

# External Verification Procedure

[QP2.06]

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## 1.0 Pre-Visit Arrangements

- 1.1 Initial contact by an SQA External Verifier (*hereafter, the Verifier*) will normally be by means of a telephone call or an email. Verifiers are instructed to get in touch with the College SQA Coordinator (*hereafter, the Coordinator*). Should a Verifier make contact directly with a teaching member of staff, he/she must be referred to the Coordinator in the first instance.
- 1.2 On receipt of a request by a Verifier to visit the College, a member of staff from the Quality Unit will contact the relevant Moderation Group Leader to agree a date for the visit.
- 1.3 The Quality Unit will confirm with the Verifier the date for the visit and other relevant information such as the Group Awards/Units currently being delivered and the amount of evidence available.
- 1.4 All details relating to the visit will then be logged by the Quality Unit on the EV & Assessor Calendar in the Quality Directorate site on the Business Gateway.
- 1.5 The Verifier will send the Coordinator confirmation of the visit in the form of a *Confirmation of the Verification Visit* (EV10B) card.
- 1.6 Within two weeks of the scheduled visit, the Verifier will send the Coordinator an External Verification Visit Plan, detailing the various activities which will be carried out during the visit and the type of evidence which it is intended to moderate. Attached will be a copy of the Product List specifying the Group Awards/Units to be moderated and the number of candidate entries per Group Award/Unit.
- 1.7 A copy of the Visit Plan and Product List will be forwarded to the Moderation Group Leader by the Quality Unit.
- 1.8 The Moderation Group Leader will notify all members of staff delivering the Group Awards/Units to be moderated of the details of the External Verifier's visit.
- 1.9 The Moderation Group Leader will ensure that the appropriate preparations for the visit – accommodation, parking, hospitality – are put in place.
- 1.10 The Moderation Group Leader will make the necessary arrangements to have all of the evidence required for the visit assembled in the designated location by the date and time of the Verifier's visit.

- 1.11 All relevant teaching staff will support the preparation for the Verifier's visit by having the required evidence forwarded to the Moderation Group Leader by the date and time requested.

## 2.0 The External Moderation Visit

- 2.1 On the day of the visit, the Moderation Group Leader will meet the External Verifier to agree the arrangements for the conduct of the visit.
- 2.2 The Verifier will check that any development/action<sup>1</sup> points arising from the previous EV visit have been satisfactorily addressed.
- 2.3 During the visit, the Verifier may want to review any or all of the following documentation relating to assessment:
- evidence that there is an effective selection and induction process in place for assessors
  - evidence that assessors have appropriate or required qualifications and experience for the awards/units they assess
  - evidence that Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is taking place and being recorded<sup>2</sup>
  - evidence that candidates have fair access to assessment<sup>3</sup>
  - evidence that assessment is structured effectively in terms of clear stages of planning, assessing, review and feedback
  - evidence that assessors are taking part in standardisation activities/meetings<sup>4</sup>
  - internal moderation and assessment records
  - internal moderation strategy and sampling
  - internal review and evaluation of internal moderation procedures

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<sup>1</sup> **Development points** are recommendations that are agreed with centres to enable them to enhance their delivery/assessment. It is not essential that centres implement development points, though it will usually be desirable.

SQA's position is that addressing **action points** is mandatory. This means that there should be evidence that action points which have been previously agreed have been actioned.

<sup>2</sup> This only applies to CPD related to assessors and their technical expertise. Examples of relevant CPD activities might include internal workshops, industrial placements, and professional body forums.

<sup>3</sup> Fair access to assessment might relate to factors such as the geographical location of candidates, their mode of attendance, the resources they have available to them, their readiness to be assessed, the appropriateness of the assessment instruments being used and the arrangements for accommodating candidates with special assessment requirements.

<sup>4</sup> Minutes of meetings at which assessors check assessment materials and decisions with each other to ensure parity and standardisation.

Some of these materials will be held by the Moderation Group Leader; the remainder will be provided by the Quality Unit on request by the Moderation Group Leader.

2.4 The Verifier may also ask to observe an assessment taking place. If so, this will have been notified in the External Moderator Visit Plan.

2.5 The Verifier may also want to review any or all of the following documentation relating to internal moderation:

- evidence that there is an effective selection and induction process in place for internal moderators
- evidence that internal moderators have an input into the induction and development of assessors
- evidence that internal moderators have the appropriate or required qualifications and experience for the awards they moderate
- evidence of CPD taking place and being recorded<sup>5</sup>
- evidence that internal moderation procedures are being applied appropriately<sup>6</sup>
- evidence that there are suitable arrangements in place to ensure standardisation of assessment decisions<sup>7</sup>
- evidence of internal moderators providing prompt, accurate and helpful feedback to assessors on their assessment decisions
- evidence that the College effectively reviews its internal moderation procedures

Some of these materials will be held by the Moderation Group Leader; the remainder will be provided by the Quality Unit on request by the Moderation Group Leader.

2.6 The Verifier will also expect to be able to interview assessors, moderators and may ask to speak with candidates associated with the Group Awards/Units being moderated.

2.7 In interviews with candidates, discussion points may include:

- frequency of assessor contact
- induction to Group Awards/Units
- support and guidance provided

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<sup>5</sup> This only appertains to CPD related to assessors and their technical expertise. Examples of relevant CPD activities might include internal workshops, industrial placements, and professional body forums.

<sup>6</sup> How effectively the College's internal moderation policy is being implemented and whether procedures are being followed for the Group Awards/Units being moderated.

<sup>7</sup> Minutes of meetings at which assessors check assessment materials and decisions with each other to ensure parity and standardisation.

- summary of progress within Group Awards/Units
- 2.8 In interviews with assessors, possible discussion points may include:
- induction into College assessment processes for the Group Awards/Units being externally moderated
  - checking on qualifications and experience of assessors
  - checking on Continuing Professional Development
  - ensuring access to assessment
  - standardisation procedures/meetings
  - feedback from internal moderator/moderation process
- 2.9 In interviews with internal moderators, possible discussion points may include:
- induction into the College's internal moderation processes for Group Awards/Units being externally moderated
  - checking on qualifications and experience of internal moderators
  - checking on Continuing Professional Development
  - ensuring access to assessment
  - standardisation procedures/meetings
  - how internal moderation procedures are applied and reviewed
- 2.10 Where the College uses a number of sites for the assessment of the Group Awards/Units being verified, the Verifier may request access to candidate evidence from some or all of these sites.
- In the case of SVQs and work-based Higher National qualifications, the Verifier may ask to visit some or all of the sites used for assessment.
- 2.11 The Verifier will evaluate the candidate evidence in association with the relevant assessment instruments, checking that:
- the assessment instruments are appropriate
  - the assessment specifications are correct/appropriate
  - there is sufficient evidence of candidate performance
  - the judgement of candidate performance is appropriate
  - that internal moderation is effective
- and, in the case of SVQs:
- that the record of candidate achievement is available
  - that the Sector Skills Councils (SSC) Standard Setting Bodies (SSB) Assessment Strategy requirements are being satisfied

- 2.12 On the basis of the evidence presented, the Verifier will determine whether all evidence presented and reviewed meets with SQA requirements. Where any issues arise, these should be discussed during the course of the visit with a view to satisfactory resolution. In the event that an issue cannot be resolved, the Verifier may indicate that a 'hold' will be placed on the moderation group until the issue is resolved.
- 2.13 At the end of the visit, the Verifier will provide verbal feedback to the Moderation Group Leader, describing the contents of his/her written report to SQA.
- 2.14 If the Verifier is recommending to SQA any Holds on certification, the College SQA Coordinator must be informed immediately.
- 2.15 The Verifier will agree with College staff any development or action points designed to improve the internal assessment and/or internal moderation process.
- 2.16 The Verifier will record any examples of aspects of the internal assessment and/or internal moderation process that are being managed and delivered particularly well by College staff.

### **3.0 Post-Visit Arrangements**

- 3.1 Following an external verification visit, the Verifier will send her/his formal written report to SQA within five days.
- 3.2 SQA will send a hard copy of this report to the College SQA Coordinator.
- 3.3 On receipt of the External Verifier's written report, the Quality Unit will forward a copy to the relevant Moderation Group Leader.
- 3.4 The Moderation Group Leader will circulate a copy of the Moderator's report to all staff involved in the delivery of the Group Awards/Units which were externally moderated and file a copy within the Moderation Group Folder.
- 3.5 The Moderation Group Leader will ensure that appropriate actions are taken to address the development and action points listed in the Verifier's report and monitor progress until satisfactory completion.
- 3.6 In the event of any Holds on certification having been recommended to SQA by the Verifier, the SQA Coordinator and Moderation Group Leader will collaborate to plan and implement the actions required to have the Hold lifted as quickly as possible.

## 4.0 Development Visits

- 4.1 Development visits by an External Verifier must be arranged through the College SQA Coordinator.
- 4.2 Each development visit costs £100, chargeable to the Teaching Department which requests the visit.
- 4.3 The Department Manager/Moderation Group Leader will email a written request for a development visit to the Coordinator including as much detail as possible, i.e.
  - moderation group number and title;
  - specific unit(s);
  - approximate number of staff to be involved in development activity;
  - preferred dates/times for development visit.
- 4.4 The Coordinator will contact SQA to arrange the visit and liaise with the Department Manager/Moderation Group Leader to agree the date and time.
- 4.5 Details relating to the visit will be logged by the Quality Unit on the EV & Assessor Calendar in the Quality Directorate site on the Business Gateway.
- 4.6 The Department Manager/Moderation Group Leader will notify all relevant members of staff of the details of the development visit.
- 4.7 The Department Manager/Moderation Group Leader will ensure that the appropriate preparations for the visit – accommodation, parking, hospitality – are put in place.
- 4.8 Following the development visit, SQA will send the Verifier's written report to the Coordinator, who will forward a copy to the Department Manager/Moderation Group Leader.