

# COVID-19 Guidelines and Procedures for Authentication Process

(In response to COVID-19 restrictions)

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**etb**

Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna  
Chill Chainnigh agus Cheatharlach  
*Kilkenny and Carlow  
Education and Training Board*

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## 1. Introduction

As a result of the COVID-19 enforced restrictions the authentication process within KCETB may have to be changed. This guidance document defines what is meant by authentication and the process for authentication during COVID-19 enforced restriction.

In April and May 2020 Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board published the following documents in response to the COVID-19 enforced lockdown:

1. Guidelines and Procedures for COVID-19 Contingency Planning for Assessments (April 2020)
2. Guidelines and Procedures for COVID-19 Contingency Planning Addendum 1 Alternative Assessments and Authentication Process (April 2020)
3. Guidelines and Procedures for COVID-19 Contingency Planning Addendum 2 Authentication Process (May 2020)

These documents were informed by QQI's Implementing Contingency Arrangements for Alternative Assessment and Authentication Processes: Guidance for Further Education & Training Providers on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2020<sup>1</sup>. These QQI guiding principles were subsequently extended until 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021.

This document is an update of the Guidelines and Procedures for COVID-19 Contingency Planning for Authentication (published in May 2020). There have been many developments since April 2020, not least the demonstrable ability by assessors and learners to adapt to the current circumstances but KCETB has also produced a number of policy documents since May 2020 including:

- [The KCETB Assessment Policy](#)
- [The KCETB Blended Learning Policy](#)
- [The KCETB RPL Policy](#)

### **Outline of this document:**

Sections 1 to 5 outlines the context of these guidelines.

Section 6 to 10 outlines the authentication process in the context of COVID-19 enforced restrictions.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Contingency%20Arrangements%20Guidance%20for%20FET%20Providers.pdf>

## 2. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to ensure that there is a consistent approach to the implementation of authentication within KCETB FET provision. A consistent approach will ensure that QA standards are maintained.

## 3. Scope

This guidance document is informed by QQI's Implementing Contingency Arrangements for Alternative Assessment and Authentication Processes: Guidance for Further Education & Training Providers on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2020. All KCETB FET centres should adopt and implement the process within their centre.

This document is therefore concerned with the Authentication Process outlined in sections 3 to 5 of QQI's Implementing Contingency Arrangements for Alternative Assessment and authentication processes: Guidance for Further Education & Training Providers on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2020.

Guidance and publications in response to the COVID-19 emergency restrictions from other certifying bodies should be monitored and implemented as directed by those organisations. Any changes to the authentication processes in non-QQI awards should also be documented. Please contact [ga.info@kilkennycarlowtb.ie](mailto:ga.info@kilkennycarlowtb.ie) if any changes are being implemented for non-QQI awards.

There is a separate document that deals with Alternative Assessments for work experience, work placement and work-based learning. That document can be found [here](#).

There is also a separate document that deals with changes to Alternative Assessment techniques. That document can be found [here](#).

## 4. Rationale

Insofar as practicable, any learner enrolled in a programme of education or training in KCETB should be enabled to achieve the qualifications that they are striving towards. To ensure that qualifications are only awarded on the basis of validly and reliably assessed learning outcomes, learner portfolios need to go through KCETB's authentication processes. This fundamental proposition continues to hold even in these exceptional circumstances. Learners, and other users of qualifications, need to be confident that 2020 and 2021 qualifications in KCETB have the same value and fitness for purpose as those made in other years.

The guidance set out here has been devised within the context of QQI's statutory [Core QA Guidelines](#), within the context of the [KCETB Assessment Policy](#) (Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures for the Fair and Consistent Assessment of Learners) and is approved by the KCETB Quality Assurance Oversight Committee.

## 5. Timeline

This guidance is intended to support authentication processes of assessments where modifications have been implemented as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.<sup>1</sup> For 2021, it is envisaged that, at a minimum, the authentication process for the April, June, July and August certification windows will be comprehended by this document.

## 6. Authentication Process

One of the most crucial components of a provider'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. Authentication processes for non QQI awards should be followed as outlined by the relevant awarding body

## 7. Internal Verification (IV)

The role of the internal verifier is to systematically check that the provider's assessment procedures have been applied consistently across assessment activities and to verify the arithmetic / administrative accuracy of assessment results. The internal verification process should be conducted in line with the [KCETB's Assessment Policy](#)

### 7.1. Remote IV

Each centre should plan for the scenario where internal verifiers are not able to access the centres/evidence in person.

Potential contingency arrangements might include:

- where assessments have been completed in a digital format (e.g. online exam), accessing these online;
- scanning written material;
- creating video, photographic or audio recordings of assessments. Care should be taken to ensure that the visual/audio quality of such recordings is sufficient to enable accurate review by an external authenticator.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> [Supplementary Guidance FET Providers \(qqi.ie\)](#)

## 7.2. Digital Records

If a provider plans to use digital records of assessments, care should be taken to ensure that these are:

- correctly labelled and attributed to the correct learner;
- stored securely and backed-up.

## 7.3. Provisional Reports

Provisional results reports should also be extracted from QBS and cross-checked with centre-level results.

## 7.4. Alternative Assessments

The process for verification of assessment results includes ensuring that assessment evidence reflects the assessment techniques outlined in the validated programme. Where alternative assessment techniques or instruments have been adopted, the internal verifier should note on the internal verification report:

- the nature of any alternative assessment adopted (e.g. assignment rather than examination); see example below; and
- whether or not the alternative assessment arrangement has been documented and formally approved by the provider (and any other authority with standing in the variation of assessment arrangements, e.g. a regulator) consistent with QQI guidance.



Internal verification Monitoring assessment results										
Please complete for each named award/group of student results verified	Is the documentation available and completed correctly? e.g. mark sheets, learner records		Was the evidence generated in accordance with appropriate assessment techniques and instruments?		Have marks been correctly totalled and grades awarded in line with QQI requirements		If an Alternative Assessment Technique was used was this approved by KCETB? Please State the nature of the Alternative Assessment in the comments			Comments:
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	N/A	
Named award title	✓		✓		✓		✓			Alternative assessment – Exam changed to open book exam with questions amended to open questions taking into account that learners can access their learning material

## 8. External Authentication (EA)

External authentication establishes the credibility of the provider’s assessment processes. Essentially it aims to ensure that assessments are valid, reliable and consistent with the requirements for the relevant awards.

Given the scale of disruption to teaching, learning and assessment during the pandemic, an external perspective on assessment is even more imperative at this time and this is especially true for alternative assessment arrangements.<sup>3</sup>

### 8.1. Remote EA

Each centre should plan for the scenario where external authenticators are not able to access the centres/evidence in person. This will require the filing of data in a way that it can be easily accessed remotely.

Potential contingency arrangements might include:

- where assessments have been completed in a digital format (e.g. online exam), allowing for the EA to access these online;
- scanning written material;
- creating video, photographic or audio recordings of assessments. Care should be taken to ensure that the visual/audio quality of such recordings is sufficient to enable accurate review by an external authenticator.

### 8.2. Sampling

The sampling structure will follow that as outlined in 11.9.2 in [KCETB's Assessment Policy](#).

The following awards must be put forward for external authentication:

- Any module that was not EA'd in the last two years
- Any new module being delivered
- Any module being delivered by a new member of staff
- Any module for which a WP form was completed
- Any module assessed using alternative assessment that wasn't assessed in the previous year.<sup>4</sup>

## 9. Requesting EA

### 9.1 Process

To request an EA for your centre please fill in the [EA Request Form](#) and send a copy to [qa.info@kilkennycarlowetb.ie](mailto:qa.info@kilkennycarlowetb.ie) ensuring the components and programmes required to be EA'd are listed on the form. Provisional portfolio numbers can be added. These can be amended closer to the EA date to reflect actual numbers. Please ensure that a proposed date for EA is included on the form. The QA Office will then source an EA for your centre.

Further information on the EA process can be found [here](#)

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<sup>3</sup> [Supplementary Guidance FET Providers \(qqi.ie\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> Alternative Assessment form still needs to be completed if the Alternative Assessment was EA'd in the previous year

## 10. Results Approval Process (RAP)

As part of the results approval process, providers are required to establish a results approval panel (RAP) to ensure that assessment decisions and results are reviewed, judged and processed in a fair, consistent and transparent manner.

The functions of the RAP include:

- reviewing and approving assessment results;
- reviewing reports of the internal verification and external authentication processes;
- agreeing to the submission of final results to QQI to request certification; and
- identifying any issues arising in relation to the results and making determinations for corrective action.<sup>5</sup>

### 10.1. Joint RAP

KCETB commenced the process of joint RAPs in 2020. One joint RAP will take place for each certification period in 2021.

### 10.2. Remote RAP

During COVID RAP meetings will continue to take place remotely via MS Teams.

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<sup>5</sup> [Supplementary Guidance FET Providers \(qqi.ie\)](#)