Guidelines for Completing External Authentication

On behalf of KCETB

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kcetb

Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna
Chill Chainnigh agus Cheatharlach

*Kilkenny and Carlow
Education and Training Board*

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Staff members should consult the QA website or Portal for the latest version of this document.			

Contents

1.   Introduction

This document is a supplementary document that has been developed by the Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board (KCETB) to support the work of the External Authenticator. The Quality assurance procedures are outlined in the [KCETB 'Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures for the Fair and Consistent Assessment of Learners'](#) (referred to as the KCETB Assessment Policy).

External Authentication (EA) establishes the credibility of KCETB's assessment processes. Essentially it aims to ensure that assessments are valid, reliable, and consistent with the requirements for the relevant awards. External Authenticators are required to authenticate a defined sample of learner assessment evidence. The volume and range of work to be assessed will be determined by the QA Team in conjunction with each KCETB centre in advance of EA with reference to the KCETB Assessment Policy.

This document has been complied with reference to the following guidance documents:
- QQI Core QA Guidelines[1]
- QQI policy on Quality Assurance Guidelines [2]
- KCETB QA Policies and Procedures for the Fair and Consistent Assessment of Learners[3]
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2.   KCETB Quality Assurance Overview

One of the most crucial components of KCETB's assessment framework is its authentication process. For QQI awards, the operation of internal verification and external authentication processes is a core quality assurance mechanism which seeks to ensure fairness, consistency and validity of assessment and of assessment outcomes. Each KCETB centre follows the process outlined in figure 1.

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[1] http://www.qqi-qaguidelines.com/core.html#core-issuu
[2] https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Core%20Statutory%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines.pdf
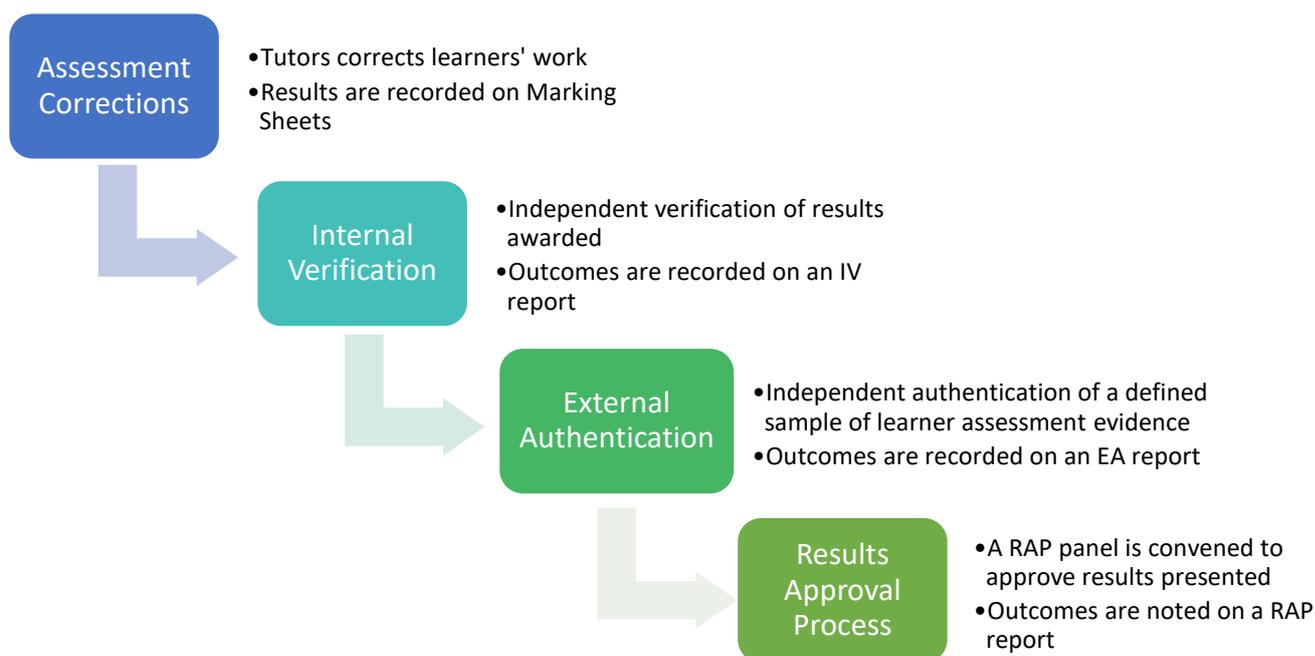[3] https://kcetbqa.ie/?page_id=882

Figure 1 KCETB Quality Assurance Procedures

Once results are approved, they are issued to learners, with instructions on appeals, before requesting Certification from QQI or other awarding bodies.

3.   External Authentication appointment (QA)

The KCETB QA Team appoints external authenticators that are appropriately trained and briefed for the role. In selecting an appropriate external authenticator, care is taken to ensure that the authenticator:

- Has technical/subject matter expertise within the appropriate award area/field of learning
- Has experience of delivering programme assessment or work in the industry/field
- Agrees to undertake appropriate training and to attend appropriate briefings
- Has the qualities necessary to interact with learners, assessors and senior staff members, as appropriate
- Has administrative and I.T. skills
- Can undertake to operate within the code of practice and guidelines issued by QQI, as appropriate
- Is available to the provider at appropriate times
- Is independent of the centre to which s/he is assigned

The KCETB QA Team in conjunction with the centres, establish upcoming EA requirements by referencing the QQI (or other awarding bodies) certification dates. Suitable EA appointments are identified by referencing the ETBi EA directory link. A KCETB QA EA Agreement email is sent to the EA in addition to the EA service agreement, GDPR agreement and an employee set up form. These documents clarify the arrangements for the EA. Contact details are supplied to the EA and the KCETB centre.

4.   Before the External Authentication (Centre)

In advance of the EA visit, the KCETB centre shall prepare the following:
- Relevant award specifications and validated programmes (if appropriate)
- All relevant assessment instruments and appropriate supporting documentation, for example, assessment briefs, examination papers, marking schemes and outline solutions
- The assessment plan(s) / Timetables (If appropriate)
- All learner assessment evidence
- All learner assessment results recorded on appropriate results sheet(s)
- List of assessors per programme and/or class group
- Internal verification report
- Details of the KCETB sampling strategy applied

Centres should also ensure that the appropriate equipment Is in place for the external authenticator to moderate assessment evidence eg. Laptop / PC / appropriate software

5.   The External Authentication event (EA and Centre)

The external authenticator conducts the authentication and moderates the assessment results before compiling a report to return to the provider. Moderating assessment results involves reviewing results and checking the standard of evidence at each grade band: Successful (Levels 1-3), Distinction, Merit, Pass (Levels 4-6) and Unsuccessful/Referred, by examining samples of evidence within each grade band and at the borders of grades. The critical points at which judgement is applied are the boundaries between bands/grades: Referred/Pass, Pass/Merit, Merit/Distinction.

In order to moderate the assessment results, the authenticator will:
- Review the award standards
- Review the QQI grading criteria
- Confirm assessment techniques and instruments are appropriate
- Ensure consistency with the award requirements
- Confirm the assessment criteria and marking sheets are appropriate
- Judge a sample of learner evidence and results to ensure consistency with the award standard and grading criteria. Please refer to the QQI website for the NFQ grid of level indicators for consistency and standards

During the external authentication process, it is expected that:
- The KCETB centre shall have a nominated contact person available to address queries that arise during the EA process
- The KCETB centre will have a suitable room / office for the external authenticator to work in with access to all materials and equipment necessary
- The KCETB centre will be mindful of the presence of the EA particularly in the event of a fire drill / emergency / building closure
- The external authenticator shall notify the contact person of missing / misplaced items
- The external authenticator shall discuss serious issues as they arise with the KCETB contact person

- The external authenticator will focus on the moderation of grades and review of documentation as outlined above.
- The external authenticator will provide a summary of the EA findings to the centre manager and / or the nominated contact person before leaving the centre.

6.   The External Authentication Report (EA)

The outcomes for the EA review are recorded in the EA report. The current version template is supplied by the QA office in advance of EA. This is the only template that should be used by the appointed EA. The following should be noted in the EA report:
- Date(s) of EA
- Name of external authenticator
- Awards / Modules covered
- Sample size
- Moderation of grades awarded
- IV report review
- Evidence of consideration of previous External Authentication recommendations
- Conclusion
- Recommendations / Observations

7.   Communication with KCETB (EA)

The arrangements for the EA visit are made by the QA Team on appointment of the EA as outlined in section 3. Throughout the EA visit, the nominated contact person is the point of contact for any queries. It is preferable that the following are discussed during the visit by highlighting to the nominated contact person:
- Missing documents or other assessment materials
- Grade changes being made
- Equipment missing or not working
- Any other issue or concern that is possible to clarify or rectify during the visit
- A brief review of the main findings on conclusion of the authentication

The EA report should be completed within a reasonable timeframe (typically within 48 hours) and electronic copies submitted to the QA Team and the nominated centre contact person.

8.   EA documentation (QA)

KCETB have a series of documents to support and record the work of the EA. This includes the paperwork required to process payment. The documents and forms are listed below.

A Documents (To be returned prior to commencing EA)
A1 ¦ EA Service Agreement (Completed via Adobe Sign)
A2 ¦ GDPR Agreement (Completed via Adobe Sign)
A3 ¦ Guest Lecturers Trainers Set up Form

B Documents (To be returned within two days of completing the EA)
B1 ¦ EA Report
B2 ¦ EA Corrective Action (*only required if there are grade changes*)

C Documents (To be returned after completing the EA for payment)
C1 ¦ EA Claim Form
C2 ¦ EA Travel and Subsistence Claim (*If you have receipts, please return these as KCETB will only reimburse overnight subsistence for vouched expenditure*)
C3 ¦ Travel Indemnity Declaration Form

D Documents (For your information)
D1 ¦ EA Workload
D2 ¦ KCETB EA Procedures
D3 ¦ Centre Contact Details
D4 ¦ Travel and Subsistence Rates *(If in centre EA)*

9. Remote External authentication (QA, Centre and EA)

In the event that remote external authentication is the preferred or necessary option, the following should be implemented in addition to the preceding sections:

- All assessment material and evidence will be uploaded onto a storage platform e.g. SharePoint, OneDrive, OneNote, Moodle.
- The e-mail address of the appointed EA will be shared with the centre in advance.
- The relevant folders will be shared with the EA in advance of the agreed start date.
- The centre nominated person will be available by phone or e-mail to address any queries.
- The report will be submitted electronically.
- The centre will confirm with the EA in advance that they have the necessary software / hardware required to view assessment material.