

Customised Qualification Framework (CQF) 2009-2010

Centre handbook

BTEC Quality Assurance

Level 2 and Level 3 BTEC Qualifications

Short Courses Levels 1-7

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1 Introduction to this handbook

This handbook gives centres information on operational quality assurance procedures and systems for BTEC Customised Qualification Framework (CQF) programmes. It is effective from 1st September 2009 until 31st August 2010.

The handbook applies to all centres approved to run BTEC programmes under the CQF in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. It may also provide information of value to centres operating other centre-devised BTEC programmes approved prior to the introduction of the customised framework.

It provides an overview of the whole assessment and quality assurance process to enable centres to understand the policies and requirements that apply to CQF. It specifies the processes and procedures that Edexcel and approved centres should adopt to ensure high-quality, consistent and rigorous standards in the assessment and quality assurance of approved customised qualifications.

Centres operating CQF BTEC Higher National qualifications should also refer to the handbook for NQF BTEC Higher Nationals.

This handbook does not apply to International centres; centres should refer to the Centre Handbook for International Centres 2009-2010.

Approval

Centres must gain approval from Edexcel prior to running any BTEC programme. Centres not currently running BTEC programmes need to gain centre approval as well as programme approval. Centres can find out more information about gaining approval from the Edexcel website www.edexcel.com.

Programmes operating under the CQF are delivered by a wide range of centres, including many employers and training providers. Some operate other Edexcel-devised qualifications but others only operate centre-devised qualifications.

External verification

Most CQF programmes are subject to external verification, i.e. Edexcel appoints an external verifier (EV) to confirm quality and standards. However, BTEC Higher National qualifications approved under CQF have external examiners (EEs). This document refers to external verification, but is applicable to all centres unless a differentiation is made. Centres operating CQF BTEC Higher National qualifications should also refer to the handbook for BTEC Higher Nationals.

2 Reminders for 2009-2010

- Please make registrations promptly. Registrations should be made by 1st November or, for programmes starting after November, within one month of commencement.
- Plan ahead for sampling. EVs may need several weeks to prepare for, plan, undertake and report on programmes. If you have not made arrangements six weeks before completion of the course contact your EV or, if you have not had information about allocation, contact the BTEC Deployment team (QAS@edexcel.com). Any programme that has already been verified should be re-sampled within one calendar year.
- It is your centre's responsibility to keep records of all approved specifications, EV reports and centre policies so that they are able to provide these to the EV. Edexcel does not undertake to supply information from our records. We would suggest that these documents be held in a quality file for ease of access.

3 Edexcel Quality management system

Overview

Edexcel operates a quality management system and the company is committed to quality in everything it does. Everyone working for Edexcel is required to operate the Edexcel Quality management system against the quality standard ISO 9001.

External verification is a system designed to ensure that assessment decisions made by centre assessors are valid, reliable and consistent with national benchmarks. External verifiers must carry out their role in accordance with the information set out in this handbook.

Centre liaison - BTEC Quality Nominee (QN)

Each centre is asked to appoint one member of staff, called the quality nominee, for all BTEC provision. This person will receive details about the appointment of an EV and will be requested to liaise with the appropriate programme managers, internal verifiers (IVs) and programme teams to ensure that the visit or postal sampling by the EV progresses smoothly.

The Internal Verifier (IV)

The IV is responsible for ensuring that:

- The learner's work shows evidence of assessment and summative feedback.
- Assessment decisions made by assessors on learner's work are accurate and meet the requirements of the specification.

Appeals

If the centre disagrees with the findings of the external verifier, the centre quality nominee has the right to contact the appropriate BTEC Assessment Manager. (Contact details can be found in Appendix 1).

The Edexcel Appeal Policy is on the [website](#). (See also Section 9: Guidance on Policies.)

4 Quality Issues

A quality issue is defined as any situation where provision does not appear to meet Edexcel requirements, and could include:

- Serious variations from approval requirements.
- Quality issues referred to Edexcel through other sources.
- Assessment malpractice (see Section 13: Guidance on Policies).

Any such instances will be investigated thoroughly by Edexcel to ensure that centres are operating to our terms and conditions and that there is no risk to the integrity of qualifications.

Quality standards

Where serious quality issues are identified, the Quality Standards Team within BTEC Assessment will:

- Contact the centre to discuss and investigate issue(s) raised.
- Record any action and give feedback to the EV.
- Notify the Qualification Manager and record action taken.
- Review the problem and the recommendations made.

The manager responsible for quality in BTEC Assessment will:

- Review the quality issues record.
- Consider informing the regulator and Edexcel Compliance or the Quality Team within Edexcel. As appropriate.
- Authorise closure of the quality issues record when the issue is resolved.
- Agree any corrective action necessary in the future.
- If necessary, review the possible withdrawal of the qualification and/or centre approval.

5 Approval-related issues

Programme definition and amendments

After a CQF qualification has gained approval a programme definition is issued. The centre must adhere to the programme structure as approved otherwise certification will be affected. For example:

- Core units are compulsory and must be taken.
- The total value of guided learning hours across units for each learner must match to the specified total hours.
- Pass, Merit and Distinction grading must be used where a unit has been defined as graded.

At the time that the programme definition is issued the centre should check that it matches the structure that the centre intends to offer. Any queries should be raised immediately with Edexcel by email to approvals@edexcel.com.

Centres may apply to amend centre-devised programmes. However, all but the most minor amendments require the issue of a new programme number and require additional administration for registered learners. An approved centre that would like to make a change should contact their normal Edexcel contact or Edexcel Approvals for advice at the earliest possible opportunity.

Under no circumstances should centres proceed to claim certification for learners where there is concern over the approved programme definition. Centres seeking to change programmes after verification is complete will be subject to investigation and may have approval withdrawn. No amendments, no matter how small, are allowed on any CQF qualification if certificates have been issued against it.

Unit specifications

Centres must adhere to the unit specifications as submitted to and approved by Edexcel. Centres are required to maintain accurate copies of the specification for use by those delivering the programme, assessors, IVs and EVs. CQF qualifications may draw on standard units issued by Edexcel. Centres must operate these as published and may not apply for any amendments.

Levels

In January 2006 the CQF was updated to reflect the revised Levels of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). CQF BTEC Higher National qualifications are now deemed to be Level 5, and CQF Advanced Professional awards at Level 7.

6 Specific issues relating to registration and certification

Administration

Full details of Edexcel procedures for registration and administration of learners are set out in the Information Manual. This section draws attention to points of particular importance for centres delivering CQF qualifications.

Centres are encouraged to use Edexcel Online for learner administration. Centres that only operate CQF qualifications should take care to designate one or more people to take responsibility for learner administration and to ensure that they have the necessary access to Edexcel Online and internal authorisation to incur costs and claim certificates.

The centre has the responsibility to check that the information given at registration is accurate and to update or amend it where necessary. For example, the centre should check that the learner's name and date of birth appear as in official documents.

All learners must be registered promptly after they start their programmes. For centres operating roll-on-roll-off programmes, or frequent short programmes, they should provide registration data monthly. Edexcel requires this information in order to allocate external verifiers.

Registration is for individual learners and is non-transferable. Registrations may not be deleted except under exceptional circumstances and with agreement from Edexcel.

At the time of registration centres are asked to give an estimated completion date for learners. This is used for the purposes of external verification and certification and must be accurate. If a learner is unable to complete by three months after the expected date the completion date should be amended.

If a learner withdraws from the programme, the centre must update this on Edexcel Online.

Individual units

Centres are permitted to register learners for certification of individual units. However, centres should do so only where units are drawn from full programmes that have registrations at the same time. Centres should take particular care to register learners correctly for the full award, when an award is comprised of one unit, as a full certificate will only be issued against registrations on programmes. Centres should note that there is no transfer of registration between individual unit registrations and full programme registrations; a learner who wants to complete a full qualification having gained individual units must be registered as a new learner for the full qualification.

Duration of registration

Learners are registered for a period of 5 years. However, the period during which they can gain certification on the programme is limited by the approved period of the programme and the continued operation of the programme at the approved centre. For CQF programmes, it is unlikely that a learner could complete the approved programme at another centre, if they are no longer able to attend their original centre or if the programme ceases to run. Learners who have not been certificated may be able to transfer their registration to another BTEC programme, either CQF or other, where a relevant programme of the same size and level exists. This process will require the Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL).

Transferring registrations

There is no opportunity for 'top up' transfer on CQF programmes, e.g. a learner completing some standard units at Level 3 and then progressing to BTEC National must register as a new learner and the units already achieved must be reported again when certification is claimed. The same applies where centres offer several related CQF programmes. In this case centres should make transfers before certification where the learner is aiming for a larger award to avoid paying a full second fee.

Certification

Centres should only make certification claims on programmes for which a valid certification release from an EV has been given. Centres should make claims promptly on learner completion when all assessment is complete and authorised by the centre. Once external verification is complete, certification may be claimed at any time in the year to facilitate flexible programme completion.

Learners may only be certificated against the programme that they are registered on. A learner may be transferred to another programme before certification using Edexcel Online. Transfers should normally take place prior to external verification in order that the external verifier can check records and clear certification.

Where learners do not complete a full programme, centres may claim a Certificate of Unit Achievement for those units that have been successfully completed.

Centres should enter certification data carefully and should ensure that all data is correct and authorised before it is submitted, e.g. data must be entered for the correct learner, units and grades (where appropriate). The information submitted will be used for certification. Should there be any certificates claimed in error then these must be returned to Edexcel with a full explanation. Edexcel may suspend clearance to certificate where valid procedures are not followed.

7 Responsibility in relation to learners

Marketing

Prior to approval centres should not make use of the term BTEC and the proposed qualification title within any marketing. After the CQF1 has been approved, centres may market to potential learners using the proposed title, provided that it is clear that the availability of the qualification is 'subject to Edexcel approval.' Edexcel does not have a duty of care to learners recruited prior to approval and does not undertake to certificate affected individuals should the programme not be approved or approved with revisions.

Centres should take care in marketing approved programmes in that they are described accurately in terms of the approval and that the title of any CQF qualification used is as approved. Centres should take particular care with the terms 'Award', 'Certificate' and 'Diploma'; if used with a capital letter these denote the size of qualification.

Recruitment with integrity

Centres are expected to recruit learners with integrity. This includes:

- Recruiting against the target learners identified within the application for approval.
- Selecting on the basis of previous relevant experience and achievement.
- Ensuring that learners are able to cope with the programme and that, if a learner requires additional support or adjustments, the centre is able to provide these.
- Checking that the learner will have reasonable opportunity to undertake assessments and complete the programme.

Support and advice

Learners must be given advice and support to enable them to progress effectively on the programme and achieve the qualification. Centres are recommended to have an induction period, event or pack of information for learners to help them to understand what is expected. This should include information on:

- The programme content, duration, learning and assessment strategy.
- Learner responsibility within assessment including authenticity of work, completing work to deadlines and attending required activities.
- The process of assessment and internal verification including feedback to learners.
- Channels for learners to raise concerns or appeals about assessment.

Learners should be provided with teaching, coaching or tuition and in addition access to any relevant study resources. These may include teaching, libraries, electronic learning materials, study books, internet access etc. For CQF programmes learners may not be

formally attending the centre, e.g. a learner may only be attending a short training programme, learning at a distance or being assessed by a centre on the basis of training during their employment. The providing centre always has a responsibility to take steps to ensure the learners are adequately supported and that those who want to achieve the qualification, and who meet the required standards, are able to do so.

Access to assessment

Centres must provide fair access to assessment for all learners, e.g. all learners should be subject to the same centre policies for late submission of work and opportunities to retake assessment. Learners have the right of appeal to the centre with respect to both access to assessment and the judgement of assessors.

Learners may generally retake assessments as required in order to achieve the outcomes. Centres may need to develop further assessments or to supplement the original assessment with an activity under constrained conditions in order to ensure that the unit(s) have been fully achieved, e.g. if a learner supplements an original report, the centre may ensure that the learner has fully grasped the unit by conducting a session of oral questions, often referred to as a professional discussion. Whilst centres are expected to provide some opportunity for retaking assessment, they are not required to provide unlimited opportunities and may make additional charges. At induction the centre should set out its policy on late work, retakes etc.

Centres may only use the assessment criteria as the basis for making assessment judgements, e.g. learners who have attitude or attendance problems may not be penalised through the assessment process by withholding a pass. Centres have the right not to accept work from learners who have not complied with specific requirements, e.g. attending a training event or meeting a deadline. However, if a centre accepts work for assessment, then it must be assessed only against the specification. The learner must never be penalised for late submission by the reduction of grade.

8 Planning assessment and assessment instruments

CQF programmes are internally assessed against centre-devised assessment instruments. Units are criterion referenced and all pass criteria must be achieved in order for a pass to be awarded. Centres must deliver assessment by designing effective assessment tasks or instruments. Centres that operate across a number of sites are expected to have a common plan of assessment and to use common assessment instruments. All assessment must be internally verified across all sites.

Centres must use assessment instruments that are fit for purpose in assessing the approved unit specifications. Generally the most appropriate assessment instruments for BTEC are assignments, i.e. open book, taken over an extended period of time, of flexible size and each learner produces individual evidence. It may be appropriate for some assessments to be closed and/or time constrained to test particular applications of skills.

Centres should design assessment instruments in line with both general policies on assessment and the specific information given in the centre's application for approval. In particular the centre should have provided an example of an assessment instrument and should use this as a basis for the design of assessment instruments over the period of the approval. Assessments reviewed during approval are exemplars; centres may amend and update these as necessary.

Centres may use assessment instruments produced by a third party, e.g. by another centre already operating a programme, by a commissioned writer or from published documents. The centre has responsibility for ensuring that the instruments are fit for purpose and that assessors know how to use the instruments in order to assess unit outcomes. Centres should not assume that materials from other sources have been authorised by Edexcel. Centres may generally adapt materials to meet the needs of their own learners. All assessment instruments must lead to reliable assessment decisions and valid assessment outcomes.

Centres may intend to use assessments to address both a CQF qualification and for other purposes, e.g. in-company assessment. Particular care must be taken to ensure that the assessments fully meet the BTEC unit specifications and that steps are taken to address any issues of mismatch, e.g. through supplementary assessments.

Alternative forms of assessment

Centres using competence-based units may have assessment strategies that relate mainly to observed direct performance, in which case the assessment instrument can be understood as being the strategy for ensuring that performance can be assessed and internally verified. In some instances centres are permitted to use short answer or multiple choice questions to test knowledge. This is generally only permitted at lower levels, and where specified in approval applications.

Assessment of standard units

Standard BTEC and NVQ units contain guidance to centres on assessment. This should be referred to in assessing the units within the CQF. For NVQ units centres should consult the assessment strategy for the relevant qualification and adhere to this if it is intended that learner evidence provided for the CQF qualification is to be subsequently presented for assessment as part of a full NVQ.

Guidance on assessment instruments

Assessment instruments may be designed to relate to the whole of one unit, part of one unit or to go across units. Centres have to track assessment and therefore it is recommended that there should be a simple relationship between assessment instruments and units, e.g. one unit is assessed through a written report for background knowledge and a practical demonstration. Centres requiring the use of several different types of assessment instrument for one unit or setting several assessments that cut across more than two units should consider restructuring their programme for a subsequent approval period.

The selection and design of assessment instruments must allow for learners to achieve the unit assessment criteria as approved:

- Ideally the brief and tasks for the learners should specify exactly where each criterion may be addressed, e.g. 'give a short presentation of your findings using appropriate visual aids (A.C.4).
- The style of assessment must reflect the criterion, e.g. a criterion related to practical demonstration cannot be fulfilled through writing a description, in other words it must lead to a valid assessment method.

For assignments a good approach is to set a scenario, context or case study as the basis with a number of tasks flowing from this. Tasks should have specified outcomes, e.g. giving a presentation, writing a report, developing a computer program, or producing a drawing. Centres should pay particular attention to the driver verbs of assessment criteria:

- Use the wording of criteria, where possible, amplifying, as necessary, e.g. 'analyse findings' could be amplified, for a particular assignment, to 'You should conclude your report by providing a detailed analysis of the findings of your research into your company's objectives covering both the company's strategy and the strengths and weaknesses of your research. Refer to statistical and financial data to support your analysis'.
- Ensure that the wording of the tasks permit criteria to be achieved, e.g. 'List the tools used' does not fully address 'Select and explain the tools used'.

Assessment instruments must provide for the valid assessment of evidence from the learner, e.g. if learning is of a practical activity there need to be records, such as DVDs and photographs, and opportunities for all learners to be observed. Group activities may be appropriate for the assessment criteria, in which case centres need to ensure that the performance of individual learners can be evidenced and assessed.

Activities that cannot reliably generate evidence for all learners should not be used for final assessment purposes, although they could form part of learning and formative assessment.

Assessment instruments may be used for several groups of learners over time, provided that this does not in itself compromise the integrity of the assessment. However, centres should review assessments periodically to take account of performance, such as time taken by learners to complete, and to ensure that information contained in them remains up to date. Ideally assessments should be signed off through the internal verification process once per year, even if they are not amended.

Learners should be given clear instructions with assessment instruments, e.g. related to timescales, sources of reference, types of evidence required importance of authenticity of work. This information could be contained in a cover sheet that summarises the requirements.

Related materials

In order to help centres to use valid documents to plan assessment and record assessment decisions, Edexcel has produced a set of exemplar documentation which can be found [here](#). Further information can be found on our website relating to:

- The National Standards Sampling Process (NSS).
- Centre Risk Assessment (CRA).
- Internal verification of assignment briefs.
- Policies on appeals concerning BTEC and Edexcel NVQ qualifications.

These documents may be used as they are or amended by centres to suit their own customised programmes.

Additional guidance for setting tests

Centres should only use written short answer or multiple choice tests for final assessment where this was included in the approved application. Such tests must be mapped to the assessment criteria and the performance against the criteria used to determine whether a learner has passed.

Where it is important that tests are taken under secure or time constrained conditions, then the centre should address this within the design of the assessment instrument, e.g. tests could be provided electronically with secure access. Learners must have the opportunity to receive feedback and to retake assessments. Where several tests or test banks are used to facilitate retake opportunities these must provide fair, consistent and reliable assessment.

Additional guidance for graded units

Centre-devised graded units have either been approved using contextualised unit grading criteria or approved on the basis of the standard grading criteria for CQF short-course qualifications. If the latter, then centres will need to consider for each unit where and how the assessment criteria can be evidenced and to provide appropriate assessment

opportunities. (Note: for standard Edexcel produced units centres must follow the published units and guidance).

Centres should design a single assessment to cover related pass, merit and distinction grading criteria whenever possible. This minimises the number and duration of assessments. This may not always be feasible, e.g. there may be some merit and distinction criteria that can only be achieved through separate activities. Centres are expected to provide all learners with the same access to opportunities for achieving merit and distinction grades, however, an individual learner is not required to attempt to evidence merit and distinction grades.

9 Support

Sources of centre support

Centres may provide some staff development through Edexcel. Edexcel offers fully customised day and half-day programmes through the **Training from Edexcel** department, e.g. events could be provided related to designing assessments, internal verification, assessment planning and record keeping. Whilst Edexcel does not offer standard training events for CQF, centres may find that some standard events may be for benefit, e.g. there are generic events for new centres and standard BTEC and NVQ programmes from which centres have drawn units for their programmes. Full details of training services are available from the 'Services for centres' section of the [website](#).

The EV provides advice and guidance on programme delivery and assessment. However, the main focus of external verification is to provide quality assurance. Centres requiring advice on running their programmes should not wait for contact with an EV: Sources of information include:

- The main website www.edexcel.com.
- The customer contact number - 0844 576 0026.
- Identified Edexcel Contacts, such as Curriculum Development Managers.

Delivery plan

Centres should draw up a plan of programme delivery to ensure that:

- Units are covered in a sensible sequence.
- Units are fully covered to enable the learner outcomes to be achieved.
- The provision of teaching, training and programme materials is in line with the guided learning hours (GLH).

Units are shown in programme definitions with a value of 1 for every 10 GLH, e.g. a 30 GLH unit has a value of 3. Guided learning hours include direct teaching/training, directed private study, and assessment. For example, 10 hours of GLH related to a short-training programme could include 1 hour of directed reading and related tasks before the training, 6 hours of training, 1 hour of tutorial and 2 hours of researching and writing a report. GLH does not include self-directed study, general work practice required to gain experience and time for repeating assessment to achieve the required standard.

Unit specifications set out what learners are required to cover as part of the programme. The unit must be covered in its entirety in order for learners to be assessed fully against the criteria. This relates to the learning outcomes, content and assessment criteria.

Learners are not required to complete a specific number of hours in order to be considered for assessment, e.g. a learner may carry out background reading in less than the expected timescale or a learner may have the benefit of previous learning or experience. Similarly learners may take longer to complete a unit. Where practicable, centres should provide for learners who need to take longer to complete units, e.g. by permitting them to attend more than one event or allowing them to attend for an extended period.

10 Internal verification of assessment

Over-arching definition

Internal verification is a quality assurance process internal to centres, which ensures the consistency of assessment and confirms that assessment tasks will generate evidence appropriate to the assessment criteria. This involves:

- The scrutiny of all assessment tasks prior to learners.
- Monitoring the quality of assessor decisions for all units and providing appropriate feedback to assessors, with an action plan where necessary.
- Monitoring consistency across teams/assessors on one or several sites through a standardisation programme.
- Ensuring that there is an internal verification plan and that this is carried out on time.

Use of assessors

Assessors should be appropriately trained and experienced staff capable of making judgements against the unit specification(s) approved by Edexcel. Centres should train assessors internally against the approved specification. Centres should consider what support is available in relation to maintaining standards, e.g. sample materials and general information on assessment.

There are no specific qualification requirements for assessors of CQF qualifications. Centres may find it useful to draw on assessors who have experience of BTEC or NVQ assessment; qualifications for NVQ assessment would be of benefit to those assessing competence-based CQF units. For units drawn from NVQs it is recommended that the NVQ requirements for assessors are observed if evidence is to be used for NVQs subsequently. Where NVQ units themselves are included in a CQF qualification, then all the regulatory requirements for the assessment of these units will apply. They can be found in the NVQ Code of Practice.

Use of internal verifier

Centres must appoint a lead IV when other IVs are required. No person may act as IV for their own assessment judgements. Assessors may undertake aspects of internal verification where they have the most relevant specialist expertise. The lead IV should take responsibility for ensuring that the full requirements of internal verification are planned and carried out.

Standardisation

All assessors for a unit must be standardised to ensure that they are making the same assessment decisions, e.g. that they accept the same range of evidence and the same quality of performance. This could be achieved by cross-sampling as part of a team activity or through feedback from an IV sampling across all assessors.

Standardisation should take place at the earliest opportunity in order to prevent the need for substantial revisiting of assessment decisions.

Where units are only being assessed by one assessor, there is no formal requirement for standardisation. However, the assessment decisions must still be sampled by an internal verifier to ensure that the assessor is thorough, consistent and fair to all learners.

During standardisation or internal verification, it may be identified that an assessor's decisions are incorrect wholly or in part. The centre must then ensure that all assessment decisions are revisited to correctly assess learner achievement. Subsequently the assessor's decision should be re-sampled to ensure that assessment decisions are being made accurately.

Centres are advised to complete initial standardisation and internal verification to give feedback to assessors before the outcomes of assessment are given to learners. This ensures smooth running of assessment and reduces the possibility of appeals.

Planning internal verification

The centre must ensure that a representative sample of assessment is subject to internal verification. There is no mandated size of sample for internal verification set by Edexcel, as this is variable, based on number of units, learners, assessors, assessment types and assessment periods. The centre must ensure that no less than 10% of all assessments are sampled and that at least 50% of the sample seen by the EV has been subject to internal verification. An internal verification plan should cover:

- All units.
- All assessors.
- All types of assessment.
- All cohorts/groups of learners.
- All assessment locations.

The completion of internal verification for both assessment design and the sampling of assessor decisions should be recorded. The outcome of sampling should be a completed record sheet with feedback to the assessor and a follow-up action plan if necessary. Assessors may not internally verify their own decisions, even if they also act in the capacity of internal verifier for other assessors.

Additional guidance for non-standard assessment

Internal verification relates to all assessments including observation of performance. Full records of observations should be kept including an observation record sheet and relevant supporting evidence, e.g. tapes, artefacts. Some internal verification may be based solely on the recorded evidence but there should be actual observation by an internal verifier of some learners, particularly for less experienced assessors.

For accreditation of prior learning (APL) or performance of tasks in the workplace, the centre may make use of witness statements. These are made by people who are not assessors and their commentaries should be reviewed by assessors in relation to the unit criteria. Assessor judgements are subject to internal verification. Witness statements may be a useful source of evidence, but it is harder to judge the validity of judgements made and their relevance to the criteria. Centres need to be aware that it is unwise to award entire unit achievement on the basis of witness statements alone.

Keeping records

Centres are required to maintain all assessment records and evidence of learner achievement until after external verification is complete. Subsequently learners have ownership of their own evidence, subject to any stipulated centre policy related to appeals. Centres are advised to retain records of learner administration and programme assessment for 3 years following completion to provide for cases of query from learners relating to their certification or from Edexcel in relation to programme quality and performance.

11 External verification

Role of the EV

The key purpose of external verification is to check on the quality of assessment offered by the centre. This will involve checking all assessment records and sampling assessment decisions through the review of learner work. External verifiers (EVs) will also be concerned with underpinning issues such as centre management, resources and learner support that will ultimately impact on the validity and quality of assessment.

EVs provide guidance for future programme delivery and assessment, however, they do not have a specific training or staff development function and centres should not invite EVs to undertake additional activities for them. Centres should approach Edexcel directly if they want to arrange a training or development event.

EVs are appointed to CQF programmes from the pool of trained personnel available for BTEC and NVQ programmes. If a CQF programme includes NVQ units then the EV will have been trained and standardised for those units. EVs always have expertise related to the sector in which the CQF qualification is accredited. However, for very specialised CQF qualifications the EV may not have delivered or assessed that specialism. All verifiers are expert in assessment methodology and processes and are able to review learner performance against national benchmarks.

Operation of external verification

An EV is given an allocation to undertake verification of a programme after learners have been registered with Edexcel. The EV is expected to make contact with the centre directly.

The allocation will normally involve one visit during an 11-month period. Allocations are only issued for one 11-month period each time, but allocations may be renewed. We would expect an EV to remain with a programme for 3-4 years where possible. Centres are notified about their EV by BTEC Deployment normally through email to the quality nominee or the identified centre contact. Details of allocated EVs can also be found on Edexcel Online.

In exceptional circumstances and after authorisation by Edexcel, the EV may make two visits, or make one visit and undertake a postal sample, in an 11-month period for:

- A new centre or new types of programmes at existing centres.
- Centres having quality issues identified through external verification reports.

In some cases visits may be replaced by postal sampling, e.g. where programmes:

- Have had satisfactory reports over 2 cycles of operation.
- Are composed of standard units that are sampled through other programmes.

- Are closely related to CQF programmes already sampled through a visit.

Making arrangements for external verification

Centres must agree an appropriate time for external verification related to programme duration and the availability of assessment materials and records. For centres having two visits, the first should take place when assessment instruments have been developed but before assessment has been completed. For centres having one visit or sample, this should be undertaken 1-3 months before the anticipated completion date. This will allow the EV to review assessment across units, but provide time for remedial action before certification.

Timing of visits is a particular issue for centres having short-duration programmes (of less than 4 months). Centres should prepare for the initial verification to take place 3-4 months after programme commencement and should advise learners that centre assessment and subsequent certification is dependent on external verification. Once external verification has been completed and the centre has full clearance to certificate, then the centre can certificate on programme completion throughout the year, i.e. until the next external verification. It is not necessary for each cohort of learners to be sampled, although EVs will require access to all records retrospectively.

Both the centre and the EV should make every effort to abide by the agreed date for external verification. A centre having difficulty in abiding by the date for external verification should notify the EV at the earliest possible opportunity. Centres that decline verification without good reason will be subject to investigation. Edexcel may impose a certificate block and consider withdrawal of approval if it is concerned that the centre is obstructing the process of verification.

Planning for external verification

When the centre and EV first make contact, the centre will need to be ready to discuss the details of the programme. EVs will:

- Request information about the programme including a copy of the specifications.
- Identify the types of units being used, e.g. standard or centre-devised, graded or pass/fail, assignment-based or competence-based.
- Discuss the format of assessments being used.
- Identify start and finish dates for groups of learners and the size of learner groups.
- Identify where and how learners are studying, e.g. on training programmes, in the workplace, full-time, on-line.
- Identify when assessments and assessed work is likely to be available.
- Check understanding of key processes, such as learner administration and internal verification.

The EV will agree with the centre, in advance, timings for a visit and the materials required. The outcomes will be confirmed in writing, such as in an email or an external

verification plan. The sample of learner work to be reviewed by the EV will be agreed with the centre and the centre may propose work from units and learners that it knows will be available. The EV will want to sample across units, vary those units over time and to ensure that the sample is of sufficient rigour.

Where there are concerns about standards a larger sample may be requested. The centre should not seek to change the sample once agreed unless there is an unavoidable problem. Centres may be subject to further investigation if there is concern that the EV is not being permitted proper access to assessment records and assessment evidence.

Centres should note that even where CQF qualifications are composed entirely of units from other programmes, the CQF EV will still need to sign off the overall CQF programme before certification can be given. Centres should seek to identify a sample of units that has not already been addressed through other external verification and should discuss the level of sampling with the EV.

Conduct of a visit

During a visit, the EV will expect to have a private room for the purposes of reviewing materials. The EV will expect to meet the programme Leader at the beginning and end of the day. Any other requirements, such as observation of assessment in action, meeting other assessors or reviewing resources, should be agreed in advance. The centre is not expected to have people 'on standby'. If it is necessary to arrange a further visit or sample because the centre has not abided by the agreed plan, then the centre may be charged for additional costs.

At the end of the visit, the EV will provide feedback to the centre. The centre should ensure that the Programme Leader and any other key personnel are present. The EV will not normally provide a full report on the day, but will summarise the main action points. The EV should advise the centre on when the report can be completed after the visit. Reports are provided electronically and should be submitted as soon as possible and within a maximum of 10 working days.

Conduct of a postal sample

A centre must agree with the EV the nature of the sample of assessments and assessed work together with assessment records required, i.e. for which units and for how many learners. Centres should abide by the agreed date for provision of the sample. An EV should complete the sample and provide the report within 10 working days. The EV should contact the centre to arrange verbal feedback on the report and required actions.

Outcomes of verification

The report shows the status and quality of the programme, documents the materials reviewed during the visit and guides the centre towards the action required to improve the programme. A programme may be graded A-E. In the first year of operation of a programme, it may be given a status of 'U - ungraded' where the EV has not reviewed sufficient assessment materials to give a grade. Grades A-B are acceptable grades. Grades C-E indicate that the centre needs to take action in order to reach an acceptable level of

operation. Where centres are awarded D or E grades then immediate action is required and that there will be follow up through the EV.

On receipt of the feedback from the EV the centre should ensure that the report is logged and a specific action plan drawn up for implementation. At subsequent visits EVs will want to review the action taken against previous feedback.

Quality of EVs

The work of all EVs is regularly monitored. This is to ensure that all external verification is of the highest standard. Centres may be asked by Edexcel to complete an online feedback form to show how satisfied they are with their EVs. Please note that external verifiers are one type of assessment associate (AAs) used by Edexcel and they may be referred to using this term when being monitored.

Very occasionally a centre may be dissatisfied following external verification. If a centre has a complaint against the behaviour of an EV or believes that an EV has given an incorrect judgement on a programme, then the centre may write to the Qualification Manager, Customised Qualifications, at Edexcel giving full details.

12 Frequently Asked Questions

Why haven't I had an External Verifier(EV)?

There are a number of potential reasons why an EV may not have contacted you to arrange sampling:

- You must register learners before an EV can be allocated to your centre. Normally registrations should be made to the full programme; unit registrations alone may delay allocation.
- Allocations are made and updated throughout the year. However, registrations made in July and August will normally be allocated from October onwards. Allow at least 4 weeks between registration and contact with an EV to make arrangements.

Always give realistic programme start and completion dates at registration so that EVs can understand your likely needs.

Which programmes will our EV cover?

Check with your EV the programmes that they have been allocated to cover. An EV will only be permitted to sample programmes that have been allocated. If you plan to make registrations on some programmes that are not running when an EV contacts you, ensure there is sufficient time for an additional allocation to be issued before the sampling takes place.

Why has more than one EV been allocated?

Most often this is because programmes are in different occupational sectors and require EVs with different expertise.

Very occasionally additional programmes not running at the time of original allocation will be offered to a different EV because the first EV has reached their maximum workload.

What documents does an EV need to have and see?

The EV will expect to be given the specification documents (as submitted to and approved by Edexcel) and all the relevant assessment records. The EV may also ask to refer to the centre's general policy documents reviewed as part of the centre approval. Centres should be prepared to post or email relevant documentation to EVs in advance of sampling to enable an appropriate sample to be agreed.

When will an EV visit my centre?

Sampling of assessment and assessment decisions for CQF programmes can take place at any time of the year, although the normal expectation would be during the period March - July unless completion dates were earlier. In a first year of operation of new programmes, sampling is likely to be through a visit. Thereafter postal sampling is likely to be used.

Can my qualification be graded?

At the time of approval a centre specifies whether a qualification is graded or ungraded. This cannot subsequently be amended without approval by Edexcel. As the vast majority of CQF qualifications are ungraded, centres should only seek to grade programmes where there is a very clear rationale and the units generate evidence that can be subject to grading.

Can I change the title of my qualification?

Any change to a qualification, including the title, must be approved by Edexcel. Sometimes centres feel that title changes are needed for particular markets. However, it is often possible to use a description for marketing the programme which is not the qualification name, provided that the name of the qualification is also given as this is what will appear on learner's certificates. Again it is important to note that an existing qualification title cannot be changed if learners have been certificated against it. In this situation a new qualification with a new number would have to be set up on the system.

13 Guidance on policies

The Edexcel [website](#) includes detailed policies which address many of the issues and situations Assessment Associates and centres may meet when dealing with all types and levels of BTEC and NVQ qualifications. This section appears in all the BTEC & NVQ qualification handbooks.

Appeals

The Edexcel Appeals Policy (04-07) applies to BTEC and NVQ qualifications.

In summary, the policy states that Edexcel will only consider an appeal from a centre after the centre's own internal appeals procedure has been exhausted. Edexcel will only consider appeals submitted by the head of centre or principal and only where:

- A centre disagrees with the outcomes of the Edexcel external quality assurance process.
- A centre questions an approval or qualification decision made by Edexcel.
- A candidate considers that a decision continues to disadvantage them even after the outcome of the centre's internal appeals procedure.

Edexcel expects that most appeals from candidates will be resolved within the centre. Only after the centre's internal appeals process has been exhausted can appeals concerning individual learners be made through the learner's centre by the head of centre or principal.

Edexcel will consider appeals at three possible stages:

- Quality Review Panel.
- Quality Standards Panel.
- Independent Appeals Panel.

The outcome of the Independent Appeals Panel will be final, with no further right of appeal beyond this stage.

Accreditation of Prior Learning

The Edexcel Policy on Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) (06-14) applies to all Edexcel qualifications.

APL is an assessment process which enables recognition of achievement from a range of activities using any valid assessment methodology. The policy document provides:

- Definitions of key terms and a detailed overview of the APL process.

- Guidance on establishing an APL system within a centre, covering recruitment and marketing issues, mapping achievement, providing evidence and assessing an APL claim.
- Documents for mapping achievement and providing witness testimonies.

Provided that the assessment requirements of a given unit or qualification have been met, the use of APL is acceptable for accrediting part of a unit(s) or complete qualification.

Evidence for APL must be:

- Authentic (clearly generated by the candidate).
- Current (usually within the last two years).
- Relevant (relating to the standard to be proved).
- Sufficient (enough to meet the required standards).

Centres are expected to establish their own APL guidance, in line with Edexcel policy, for their assessors and internal verifiers.

Assessment malpractice

The Edexcel Policy on Assessment Malpractice (06-13) applies to all BTEC and NVQ programmes.

The policy provides a definition of malpractice, examples of what constitutes malpractice by both candidates and centre staff and positive steps that can be taken to prevent or reduce candidate malpractice.

Malpractice consists of those acts which undermine the integrity and validity of assessment, the certification of qualifications and/or damages the authority of those responsible for conducting the assessment and certification. Edexcel reserves the right to impose sanctions and/or penalties on candidates or centres where incidents or attempted incidents of malpractice have been proven.

Distance assessment

The Edexcel Policy on Distance Assessment (03-02) covers all qualifications where there is summative internal assessment. Candidates on distance learning qualifications should have the right to expect equal opportunities to succeed when compared with those candidates attending a centre. There is an expectation upon centres that they must quality assure qualifications and assessment to ensure that common standards apply regardless of the mode of study.

The policy defines distance assessment and states that it may be employed for any Edexcel qualification, unless a contrary decision has been made by the regulator. It stresses that use of distance assessment should not reduce the validity of the assessment.

Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations

The Edexcel Policy on **Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations for BTEC and Edexcel NVO Qualifications (RA&SC 06-12)** sets out how Edexcel complies with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and its subsequent amendments.

Edexcel aims to facilitate access to BTEC and NVO qualifications for candidates who are eligible for reasonable adjustments in assessments without compromising the assessment of the skills, knowledge, understanding or competence being measured.

Reasonable adjustments (pre-assessment) include adjustments to assessment based on the candidate's history of need and provision. Access arrangements are intended to increase access to assessment but must not compromise the standard of assessment. Edexcel expects that centres will apply access arrangements internally on a systematic and considered basis; only in certain cases would application to Edexcel for approval be appropriate. Examples of access arrangements listed in the policy document include:

- Readers.
- Scribes.
- Practical assistants.
- Prompters.
- Use of British Sign Language (BSL).
- Modified papers/assignments.

The policy states that centres should always recruit with integrity and ensure that candidates have appropriate information and advice on their selected qualification and how it will meet their needs. The recruitment process should include assessment of the suitability of potential candidates and arrangements for advising candidates if they may not be able to demonstrate attainment in all parts of the assessment.

Special consideration (post-assessment) is an adjustment to a candidate's grades and is normally given by applying an allowance with respect to an assessment undertaken when the candidate was adversely affected by personal difficulties. Examples of special considerations listed in the policy document include:

- Terminal illness.
- Bereavement of a family member.
- Serious and disruptive domestic crisis.
- Incapacitating illness.
- Severe accident.
- Recent traumatic experience.
- Lost/damaged work.

Applications for reasonable adjustments or special consideration should be made by centres directly to Edexcel, using forms RA1/SC1 available from the Edexcel website.

Assessment associates should note that this policy replaces the previous Edexcel policy Access Arrangements and Special Considerations for BTEC and Edexcel NVQ Qualifications (04-011).

Electronic assessment

The Edexcel Policy on Electronic Assessment (03-03) sets out the criteria for using electronic assessment for Edexcel qualifications and for implementing appropriate quality assured operating procedures covering validity of assessment, authenticity of candidate evidence, security of materials & evidence and audit trails.

Electronic assessment is defined as any or all of the recording, transmission, presentation and subsequent processing of assessment materials and evidence using computers and associated hardware. Besides textual evidence, the medium extends to include evidence such as digital videos of performances, digital photographs and digital audio records of oral work.

Electronic assessment may be used for any Edexcel qualification unless a contrary decision has been made by the regulator.

The policy covers equality of opportunities, operational issues and practical considerations relating to electronic assessment.

Table reference code	Web link to policy documents
RA&SC 06-12	Reasonable Adjustment and Specials Considerations for BTEC and Edexcel NVQ Qualifications
Form: RA1	Application of Reasonable Adjustment for BTEC and Edexcel NVQ Qualification (internal)
Form: RA2	Application of Reasonable Adjustment for BTEC and Edexcel NVQ Qualification - (Edexcel)
Form: SC1	Application for Special Consideration: BTEC & Edexcel NVQs Qualifications
MAL 06-13	Assessment Malpractice
APL 06-14	Accreditation of Prior Learning
AGAC 06-15	Assessment and grading: Application of Criteria
Lang VQ 05-01	Use of Language (Welsh and Irish) in BTEC qualifications and Edexcel NVQs
CA 04-05	Policy on consortium arrangements for BTEC and Edexcel NVQ qualifications
Appeals 04-07	Policy on appeals concerning BTEC and Edexcel NVQ qualifications
DA 03-02	Policy on Distance Assessment
EA 03-03	Policy on Electronic Assessment

APPENDIX 1: Glossary

Service Operations (formerly BRACS)

Service Operations deal with registration of learners and issue learners' certificates on achievement of qualification.

AA Deployment Team (formerly VAT)

This team is responsible for the appointment of both risk assessors and external verifiers following registration and will notify the centre quality nominee of the contact details for both external verifiers and risk assessors once appointed.

BTEC EVs

Each programme will have an EV allocated once registrations have been made. The external verifier has responsibility to make contact with the centre BTEC quality nominee initially. EVs will often communicate using email and telephone and centres should keep their centre contact details up to date to facilitate this process.

BTEC Regional Quality Managers (RQMs)

BTEC RQMs monitor the progress of AAs activities at each centre. They ensure that programmes with NSS Blocks are attended to quickly and improvement plans put in place to rectify the position. In addition, RQMs ensure any centre quality issues are appropriately addressed. They manage the CRA process and ensure that all CRAs are carried out. A BTEC RQM is allocated to each BTEC centre. They provide advice and guidance on all aspects of quality operations of BTEC programmes.

Contact Details

Most staff can be contacted via:

BTEC Assessment
Edexcel
190 High Holborn
London
WC1V 7BH

Contact with Edexcel staff can also be made by telephone, 0844 576 0026 or by emailing enquiries@edexcel.com, giving the subject title, centre name and number in the email subject box and indicating clearly the nature of the query.

Regional Offices

For details of regional offices, please refer to the [website](#) or the Information Manual Contact Information section.

APPENDIX 2: R.Q.M. Contacts

Region	Regional Quality Manager		Centre Range (see map)
Northern England & Scotland	SV	Sharon.Veitch@edexcel.com 01642 560075 07595 887726	39; 41; 42; 43; 48; 49; 69; 70
North Central England	CA	Christine.Arnold@edexcel.com 0161 723 2863 07545 938390	37; 38; 46; 47
North West England & Isle of Man	PS	Paul.Sneade@edexcel.com 0151 724 4130 07770 582405	32; 33; 34; 35; 45
Central England West & North Wales	CL	Carol.Lunt@edexcel.com 01514 204830 07595 887716	23; 29; 30; 40; 681; 684
Central England East	HW	Howard.Wilson@edexcel.com 01522 788675 07825969799	26; 28; 36; 44
Central England	SF	Simon.Fox@edexcel.com 0121 4431420 07795 477521	20; 21; 25; 31
Eastern England	DA	Denise.Augar@edexcel.com 01223 354581 07919 047571	15; 16; 18; 19; 22; 27
Hertfordshire, North & Central London	DR	Dave.Roberts@edexcel.com 01992 503496 07917 775730	102; 103; 104; 105; 112; 116; 121; 122; 123; 125; 126; 127; 128; 132; 133; 134; 17
Central England South & West London	LW	Linda.Wain@edexcel.com 01256 817297 07894 418819	101; 124; 129; 131; 144; 146; 51; 52; 62; 64
South East England, South & East London	VB	Valerie.Benney@edexcel.com 01959 575493 07824 410136	106; 107; 108; 109; 110; 117; 119; 141; 142; 143; 145; 147; 61
Southern England	TB	Tricia.Burton@edexcel.com 01202 296258 07766 993405	55; 56; 58; 59; 65
South West England	CB	Caroline.Bland@edexcel.com 02392 596184 07595 887717	50; 53; 54; 57; 63; 66
Ireland, South & Mid Wales, Hereford & Worcester	KC	Kath.Carmody@edexcel.com 01656 768428 07775 817283	24; 682; 683; 685; 686; 687; 688; 71; 72; 73; 76; 78; 79
International	EC	Elizabeth.Crofts@edexcel.com 01440 788875 07795 241795	67; 74; 75; 77; 90; 91; 92; 93; 94; 96; 97
NB. For centres with numbers that have no set region, please contact the relevant RQM for your region.			001 - 009

For more information on Edexcel and BTEC qualifications
please visit our website: www.edexcel.com

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