

The EA Process and Arrangements for the Early Appointment of External Authenticators to Evaluate Assessment Instruments including Alternative Assessments – Pilot 2020/21

Based on learning captured from the last programme cycle in the midst of the Covid-19 crisis, the area of quality assuring assessment was examined by the Quality Assurance and Strategic Planning Council (QASPC) including the role and function of the External Authenticator (EA). It was agreed that the EA was a key party in the process of quality assuring assessment and it was put forward that an opportunity for EA input earlier in the programme cycle would be most beneficial for all parties involved. The role of the EA was examined and in particular the tasks involved in carrying out this role. It was agreed that a pilot which allowed the EA to carry out the task of examining and evaluating assessment briefs earlier in the programme cycle without the need for this work to be duplicated at the end of the programme cycle would be beneficial. This approach can be used where Alternative Assessments have not been used and will provide for:

- The completion of part of the EA role earlier in the programme cycle thereby facilitating feedback to teachers/trainers/tutors in a timely manner prior to instruments being issued.
- An examination of alternative assessment briefs in accordance with the City of Dublin ETB produced guidance to ensure the standards these instruments (where applicable)
- A reduction of work being carried out at the end of the programme cycle thereby reducing pressure on teachers/trainers/tutors.

It is recognised that the EA carries out the following key tasks.

- 1. Examining and evaluating all assessment instruments and marking schemes to ensure all learning outcomes have been assessed via the instruments, and that the instruments meet the national standards of the award to which the module leads.**
- 2. Ensuring Internal Verification has occurred and reporting on same.**
- 3. Selecting a sample of learner evidence in accordance with the provider sampling strategy and moderating this evidence against the relevant standards. This may result in the EA proposing a change in grades awarded.**
- 4. Liaising with Quality Teams and members of teaching/training/tutoring staff with requests for further information, and to discuss findings and provide feedback**
- 5. Completing an EA Report per course which is furnished to the provider/centre.**

It is proposed that the following tasks can be completed remotely in advance (prior to end of the programme cycle):

- 1. The EA examines and evaluates all assessment instruments and marking schemes to ensure all learning outcomes have been assessed via the instruments, and that the instruments are consistent with national standards of the award to which the module/programme leads.**

The EA carries out this task by verifying:

- i. The assessment instruments (e.g. briefs/exam papers) against the assessment requirements of module descriptor and the relevant component specification to ensure Learning Outcomes (LOs) are covered and the tasks are appropriate for the level of the award (NFQ award level indicators e.g. level of autonomy and independence expected).

Appendix 1

- ii. That the marking schemes for the assessments are consistent with the module descriptor/NFQ award level indicators and marks given for tasks reflect the relevant QQI grading criteria for the award level.
- iii. Where Alternative Assessments (AA) were devised in response to the Covid-19 crisis the EA evaluates the instrument against the City of Dublin ETB Memo on Quality Assuring Alternative Assessment instruments, which takes account of the relevant standards to be applied. Where the EA is examining the AA in advance the prescribed form in the Memo will be completed by the EA to verify the instrument meets the necessary standards.

4(a)¹. Liaise with Quality Teams and members of teaching/training/tutoring staff where relevant with requests for further information, and to discuss findings and provide feedback

5(a)² The EA Report: The EA should complete the 'Assessment Instruments and Marking Schemes' section of the EA report and issue to the centre and the relevant teachers/tutors/trainers. Where feedback for more than one module has been provided in the report, it should be extracted and shared with teachers individually. It is important to highlight and emphasise good practice as well as areas for improvement. Feedback should be examined with/by teachers and any adjustments to be carried out as agreed. Further clarifications may be sought from the EA in respect of this. Where the EA completed the relevant form in relation to an AA, this should also be attached.

Where the above tasks are completed in advance by an EA the following payment arrangements can be used:

- 20% of the EA's agreed fee in advance
- 10% of the agreed EA daily rate to be paid per AA verification form completed in advance.

It is proposed the following occur at the end of the programme cycle:

2. The EA checks that Internal Verification has occurred in accordance with the agreed requirements. The IV Report is made available and is checked by the EA.

3. A Sample of Learner Evidence is selected based on the provider's sampling strategy – Appendix 1.

Within the sample the EA examines and evaluates the following for each learner and each module:

- **What was asked of the learner (the assessment instrument)**
- **How the learner responded to what was asked (learner evidence)**
- **How the teacher/trainer/tutor graded and why based on the above in line with a marking scheme which reflects the LOs, and the appropriate grading criteria (marking and feedback)**

The EA should then determine whether the correct marks were given in each assessment and if they agree with the overall grade given to the learner for the module. Any **recommended grade changes should be made to the Results Sheet** and reflected in the EA Report.

4(b)³ While carrying out the above tasks the EA will often have to **liaise with the subject teacher/trainer/tutor, and relevant member/s of the Centre Quality Team**, where necessary.

5b⁴. The EA completes their report and all sections not previously finalised and issues the completed report to the centre's Quality Team. The balance of payment due to the EA should then be discharged.

¹ The numbering reflects the splitting of tasks into two phases

² The numbering reflects the splitting of tasks into two phases

³ The numbering reflects the splitting of tasks into two phases

⁴ The numbering reflects the splitting of tasks into two phases

Appendix 1

City of Dublin ETB External Authentication Common Sampling Strategy

To ensure consistency across all City of Dublin ETB centres & to comply with QQI Quality Assurance Guidelines for External Authenticators (revised 2015), the City of Dublin ETB QA Steering Committee has approved one common sampling strategy for all City of Dublin ETB centres in 2019. This has been further updated as follows by the City of Dublin ETB Quality Assurance and Strategic Planning Council in February 2021:

1. The City of Dublin ETB IV/EA common sampling strategy is as follows:

- 1.1 All programmes and their respective programme modules shall be internally verified prior to every certification period where learners are being put forward for certification for their completed programme/programme modules for that period. This takes account of multiple assessment periods which occur annually.
- 1.2 All programmes and their respective programme modules shall be externally authenticated on an annual basis. This takes account of multiple certification periods which occur annually.
- 1.3 The sampling per module includes moderation at the relevant cut-off points to include Distinction, Merit, Pass and Unsuccessful grades in each learner group selected. A minimum of four learners should be sampled or where a learner group has a smaller number than 4, 100% of that learner group shall be sampled.
- 1.4 Where appropriate, if the module with the same assessment instruments is delivered by the same teacher/trainer/tutor to more than one learner group then the minimum sample may be selected from across both learner groups. Where there are more than two learner groups but less than 5 to which the above applies, the sample should be increased to a minimum of 8 in line with requirements in relation to moderation at relevant cut off points.

2. The EA must ensure that the selected sample meets the following criteria:

- 2.1 The sample must be sufficient to enable the Authenticator to make an informed judgement on the consistency of the assessment decisions in the context of the award standards.
 - 2.2 Sample includes the borderline grades of Distinction, Pass, Merit and Unsuccessful, with a spread of grades reflected to ensure grading criteria are being applied consistently, as appropriate.
 - 2.3 If the Authenticator is moderating results from a number of assessors and programmes, then the sample of evidence should reflect each assessor and each programme sufficiently.
 - 2.4 New assessor judgements/decisions should be sampled at least once during the assessment cycle, as identified by centre management.
 - 2.5 If significant issues are identified with a sample, the evidence for the whole cohort of learners from which the sample was taken should be reviewed by the Authenticator.
 - 2.6 Where learner evidence from a number of centres is presented, the sample must include evidence from each centre.
3. Any proposed deviation from the above sampling strategy cannot be approved at centre level. As a minimum the sampling strategy requirements prescribed by QQI in Quality Assuring Assessment Guidelines for Providers 2013 (V2 revised 2018) will be adhered to. This document is available at [Sample Certificates \(qqi.ie\)](https://www.qqi.ie/Sample-Certificates).