolved authority which means that they conduct the approval process themselves for some types of qualification. (Please refer to the section on devolved authority and quality auditing).

Assessment

For both internally-assessed and externally-assessed qualifications, we need your co-operation in ensuring that all candidates have equality of access to assessment, in accordance with our mutual legal and moral responsibilities.

You should be able to demonstrate the effectiveness of your procedures for making assessment arrangements for candidates with disabilities and those with additional support needs.

New technologies give increased opportunities for candidate support. However, they also set new challenges, and together we need to support each other in keeping abreast of technologies to identify opportunities for candidates and manage potential risks to national standards.

We must be vigilant in ensuring that evidence submitted for assessment is the candidate's own work. Candidates increasingly have access to rich sources of information, for example through the internet, and we all have a duty to support them to make sure that they do not plagiarise when using such sources.

This combination of vigilance and support applies to assessment evidence produced under examination conditions, and to all other candidate evidence for internally-assessed and externally-assessed qualifications. This includes folios and projects, and evidence produced in real working environments, which require different quality assurance measures for ensuring authenticity.

Security is a vital consideration throughout the assessment process, from initial development of the assessment materials to candidate certification. You must ensure that assessment materials and candidate evidence for internally- and externally-assessed qualifications are securely stored whilst in your centre. Any breaches in security in relation to national examinations must be reported to SQA.

The conduct of national examinations requires a high degree of organisation and preparation from centres and SQA. Where qualifications include an external assessment which is set and marked by SQA, we take on the responsibility for ensuring that national standards are met and maintained. Your responsibilities relate to administering assessment activities on our behalf according to defined guidelines.

For internally-assessed qualifications, quality assurance is through internal and external verification. Internal verification is your responsibility as a centre, and external verification is SQA's responsibility.

Internal verification

SQA requires that all candidates in your centre entered for the same qualification are assessed to a specified standard. Your internal verification procedures should ensure that your assessors are making consistent and accurate assessment decisions.

You must have written procedures for ensuring that all assessment decisions are consistent with national standards, and must maintain records of the internal verification process.

Internal verification underpins our internally-assessed qualifications. It is one of the key processes by which you and SQA ensure equality of access to assessment for all candidates. Effective internal verification is every candidate's guarantee that all assessment decisions are fair and transparent.

To help support you in ensuring the validity and reliability of internal assessment, we publish assessment materials for centre use. If you are producing your own assessment material, you can ask SQA to scrutinise the materials before you use them, and confirm that they meet the requirements of the assessment specification.

External verification

SQA has a team of external verifiers drawn from a wide variety of backgrounds, including education and industry, who are all subject experts and/or occupationally competent. Their role is to confirm that the assessment decisions which you make in your centre consistently meet national standards, and we provide them with training so that they can carry out verification to our high standards.

How and when we carry out external verification is based on a number of factors, including the type of qualification, the type and format of evidence, and your centre's track record in assessing the qualification. We are committed to ensuring that the system is fit for purpose, and that it provides you with support as well as confirmation of the validity and reliability of your assessment decisions.

External verification involves various approaches, both visiting and central verification, and increasingly, e-verification. Where the candidate evidence is ephemeral, for example a performance in Drama or a process in Catering, or results in a product which cannot be readily transported, we use visiting verification.

Validation

SQA has a wide portfolio of qualifications which is constantly changing and expanding to meet the needs of our stakeholders. We subject all our qualifications to a rigorous validation process to ensure that they meet our overall design criteria, which are:

- ◆ qualifications are accessible to all candidates who have the potential to achieve them
- ◆ the criteria which define the performance required of candidates for them to achieve qualifications is appropriate to purpose, explicit and in the public domain

- ◆ each Unit, Course and Group Award is unique and necessary, and complies with the relevant qualification specification

We work closely with our stakeholders in developing qualifications, and we invite centre staff to serve on Qualification Development Teams. We place great value on this close partnership with our centres, and on the willingness of centres to release staff to work with us. We also consult regularly with centres on proposals for introducing new qualifications or revising existing ones.

Centres can apply for devolved authority for the validation of some qualifications. This means that centres conduct the validation process on SQA's behalf. Devolved authority for validation applies to Group Awards only: SQA is responsible for writing and validating Units.

Devolved authority and quality auditing

Quality auditing ensures that centres have the systems in place to enable them to take on responsibility for approval and validation. Centres can apply for devolved authority to validate some SQA qualifications and to approve themselves to offer specific SQA qualifications.

Devolved authority for approval does not extend to certain types of qualifications, mainly some Scottish Vocational Qualifications. This is because of policy and/or agreements, for example, where we offer the qualification in partnership with another body.

We do not offer devolved authority for validation of some other SQA qualifications, currently National Qualifications and Scottish Vocational Qualifications.

The devolution of authority will depend on a successful audit against the criteria set out in this document. Following a successful quality audit, we will offer a quality contract to centres defining the extent of their devolved authority.

After the initial audit, feedback from external verification and on the performance of any candidates in external assessment will allow SQA to monitor the quality of assessment in the centre. There will be ongoing support and monitoring of the quality contract.

Monitoring of SQA's quality processes

We quality assure our national system of assessment to ensure that consistent and accurate standards are set, applied and maintained. We work in partnership with many subject experts and staff in centres who carry out quality assurance activities on our behalf, including support with the development of qualifications, support and assessment materials, external verification, and the setting and marking of examinations. To comply with the Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003, SQA undertakes Disclosure Scotland checks for any SQA staff whose duties may involve contact with children.

For internally-assessed qualifications, we regularly monitor centres to ensure that our qualifications are offered in centres which have the resources and expertise to assess candidates against the qualification criteria.

We always submit a report to centres on the results of our monitoring activities in their centre. These reports confirm that the centre continues to meet our approval criteria and that assessment decisions are consistent with national standards. They also contain developmental advice, to provide centres with additional support in our mutual drive for excellence.

We are actively pursuing new ways of carrying out quality assurance activities, including e-assessment and e-verification where appropriate.

Our quality assurance system has to be continually maintained so that, through evolving processes and the development of skills and experience of staff, standards can be enhanced. For this reason, where centres have not offered a qualification for some time, and wish to resume their activity, we will carry out further quality checks to confirm continued approval to offer the qualification.

As well as working with centres to manage and enhance the quality of SQA qualifications, we routinely monitor our own performance. We establish processes that need to be followed and submit these to regular auditing. This includes systematic evaluation and review of the effectiveness of our quality management processes. We also monitor standards across all our qualifications over time, to ensure consistency. Feedback from our stakeholders is an integral part of all our review activities.

We are also subject to external audit by a number of agencies, including the Scottish Executive.

What happens if things go wrong

We have a range of methods to help you get back on track if our quality assurance activities identify problems in your centre. If issues do arise, we will work with you to resolve them, and to ensure that candidates are not disadvantaged.

If we identify problems during external verification, we place a 'hold' on candidate certification until the matter is resolved. This means that no candidates in your centre can be certificated for the Units or the award until you show us that you are making accurate assessment decisions using the correct assessment material.

Where external verification reveals a significant problem in internal assessment, this means that your internal verification process has not been effective. Should a centre-wide problem be identified through external verification, we may arrange for a visit by a member of our quality assurance staff, to help you to develop an effective internal verification process.

You can request a development visit from SQA staff at any time.

Devolved authority for approval and validation can also be removed if evidence from quality assurance monitoring indicates that you are not meeting your responsibilities.

Approval to offer specific qualifications or approval as an SQA centre can be removed if you do not continue to meet the criteria of the quality framework.

For internally-assessed qualifications, it is your responsibility to deal with candidate appeals against assessment decisions, and with candidate complaints. SQA deals with appeals against assessment decisions in external examinations. Such appeals must be submitted to SQA through centres, and not by individual candidates.

If you are dissatisfied with the way SQA has acted in any respect, we offer a complaints procedure. You have a right to appeal to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman if you are not satisfied with the way in which we have dealt with your complaint.

Summary of your responsibilities as an SQA centre

Process	1 management of an SQA centre	2 approval to offer specific SQA qualifications	3 internal verification of internal assessment	4 external verification of internal assessment	5 quality control of external assessment	6 validation of SQA qualifications
Summary of responsibilities						
To become an SQA centre you need to be able to show us your potential to meet your responsibilities under these three processes	●	●	●			
To continue to be an SQA centre, you need to show us that you are consistently meeting your responsibilities	●		●	●		
For each new qualification which you wish to offer, you will need to show again your potential to meet the specific qualification approval criteria		●				
If you are offering SQA external examinations to candidates, then you need to meet additional criteria					●	
Centres with devolved authority for approval		● you take on both centre and SQA responsibilities				
Centres with devolved authority for validation						● you take on both centre and SQA responsibilities

On the following pages, we have set out the criteria for each process, and outlined centre and SQA responsibilities in relation to each criterion.

The quality processes and criteria

Process 1: Management of an SQA centre

For centres not yet approved, the potential to meet these criteria must be demonstrated. Following approval, SQA will help you to ensure that you continue to meet the criteria by providing ongoing monitoring and support.

Criterion	The centre	SQA
1.1 <i>Quality assurance is managed effectively and processes which support all SQA qualifications are reviewed and continuously improved</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) manages effectively the internal processes which underpin SQA provision reviews and updates internal quality assurance processes as required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) provides information, guidance and support on quality assurance requirements to centres b) monitors centres' quality assurance processes consults with stakeholders and takes action on feedback
1.2 <i>Information is managed effectively within the centre and between the centre and SQA</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) has documented systems in place to ensure that information is transferred between the centre and SQA at the appropriate times b) records and stores information on SQA qualifications, procedural requirements and candidates in accordance with current legislation on data protection c) retains a record of all current candidate addresses for certification purposes d) disseminates SQA related information to staff and candidates e) complies with SQA requirements for ensuring that existing candidates use the correct Scottish Candidate Numbers and for allocating SCNs to new candidates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) provides information on SQA requirements, eg qualification information including arrangements documents and Unit specifications b) processes information received from centres c) maintains a comprehensive record of candidate achievement d) issues results data and certificates accurately in accordance with published timescales
1.3 <i>Resources are managed effectively</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) ensures that staff are and continue to be competent in the subject/occupational areas within which they operate and that they are competent to assess and internally moderate, using appropriate assessment approaches b) provides accommodation, reference material, equipment, learning and assessment material, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) approves assessment and quality assurance processes within centres and monitors them for continuing compliance

Criterion	The centre	SQA
	<p>including ICT, which support the assessment of SQA qualifications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> c) reviews assessment materials and learning resources to ensure that they continue to support appropriate assessment approaches for SQA qualifications d) maintains financial viability to ensure that contracts with candidates and SQA are fulfilled 	
<p>1.4 <i>There are arrangements in place for the management of external quality assurance of SQA qualifications</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) ensures that staff understand the process and SQA requirements b) allows SQA staff access to the centre, sites and electronic assessment systems, as requested by SQA c) makes available materials in the right locations and formats, including remote access d) takes action on feedback from the external quality assurance process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) makes available information on external quality assurance requirements
<p>1.5 <i>There are systems in place for the management of:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ <i>candidate induction, guidance and support</i> ◆ <i>appropriate assessment arrangements for candidates with disabilities and/or additional support needs</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) makes curricular, vocational and qualification-related guidance and support available to candidates b) makes material relating to SQA qualifications available to candidates c) provides suitable opportunities for remediation and reassessment d) provides candidates with a formal statement specifying its ongoing responsibilities to them in relation to induction, guidance and support e) demonstrates a commitment to equal opportunity in the selection, admission, support and assessment of candidates f) seeks SQA approval for assessment arrangements and implements these arrangements as agreed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) monitors processes within centres b) gives targeted information and guidance to centres and other stakeholders as required c) provides guidance on possible assessment arrangements for candidates with disabilities and/or additional support needs d) monitors and verifies appropriate arrangements for candidates with disabilities and/or additional support needs e) makes fair and consistent decisions on individual cases submitted by the centre f) monitors the effectiveness of support provided for candidates g) monitors the effectiveness of equal opportunities procedures in centres

Criterion	The centre	SQA
<p>1.6 <i>There is a system for the management of candidate appeals against internal assessment decisions</i></p>	<p>g) retains evidence justifying the need for assessment arrangements</p> <p>h) offers a complaints/grievance process to candidates on matters not directly involving assessment decisions</p> <p>a) operates a satisfactory internal assessment appeals procedure for candidates</p> <p>b) disseminates information on the appeals procedures to staff and candidates</p> <p>c) maintains records of appeals</p>	<p>a) ensures that the centre has an appeals procedure for internal assessment decisions</p> <p>b) monitors the operation, dissemination and recording of the system</p>

Process 2: Approval to offer specific SQA qualifications

Criterion	The centre	SQA
<p>2.1 <i>An approval process for specific SQA qualifications is defined and documented</i></p>	<p>a) defines internal processes which underpin specific qualifications approval</p> <p>b) records and stores information on obtaining approval for specific qualifications</p>	<p>a) defines procedures for obtaining approval for specific qualifications</p> <p>b) operates an approval system to meet the requirements of centres and qualifications</p> <p>c) monitors the effectiveness of the centre's approval process</p> <p>d) records and stores information relating to specific qualification approval</p>
<p>2.2 <i>Resources meet the requirements of:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ <i>the qualifications</i> ◆ <i>the method of assessment</i> ◆ <i>the number and needs of candidates</i> ◆ <i>the mode(s) of delivery</i> 	<p>a) provides accommodation and equipment which is suitable for the qualification and mode of delivery, and takes account of technical/specialist needs, including ICT systems</p> <p>b) for e-assessment, ensures that hardware and software comply with current SQA specifications and standards, including methods of authenticating candidate evidence</p> <p>c) nominates and provides sufficient numbers of qualified/ experienced staff to assess and verify internal assessments and estimates</p> <p>d) provides all candidates with access to learning opportunities and learning and reference materials which support the qualification</p> <p>e) uses assessment material which is appropriate to the requirements of the qualification and assessment approaches and candidates' learning and assessment requirements</p>	<p>a) gives guidance on the resources required for specific SQA qualifications</p> <p>b) approves resources for specific qualifications, including staff nominated as assessors and internal verifiers, and monitors them for continuing compliance</p>

Centres with devolved authority for approval must:

- ◆ have and operate an approval process which has procedures to ensure that all approval proposals are appraised against the approval criteria for the centre as well as all of the criteria in the SQA column
- ◆ have documentation describing all approvals which have been carried out, including the result of the appraisal against each of the criteria for the centre as well as all of the criteria in the SQA column
- ◆ ensure that the outcomes of approvals are promptly reported to SQA

Process 3: Internal verification of internal assessment

Criterion	The centre	SQA
<p>3.1 <i>The internal verification system ensures that the centre's assessments of internally-assessed qualifications are valid and reliable</i></p>	<p>a) ensures that the chosen assessment instruments and assessment guidelines are valid and applied consistently by all assessors for the same qualification across all candidates</p> <p>b) demonstrates that arrangements are effective for the safe storage of internal assessment materials</p> <p>c) ensures that access to assessment materials is effectively managed</p> <p>d) ensures that the final assessment decisions made by assessors are accurate, reliable and recorded</p> <p>e) takes steps to minimise the risk of plagiarism</p> <p>f) ensures that assessment evidence is the candidate's own work</p>	<p>a) provides guidance on best practice for internal verification as it applies to different types of qualifications</p>
<p>3.2 <i>The internal verification system is reviewed to ensure efficient and effective deployment of internal verifiers</i></p>	<p>a) monitors the effectiveness of the assessment and internal verification system and implements any necessary changes</p>	
<p>3.3 <i>The internal verification system reflects developments in SQA's assessment policy and procedures</i></p>	<p>a) implements any changes made necessary by changes to SQA policy</p>	<p>a) issues guidance in relation to any amendments to policy relating to internally-assessed qualifications</p>

Process 4: External verification of internal assessment

Criterion	The centre	SQA
4.1 <i>The external verification system ensures that there is an appropriate level of verification conducted for each qualification area</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) selects centres and qualifications for external verification b) manages the verification process c) reports to centres on the results of external verification
4.2 <i>The external verification system ensures that are sufficient verifiers to allow verification to take place</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) recruits, appoints and trains sufficient personnel with the appropriate subject/occupational and assessment expertise
4.3 <i>The external verification system ensures that instruments of assessment are valid and reliable and that the centre's assessment decisions are accurate</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) retains appropriate evidence until agreed disposal dates b) makes available assessment instruments, assessment guidelines, candidate evidence and assessment decisions for a sample of candidates in the format and location requested by SQA, including remote verification c) provides evidence that internal verification is being applied to all qualifications which are internally assessed d) acts on any verification feedback provided by SQA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) selects the appropriate form of verification for the particular qualifications being moderated b) accepts centres' assessment decisions which are in accordance with the national standards and assists centres in achieving national standards where their assessment decisions have not been accepted c) provides feedback and support to centres d) oversees the conduct of verification
4.4 <i>The verification system ensures that records of all verification activity are complete and accurate</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) records and stores reports on each verification conducted to inform future selections
4.5 <i>The verification system is reviewed to ensure efficient and effective deployment of verifiers</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) assists SQA by providing feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) records and stores reports on each verification conducted to inform future selections b) monitors the performance of verifiers c) ensures that verifiers remain competent by identifying and meeting verification team and individual training needs and contributing to Continuing Professional Development d) ensures that verifiers are consistent in verification decisions and are kept up to date with assessment practice in their verification group, including electronic assessment approaches

Criterion	The centre	SQA
4.6 <i>The verification system reflects developments in assessment policy and procedures</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) keeps verification under review, taking account of developments in technology and personalised learning b) notifies all parties concerned of any policy and procedural changes relating to verification c) identifies and meets training needs for verifiers which result from developments in policy and procedures leading to new approaches to assessment and external verification in relation to internally-assessed qualifications

Process 5: Quality control of external assessment

Criterion	The centre	SQA
5.1 <i>External assessment procedures are defined</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) disseminates internally, and stores information on examination procedures and timetables b) documents its arrangements for access for SQA quality assurance staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) explains its external assessment procedures and publishes specific information on the examination in good time
5.2 <i>Resources are sufficient to support external assessment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) nominates invigilators b) when requested, releases staff to SQA where possible c) provides suitable accommodation and facilities to meet the assessment needs of all candidates and modes of assessment d) ensures that examination materials and candidate assessments (including scripts and electronically-stored evidence) are securely stored until dispatch 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) maintains systems for processing external assessment including assessment arrangements for candidates with disabilities and/or additional support needs b) appoints and trains sufficient personnel with appropriate expertise to carry out roles including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ principal assessor ◆ examiner ◆ setter ◆ vetter ◆ scrutineer ◆ marker ◆ invigilator
5.3 <i>Assessment instruments are accessible, valid, practicable and cost-effective and their marking is reliable</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) ensures that candidates are informed of the assessment criteria and mode and format of assessment by which they will be assessed b) submits accurate entry details and, where appropriate, estimates of performance for each candidate c) takes appropriate steps to minimise the risk of plagiarism d) ensures that assessment evidence is the candidate's own work e) responds to requests for feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) ensures that its assessment instruments conform in all respects to the assessment arrangements b) scrutinises the quality of work of each marker and takes action where required c) decides grade boundaries using all relevant information and expertise in order to maintain comparability of year-to-year standards d) seeks and provides systematic feedback on the quality of external assessments
5.4 <i>Awards may be reviewed through an Assessment Appeals process</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) submits Assessment Appeal requests which are supported by valid and reliable alternative evidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) carries out a pre-results review of awards for all candidates b) carries out post-results Assessment Appeals and promptly reports the outcomes to centres

Process 6: Validation of SQA qualifications

Criterion	The centre	SQA
6.1 <i>The validation process for qualifications is defined and in the public domain</i>	a) ensures that submissions to SQA of locally-devised proposals for validation comply with the SQA's system, procedures and timescales	a) operates a validation system b) publishes the system, procedures and timescales for the validation of new and revised qualifications and makes them known to centres
6.2 <i>The qualification conforms to the SQA design rules and principles and other technical requirements which are current at the time of its validation</i>	a) uses SQA's design rules and principles and other technical requirements as the basis for development of proposed qualifications to be submitted to SQA for validation	a) publishes design rules and principles and other technical requirements and guidance on their use b) develops qualifications and validates them to ensure that all of these qualifications comply with the design rules and principles and the technical requirements*
6.3 <i>There is a demonstrable need for the qualification which fills a gap in the qualifications framework and makes a valuable and unique contribution to SQA's portfolio of qualifications</i>		a) works with stakeholders to identify the qualifications required to meet the needs of Scottish society* b) consults with appropriate bodies to identify the need for the qualification* c) operates a system of collecting feedback from stakeholders to regularly review the qualifications and engage in a programme of updating
6.4 <i>The qualification is accessible to all candidates who could potentially achieve it</i>		a) ensures that all qualifications which it validates are free from unnecessary barriers to achievement* b) conducts regular reviews of competences to ensure that they are not discriminatory*
6.5 <i>The qualification requires a candidate to demonstrate significant, achievable outcomes in a recognised curricular or vocational area</i>		a) ensures that qualifications which it validates meet this criterion* b) ensures that qualifications which it validates have assessment arrangements appropriate to the outcomes which candidates must demonstrate* c) operates a feedback system to collect stakeholders' views on the extent to which National and Higher National Qualifications meet this criterion*
6.6 <i>The qualification is coherent and its title accurately reflects its content</i>		a) ensures that qualifications which it validates meet this criterion* b) operates a feedback system to collect stakeholders' views on the extent to which qualifications meet this criterion*

Centres with devolved authority for validation of qualifications must:

- ◆ have and operate a system and procedures which ensure that all validations are appraised against the validation criteria in the column for centres as well as the criteria marked '*' in the SQA column
- ◆ have documentation describing all validations carried out, including the result of the appraisal of the proposed new or revised qualification against each of the criteria in the column for centres as well as the criteria marked '*' in the SQA column
- ◆ ensure that the outcome of devolved validations is promptly reported to SQA