

Introduction

For certain qualifications, it may be appropriate for unit assessments to be set locally at the centre. This may be in response to varying local contexts over which the unit learning outcomes can be demonstrated and assessed, or where a unit is so specialist in nature there is little benefit to the standardised assessment approach offered by externally set assessments.

This guidance (GM3), along with the assessment development form *IQA authorisation to sign off form (AD4)*, is designed to support the quality assurance of such assessments so that they are as valid, reliable and fit for purpose as possible. It forms part of a group of materials which allow a standard approach for all locally produced assessments across centres and qualifications. It provides a clear process to support the centre's assessment developers and offers candidates a similar assessment experience no matter where they are in the country, as well as the benefit of local flexibility.

For details of all of the assessment development materials and processes please refer to the guidance document *Developing centre devised assessments – guidance for centre based assessment writers*, (GM1).

Overview of the development process

For units which are designated 'centre devised', the assessments are developed in the centre by a centre assessor, following the provided guidance (Generic guidance GM1 and qualification specific guidance GMXXXX) and using the provided forms to produce a valid and reliable assessment for the specified unit(s).

The validity of the assessment is checked by the Internal Quality Assurer (IQA) in the centre as well as the potential for the assessment materials to be used reliably across the centre and to be accessible by candidates.

The shared use of generic grade descriptors along with the assessment criteria and level descriptors are intended to support the consistency of standard across centres. The role of the quality assurance process is to ensure that the interpretation of these materials is as consistent as possible across centres to produce valid and reliable assessment results for candidates.

This guidance (GM3) is to be used along with form AD4 in reviewing that the judgements and guidance made by the centre's IQA conforms to national standards for the qualifications.

The External Quality Assurer (EQA) must review a representative sample of assessments signed off by the IQA to be assured that the decisions and guidance are consistent and appropriate. This number will vary depending on the range of assessment types and qualifications the IQA is responsible for.

Where the EQA feels that the decisions and guidance are not in line with the national standard, feedback must be provided and the remedial actions required using form AD4 and further assessments reviewed.

Assessment development and centre QA processes

The quality assurance processes relating to the development of the assessment should be integrated into the normal quality and management systems within the centre. The key features of; ensuring clarity of processes, clarity of roles, access to appropriate materials, standardisation of judgement, support of and among assessors and clear documentation of processes/record keeping apply as usual.

This document is intended to act as a supplement to the normal quality assurance guidance relating only to the authorisation of an IQA to have sole sign off for centre devised assessments.

IQA responsibilities

For centre devised assessments, the IQA is responsible for:

- ensuring that, the processed and materials outlined in GM1 and the accompanying forms etc are available and used correctly.
- assessment writers are supported appropriately.
- signing off and ensuring appropriate record keeping of 100% of centre devised assignments.
- working with the External Quality Assurer to ensure that the assessment standards developed within their centre are consistent with national standards through this authorisation process.

EQA responsibilities

For centre devised assessments, the EQA is additionally responsible for:

- ensuring that the IQA is supporting the assessment development process and writer(s) in such a way as to ensure assignments are fit for purpose and appropriately reflect the national standards.
- providing clarification and support to the IQA regarding any issues/queries during the assessment development process.
- authorising the IQA to be sole sign-off for the specified range of qualification areas after scrutiny of an initial sample of assessment sign offs (using form AD4).
- on-going quality assurance of a sample of assessments as part of normal quality assurance procedures.

Quality assurance of processes will be incorporated into standard quality monitoring visits, and the authorisation of sign off may be carried out at this time if it is convenient or may be desk-based as necessary. Where this activity takes place on a visit, a record that sign-off has been completed should also be included on the standard EQA report form.

The authorisation process

Sample selection – the sample selection will be somewhat governed by the order in which the centre chooses to write their assessments.

1. The EQA will initially request to see an assessment that is commonly used across all centres that they verify, this will usually be a mandatory unit for qualifications where all assessments are centre devised, and the most commonly used optional unit where mandatory units are externally set. It will be the unit most commonly delivered first by most centres. Where there are graded and ungraded assessments, it should be graded. This will be the benchmark unit by which the EQA can compare interpretation of standards across all centres QAd.
2. In addition the IQA will select an early assessment that is of a different nature where this applies (eg a practical unit if the first assessment is more a written assessment). Where possible this will be where the IQA

has provided feedback on the initial draft assessment requiring amendments eg in support of a less experienced writer.

Further samples may be requested to ensure EQA is satisfied that the IQA feedback and judgement is consistent with the national standard.

These assessments may be reviewed by the EQA at the same time or as they are produced whatever best suits the delivery of the assessments, workloads etc but this must be agreed between EQA and IQA.

The total number of assessments requested will vary depending on the experience of the IQA, the variety of task types, contexts and assessment conditions arising and the number of different qualifications the IQA covers. It will not be necessary for the sample to cover all qualifications as long as they are similar enough in content and task type, but for any new qualifications, the EQA will need to judge for any new qualification whether existing authorisation is appropriate.

What to include for scrutiny – The documentation should be provided electronically unless requested otherwise. For each assessment the EQA will need to see:

- the completed AD1 assessment task sheets – draft and final after IQA feedback
- the AD2 contextualised grading criteria form - draft and final after IQA feedback
- the AD3 assessment sign off form completed by the writer and the IQA, including any feedback or recommendations.

EQA scrutiny – the EQA will scrutinise the samples against the quality criteria and with reference to GM1, GM2, GM3 and GMXXXX. At this stage they will either provide feedback as necessary using form AD4 or a request for further samples for review.

Feedback – Any feedback provided should be acted upon not just for the sample assessment but any other assessments in production or already produced to which the feedback also applies.

Use of sample assessments during scrutiny – Assessments may not be used until scrutiny of that assessment is complete and any feedback has been acted upon. Further assessments may not be used until they have been either scrutinised as part of the sample or the EQA has authorised the IQA for sole sign off.

For this reason it is important to develop initial assessments as early as possible in the delivery of a qualification leaving sufficient time for redrafting or amendments.

Timescales should be agreed with EQAs as early as possible.

Authorisation – Following authorisation sign-off, the IQA will be authorised to be sole sign-off for all further assessments within the specified qualification range. The assessments and sign-off documentation will then come under the standard risk-based quality assurance sampling process. The sign-off does not mean that the IQA may not request support in future regarding the quality assurance of assessments, and any concerns should be raised with the EQA in the first instance.

For any new centre devised qualification, a judgement will be made by the EQA at qualification approval whether further authorisation is necessary. This will usually only be the case if the form of assessment tasks for the new qualification is likely to be different from that already sampled.

Criteria for quality assurance of assessment

The criteria for evaluating centre-devised assessments are similar but slightly different from the criteria for evaluating evidence - validity, authenticity, currency, sufficiency (VACS).

These can be summarised as, **Validity, Reliability, Accessibility, Authenticity and Practicability**.

These criteria need to be considered at all points in the assessment process of however, the points noted below are restricted to the scrutiny of the assessment and support the completion of the form AD4.

Validity – This relates to the assessment accurately measuring whether the learning outcomes of the unit have been met.

Validity can be seen as a thread or chain that runs from the Learning outcomes through the teaching and learning, the assessment tasks, the candidate evidence, the marking criteria and finally to the candidate result. The candidate result at the end of the long process must accurately record whether the learning outcomes and any grading criteria have been met or not.

It can also be visualised as a bucket full of water, being passed along the chain towards a fire, and where at each link there is opportunity for some water (validity) to slosh out. This has been termed the 'bucket brigade' analogy¹, and the question is whether there is enough water left at the end of the chain to put the fire out – has the chain done its job well enough to have been a valid method of putting the fire out – is there enough validity left to be confident that the candidate result is a true reflection of whether the learning outcomes have been met – or has something else been measured instead.

For these assessments the points in the chain can be seen as:

Tasks are appropriate for the unit content

The tasks are pitched at the level of the unit (see level descriptors of forms of evidence that will demonstrate the learning outcomes without the need for skills that a 'ready for assessment candidate group' is unlikely to have acquired during learning.

For instance the use of written methods to assess practical skill would not generate evidence of practical skills and may require writing skills which are irrelevant to the learning outcomes being assessed.

Mapping is accurate and complete

The mapping to the unit helps show that the assessment criteria of the unit are all addressed by the assessment – ie there is opportunity for sufficient evidence to be generated across the learning outcomes to judge if the candidate has met them or not.

The marking and grading criteria accurately give credit for only the skills and knowledge required to

The marking criteria or any centre devised checklists must directly reflect the assessment criteria of the unit and the correct grading criteria.

The indicators and notes section of the grading criteria must show that the grading criteria have been interpreted accurately to reflect the cognitive and practical skill levels of the generic criteria.

¹ Add reference – Pollitt and Ahmed

demonstrate the learning outcomes Eg giving examples would not be appropriate indicator for a criterion which asks for an analysis... (see Blooms² for help with this type of alignment)

Also the marking criteria should never relate to any qualities outside the unit such eg quality of presentation of evidence unless of course presentation skills are included as a learning outcome.

Reliability – this relates to candidates providing the same standard of evidence getting the same result across different centres, assessments, occasions and assessors.

The shared use of the unit and the generic grading criteria go some way to support reliability and consistency, but at any point where interpretation of the standard is possible there is a risk that the standard across centres will vary.

Clarity and shared understanding of the assessment and grading criteria **Here a strong shared understanding among the assessors in the centre is important and this can be supported by the inclusion of all assessors in the editing and development of the notes and indicators section of the grading criteria.**

The notes and indicators section should be completed and use wording that is as objective as possible, is appropriate for the task and the standard and is likely to be well understood across the assessor group

The assessment and grading criteria reflect the national standards The assessment and grading criteria indicators and notes, and any checklists etc developed from them, should be consistent with the standards seen across the group of centres.

Any exemplars of the standard (where available) are being used.

Accessibility – This relates to the importance that all appropriately trained candidates have equal opportunity to achieve the grades – ie none is disadvantaged unfairly.

The assessment format or wording should not provide any barrier to any candidates including those with particular requirements.

Sometimes tasks may be developed which require the use of formats which are not necessarily required for the unit – eg presentation of knowledge in the form of a leaflet or presentation etc. Where this is motivating or educational for candidates, this may be acceptable, but great care must be taken that the *format* does not affect the result of a candidate – some candidates may be too nervous to present well and in this case the assessment of the quality of the content would be affected badly. A better alternative would be to assess the presentation notes and the actual presentation used as a formative activity.

Any difficulty a candidate has with an assessment should be as a result of their ability or performance in the knowledge or skills being assessed.

Authenticity – This relates to having a high degree of confidence that the evidence the assessor is presented with for marking is the candidates own work.

² Blooms

The main concern here is around the correct conditions or controls having been stated for the type of evidence being produced. (see Appendix 2 GM1).

Practicability – This includes a number of aspects such as efficiency, cost effectiveness, ease of administration, resource issues.

Most of these will relate to practicalities that the centre will be more concerned with than City & Guilds, however it is appropriate to make note of any concerns. For instance where efficiency is being sought and a number of units are being assessed together, it is important to be sure that the task does not become too burdensome for the candidate, and that the units can still be separately assessed and graded as necessary without it becoming so complicated it risks accuracy.

Timings should also be considered – will the candidates have enough time to complete and is the balance between teaching time and assessment time appropriate.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Overview of materials

Appendix 1

Materials

The key materials involved in the quality assurance of centre devised assessments are outlined below.

GM3 and AD4 are specific to this process; the others are referred to during the process.

Guidance materials

Developing centre devised assessments (GM1)

This document provides a generic guidance for all centre devised qualifications in the use of the standard centre devised forms and the production of fit for purpose assessments.

Generic grading criteria (GM2)

These are provided as appendix 1 of *Developing centre devised assessments* and also as a separate document.

Guidance for producing centre devised tasks for <qualification title /number> (GMXXX³)

This short document lays out the *unit specific guidance* for the production of assessments for the qualification to meet City & Guilds requirements, and to ensure consistency across centres. This document is used in conjunction with the assessment criteria (AC) and learning outcomes (LO), as contained in the qualification handbook. The important information for assessment production may include:

- examples of appropriate assessment methods
- examples of appropriate tasks and evidence types
- whether there are any specific assessment conditions to be adhered to for the unit assessment
- whether the unit is graded or not
- which generic grading criteria are to be used when grading the unit, (if it is to be graded).

Authorisation to sign off assessments (this document) (GM3)

This document provides the generic guidance for the quality assurance of assessments devised by centres. All other aspects of quality assurance relating to assessment delivery and assessor judgement etc remain the same.

Assessment development forms:

Assessment tasks (AD1) – the assessment task form allows tasks to be written in a standard format, showing mapping to the units and generic grading criteria, and incorporating guidance to candidates about the assessment deadline, assessment conditions, avoiding plagiarism and labelling evidence.

Assessment grading criteria (AD2) – This form is used to lay out the assessment criteria and grading criteria that will be used to mark each candidate's evidence against for each task.

Assessment sign off form (AD3) – This form is used by the IQA to review the assessments and grading criteria. They are reviewed for validity and accessibility of the tasks and ensure that the correct assessment and grading criteria have been transferred into the grading criteria form and appropriate contextualisation where appropriate. The assessment tasks and grading criteria must not be used until they have been signed off.

³ insert qualification number in place of the XXXX

IQA authorisation to sign off form (AD4) – This form is used to record interactions between IQA and EQA during the authorisation process.