

BTEC International Quality Assurance Handbook 2011-12

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Welcome!

Welcome to the International Handbook for centres delivering BTEC Vocational Qualifications during 2011-12.

This handbook will provide you with guidance on what you need to do to operate your programmes effectively and gain certification for your students.

You should maintain regular contact with your Edexcel regional office to ensure that you have all the information needed.

Approval

What is approval?

Any organisation wishing to deliver BTEC programmes must first gain centre approval from Edexcel.

An approved centre must obtain qualification approval to deliver and assess any BTEC programme at any level.

Which qualifications does approval cover?

Approval is required for any BTEC qualification level 1-7.

How do I get approval?

Contact your Regional Development Manager who will be able to help you to complete the relevant forms. Contact details can be found on the Edexcel website.

Further information

You may only operate the programmes for which you are approved and must only use the units and the programme structure shown on the programme definition.

The programme definition may include specialist or optional units. You should only offer units to students for which you have the necessary teachers, assessors and resources. There must be sufficient resources for all the students recruited.

You will need to take special care in choosing units and ensure that you do not select optional units which may cause problems in delivery. This could be because of their UK legal, social or cultural focus. Suitable alternatives can be selected from the wide range on offer.

You must ensure that you have the full specification for the approved programme and that this is made available to all the teachers and assessors on the programme. If you do not follow the requirements of the specification, certification may be affected.

You should consult the Edexcel website as well as the International website pages to check for the specification and any updates.

Implementation training

What is it?

Implementation training is a standard package of training to ensure that all staff understand the requirements for the delivery and assessment of BTEC qualifications.

Why do I need to do it?

Implementation training gives you the foundations needed to deliver a BTEC programme successfully.

When do I need to do it?

Implementation training should be completed before the programme is delivered to learners.

Further information

We will try our best to arrange the training before delivery takes place. The Standards Verifier may check that training has been undertaken and that the guidance given is being followed.

New members of staff should be given an induction to BTEC programmes to include the use of the specification, requirements of assessment, assessment record keeping, standards and standards verification. Training and updating may be requested through the centre's regional contact.

The Standards Verifier may check the qualifications and experience of new staff and can refuse certification if there is lack of continuity. The Standards Verifier will also refuse certification if staff are not delivering the programme according to BTEC requirements and standards.

Administration

What is it?

Administration is the management of individual students on Edexcel Systems.

Why do I need to do it?

Administration of students ensures that they are registered with Edexcel and are eligible for certification.

When do I need to do it?

Administration of students occurs at the beginning and throughout the delivery of the programme.

Further information

The administration of individual students on BTEC programmes is very simple. Full instructions are given in the **International Information Manual**, which can be found at: www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/int-manual.aspx

Most administration can be completed electronically using the Edexcel Online (EOL) website. If you have been approved to deliver a BTEC programme, you will have been given access to this site. If you have any queries about access to Edexcel Online, contact your Regional Office in the first instance.

You will need to:

- register students with us within 60 days of when they start on the programme, giving their full details and an expected date of completion
- report student achievement accurately and claim certification once the learners have completed the programme

Certification claims will be honoured if:

- standards verification has been fully completed and a 'Yes' to certification reported
- there are no serious quality issues
- there are no outstanding financial issues

You should note the following key points:

- registration is of individual students and is non-transferable
- higher fees are charged for late registrations (61-90 days after enrolment the original fee X 1.25, 91-120 days X 1.50, 121+ days after enrolment X 2)
- the name given at registration will be used for certification; You must check that the name as given in English is valid for the users of the certificate, e.g., in spelling and word order
- the date of birth must follow the UK date convention of day/month/year and the UK calendar
- registrations cannot be deleted (fee reimbursed) if students leave the programme, except if this is within 90 days of enrolment at the centre
- Standards Verifiers will check that learners on the programme are registered and will not permit certification if there are irregularities, e.g. work being presented for unregistered students

Financial administration

Our processes and terms are set out in the standard terms and conditions issued with approval. If you require a copy of the terms and conditions you should contact your Regional Development Manager.

Your regional contact will be able to confirm agreements on student fees, payments for verification and for any other services.

Invoices are issued immediately after student registrations are made and at the time that external verification takes place. You are expected to pay invoices in line with the terms. Centres that do not pay in full as required will be subject to withdrawal of services, including the provision of external verification. Failure to comply with terms and conditions could result in withdrawal of approval.

If you have any concerns about the accuracy of an invoice, please contact your Regional Development Manager immediately on its receipt.

Policies

What are they?

Policies are your published guidelines and processes that have been put in place to manage programme delivery at your centre.

Why do I need them?

These are needed so that all staff and learners know what processes will be followed and what is expected of them.

When do I need to do it?

Policies need to be in place prior to the start of the programme and in order to gain approval from Edexcel to deliver any vocational programmes

Further information

In addition to the programme specification, there are a number of policies that you need to be aware of.

Edexcel Policies are posted at: www.edexcel.com/about/policies

Relevant current policies include:

- UK Centres operating overseas
- Reasonable adjustments and special consideration
- Appeals
- Assessment and grading
- Recognition of prior learning
- Assessment

- Malpractice
- Electronic assessment
- Distance assessment
- Internal verification
- Plagiarism

Guidance for planning delivery and assessment for international centres is available at: www.btec.co.uk/international-quality

Support materials are available for some programmes on the Edexcel website. In some cases these will need to be adapted for use in a particular country.

External verification

What is this?

External verification is a quality check by an expert called a Standards Verifier who is appointed by Edexcel.

Why do I need it?

External verification allows certificates to be released and provides you with guidance and support on a regular basis.

When do I need to do it?

You can arrange a suitable time with your Regional Development Manager.

Further information

All BTEC centres and programmes are subject to quality assurance checks. The main form of quality assurance is through a Standards Verifier although some centres in Europe running QCF qualifications will adhere to the UK process. You may also be subject to checks through the regional office working with staff based centrally in London.

In order to prepare for external verification, you should refer to the latest version of: **Preparing for Standards Verification Visits.**

Standard Verifiers are appointed for their subject expertise and their knowledge of BTEC programmes. Standards Verifiers have current or recent experience in delivering programmes in the UK. All Standards Verifiers undergo regular training and their work is monitored by Edexcel senior staff. Their work and reports are monitored by an International Quality and Assessment Advisor.

The International Quality and Assessment Advisors are appointed to monitor and support standards verification activities in the following regions:

- Australasia
- Europe
- Indian Sub-continent
- Middle East
- North Asia
- Latin America
- South Africa
- South Asia

External verification visits

Once your learners have been registered we will allocate a Standards Verifier to quality assure the programme. The Standards Verifier will normally visit twice during an 11 month period, i.e. four visits during the period of operation of a two year programme.

We would normally expect a Standards Verifier to remain with a programme for up to four years where possible. You will be notified about your Standards Verifier by your regional office.

- Arrangements for external verification visits should be agreed shortly after approval and early in each registration period, as visits have to be booked months before they take place. Standards Verifiers may arrange to visit a number of centres in one region at the same time
- You will need to confirm with your regional office when visits normally take place and should ensure that visits can go ahead when planned
- Please be aware of Standards Verifier availability and do not make unreasonable demands for visit times or duration; Edexcel cannot agree to undertake visits on demand
- Centres that cancel visits may incur additional costs and their certification status could be affected.

What is the frequency of Standards Verifier visits?

- If you have been running a BTEC programme for three years **and** have had an acceptable Standards Verifier report, the number of Standards Verifier visits can be reduced from two to one per year
- If you have achieved consistently high ratings and are therefore on one Standards Verifier visit per year, but wish to have an additional Standards Verifier visit for purposes of programme team support and reassurance, you may request this via the Regional Office on a one off basis

Please be aware that the ruling on the frequency of visits applies to specific programmes and does not apply across the centre; you may receive a single visit for one of your BTEC programmes but still have two for another.

Visit planning

Before each visit, a centre should receive a verification plan. The centre refers to this for its own planning purposes and liaises with the regional office and Standards Verifier to draw up a detailed plan for the day.

Each visit will normally involve:

- reviewing assessment materials
 - e.g. assignments briefs, learner work, assessment records
- reviewing course documentation
 - e.g. policy documents, course review documents
- reviewing the operation of the internal verification process
- meeting members of teaching staff and other key personnel in the centre
- meeting students
- checking the arrangements for management of the programme and the adequacy of resources
 - e.g. library facilities, new teaching staff

Reminders

- You will need to have addressed the action points from the previous Standards Verifier report form. The Standards Verifier will start by referring back to the previous report and asking about progress
- Standards Verifiers need to have the maximum amount of time in the centre during the visit in order to complete their planned activities. You are therefore asked not to provide hospitality or other activities beyond ensuring that standard Verifiers are provided with some refreshments during the visit
- Standards Verifiers are not contracted to attend press conferences or similar activities. They are allocated to centres in order to externally review programmes and not to act as broader Edexcel representatives in the sense of public relations

Standards Verifiers: reporting and feedback

On the day of the visit please ensure that the detailed plan is followed and that all required materials are available for the Standards Verifier to see.

At the end of the visit, the Standards Verifier will provide verbal feedback to the centre. It will be necessary for the Programme Leader and any other key personnel to be present. The Standards Verifier will not normally provide a full report on the day, but will summarise the main action points. The Standards Verifier should advise the centre when the report can be completed after the visit. Reports are provided electronically.

You are advised to refer to **Preparing for Standards Verifier Visits**, a practical guide about preparation for the Standards Verifier visit and managing the day of the visit.

Standards Verifier reports

A Standards Verifier's report:

- shows the status and quality of the programme
- documents the materials reviewed during the visit
- guides you towards the action required to improve the programme.

Standards Verifier decisions on certification

You will only be able to claim certificates for students on a programme if the programme has been given YES for certification. Sufficient sampling normally involves four visits for a programme of two years duration.

Standards Verifier monitoring

The work of all Standards Verifiers is regularly monitored, to ensure that external verification is of the highest standard. You may be asked by Edexcel to complete a feedback form to show how satisfied you are with your Standards Verifier. Please note that International Standards Verifiers are only one type of Assessment Associate contracted by Edexcel and they may sometimes be referred to as "AA"s when being monitored.

Very occasionally, a centre may be dissatisfied following external verification. If you have a complaint about the behaviour of a Standards Verifier or believe that a Standards Verifier has given an incorrect judgement on a programme, then you may write to the International Assessment and Delivery Manager at Edexcel giving full details.

Standards Verifiers and training in centres

The role of the Standards Verifier includes giving advice and support to the programme team and reassuring you that you are delivering the programme(s) in accordance with Edexcel requirements.

The Standards Verifier is **not** permitted to run training sessions for you in addition to their Standards Verifier role. Training sessions, where needed, can be arranged through Training from Edexcel and you are advised initially to contact your regional office for advice.

QCF or NVQ programmes

In some instances, for example, where progression is direct to the UK, centres may be approved to run an accredited QCF or NVQ qualification. These centres tend to be in Europe. In these cases the programmes must be delivered exactly as they would be in the UK.

You will need to:

- appoint a Lead Internal Verifier to each principal subject area
- attempt to gain accreditation via online standardisation (OSCA2)
- conduct Quality Review and Development

Please refer to the **UK BTEC Quality Assurance Handbook 2011-12** for further information: www.edexcel.com/quals/BTEC/quality/Pages/documents.aspx

Advisory visits for European centres running QCF programmes

Centres that are successful in gaining accreditation will no longer be visited by International Standards Verifiers. However, you may request an advisory visit after Quality Review & Development has taken place.

Where possible we will allocate the same Assessment Associate that has conducted Quality Review & Development. However, you may request a subject specialist if you require.

The visit will be very much the same as a standards verification visit but the advisor will not grade programmes and release certification.

An advisory visit form will be completed and sent to you upon completion of the visit.

Claiming certification

When all external verification and quality assurance is complete and certification clearance has been given, you are responsible for claiming certificates via Edexcel Online. The full processes are given in the **International Information Manual**, which can be found at: www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/int-manual.aspx

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

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

You will need to enter certification data carefully and you should ensure that all data is correct before it is submitted. For example, data must be entered for the correct individual, units and grades (where appropriate). The information submitted will be used for certification. Should there be any errors in certificates these must be returned to Edexcel with a full explanation. Edexcel may suspend clearance to certificate where valid procedures are not followed.

Programme end dates

Programmes are approved for a fixed period. You will need to consider 1-2 years in advance of the expiry date what action is required to continue to offer a BTEC programme. Generally published programmes and policies may be updated during the period of approval. You can find up to date information and advice from your regional office or the website.

If you no longer wish to offer a programme, then you should notify your regional office in writing. The programme can then be expired and arrangements made for the final external verification of any remaining learners.