EQA Strategy Including Centre Assessment Standards Scrutiny (CASS) Strategy (External)

V25.2

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Approved By	Executive Team
Policy Relates to	Recognised Centres, VQA Employees, Third Parties, Learners
Policy is for the use of	VQA Recognised Centres
Should be read in conjunction with	Sanctions Policy, Appeals Policy, Malpractice and Maladministration Policy, Conflict of Interest Policy
Relevant GCoR	H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, H6

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Previous updates

Updated to include

- CRAs taking place every 12 months
- CDA requirements updated to reflect that EQA Team now being responsible

Recent updates

v25.2 Updated to reflect Moderation requirements for certain qualifications and some minor amendments to structure and wording for clarity.

Introduction

This document details VQA's strategy in relation to External Quality Assurance including:

- Qualification risk factors and calculation
- Centre Assessment Standards Scrutiny (CASS)
- EQA activity strategy
- EQA sampling strategy
- Guidance and support available for centres.

This strategy intends to:

- Demonstrate our compliance with the Ofqual General Conditions of Recognition in relation to CASS
- Ensure that our centres meet our quality assurance requirements
- Safeguard our reputation, and the reputation of the sector and our Centres, with all our stakeholders
- Support centres to be prepared for and meet VQAs quality assurance standards.

This document should be read in conjunction with the following other policies:

- Conflict of Interest policy
- Malpractice and Maladministration policy
- Sanctions policy.
- Appeals policy.

VQA Internal Responsibility

The Regulatory Compliance Pillar is responsible for the maintenance and compliance of this strategy. If the Head of Regulatory Compliance is absent, the Responsible Officer will appoint another appropriate colleague to ensure all of VQA's actions and activities are in line with the content of this policy.

Review Arrangements

We will review the strategy annually as part of our self-evaluation process and revise it as and when necessary, in response to feedback or requests. We may also update this strategy as part of good practice guidance issued by the regulatory authorities.

The annual review of this strategy will be undertaken by the Regulatory Compliance Pillar. As part of this review, any amendments or updates to this strategy will be approved by VQA's Executive Team.

If you have any points or feedback regarding this strategy, please contact us via the details provided at the start of this policy.

Recognised Centre Responsibility

VQA suggests that all Recognised and potential Centre staff involved in the delivery, management, assessment and quality assurance of our qualifications and their Learners are fully aware of the contents of this policy.

A Recognised Centre must have relevant policies, procedures and processes in place that ensure they meet the contents of this document.

Activity types

There are two main EQA Activity types:

- Continued Recognition Activity (CRA) – this can be remote or face-to-face; may include sampling, where required; can be pre-arranged or unannounced.
- Sampling activity.
- Moderation – this is where VQA marks learner assessment prior to results being issued and makes any required changes.

The requirements of a CRA in respect to what is reviewed by the EQA are set out in the EQA Continued Recognition Activity report template, which you will receive following the completion of the activity.

The requirements of a sampling activity are set out in the EQA Sampling report template, which you will receive following the completion of the activity.

A CRA will be valid for up to 12 months. These will be chargeable in line with our published fees.

Sampling will take place at the point of claims where the centre does not have DCS.

CRAs will contain sampling of both previously claimed certificates awarded via DCS and learners that are registered on qualifications that have yet to have any claims or certifications.

The amount of sampling will be determined by the Centre risk rating and the Qualification risk rating.

Moderation follows Ofqual's definition and does not have to be solely where a centre and qualification risk are Red. For example, the regulatory requirements for the qualification may require moderation.

For all activity types, Centres must have maintained assessment records for all learners for 3 years to ensure that they are liable for EQA Activities and any other retrospective activities that VQA or other regulator(s) may undertake.

What to expect from EQA activities

Our EQA Officers will be in touch when your Centre is required to provide sampling, for both Sampling activities and CRAs. The EQA Officer will outline exactly what you need to provide, as it may vary depending upon the nature of the associated qualifications; however, examples of what you'll need to prepare and send are:

- Learner assessments
- Assessor feedback records
- IQA records
- Attendance records.

For CRAs, your allocated EQA will contact you to arrange a suitable time for the activity to take place.

The EQA will complete sampling, if required, which will be requested by a EQA Officer as detailed above.

The other sections of a CRA will be outlined by your EQA, including details of any observations or interviews that are required.

Our CRA report covers 4 main areas in addition to sampling, observations and interviews:

- Centre requirements – this includes information relating to your internal arrangements and ensuring you're using VQA systems and processes properly
- Procedures – this includes ensuring that your centre has the correct policies and procedures in place to meet VQA's standards, including, IQA Policy/Procedure, Maladministration and Malpractice policy, Learner Appeals policy and Business Continuity Plans
- Learner requirements – this includes information regarding the enrolment and support given to learners
- Internal Quality Assurance – this includes the IQA arrangements in place at the centre including appropriate records, standardisation, feedback and other IQA processes
- Assessments – this includes the Assessments arrangements in place at the centre including appropriate records, standardisation, feedback and other Assessment processes
- Staff – this includes ensuring that staffing arrangements are adequate and recorded properly
- Appeals and Complaints – this includes ensuring appeals and complaints have been recorded, processed.

Centre support and guidance

All centres who are approved to deliver and mark assessments on behalf of VQA will go through, or have been through, the centre recognition and qualification approval processes. These processes ensure that centres have appropriate capacity and resource to deliver and mark assessments on behalf of VQA.

Our EQA team will take you through these processes, outlining at each stage what is required and offering further support, if required.

Some VQA qualifications require that you devise an assessment. These are called Centre Devised Assessments (CDAs) and must be created in line with the learning outcomes and assessment criteria in the VQA qualification specification. You can find these qualification specifications via the qualification search on tquk.org.

During qualification approval, you may be required to submit devised assessments to the EQA Team for review. Whether or not a devised assessment is requested, you may ask that it is reviewed to further assure yourselves the assessment meets the requirements of the qualification. Further guidance in relation to centre-devised assessments can be found here.

Where you require additional training and support this can be offered via an EQA or LEQA with appropriate sector/subject knowledge, where appropriate. This will be chargeable in line with our published fees. Additionally, if you have colleagues who require full training or qualifications in relation to IQA or Assessment, we can signpost you to complete these with a third party.

Centre risk score

Once a centre is recognised by VQA, they will have a centre risk rating attributed to them. This rating is automatically generated by VQA's internal Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, using relevant information. Whilst we will never make a centre's risk score available publicly, we have included some examples below of what can affect a centre's risk score:

- Outcome of EQA activities

- Ability to respond to and complete actions
- Sanctions currently or previously imposed
- Previous instances of maladministration and malpractice.

VQA will always reward those that seek to uphold the quality of our qualifications and the sector.

Proactivity in relation to communication with VQA will also be considered in relation to centre risk.

Whilst our internal system automatically calculates a rating, there will be intelligence that is received that may not be quantifiable or is not yet included in the auto-calculated risk score. In these instances, the intelligence will be considered when determining the centre risk score in relation to EQA Activities.

Newly recognised centre risk rating and EQA Activities

Newly recognised centres will be assigned a risk rating based on the outcome of their Centre Recognition engagement and findings.

All claims made by newly recognised centres that have not transferred DCS will have all claims scrutinised by completing Sampling EQA Activities. This will be based on the risk rating that is assigned from the Centre Recognition process and the calculated risk rating by the CRM.

For details on newly recognised centres that have transferred DCS, please see the Direct Claim Status section.

Qualification risk score

As part of our risk-based approach, our Qualifications team have reviewed our qualifications portfolio to determine the appropriate risk rating. Some examples of the factors considered to determine these ratings have been provided below:

- assessment type
- burden on the centre
- qualification structure suitable for centre-devised assessments
- purpose of the qualification.

There are 3 types of qualification risk rating:

- Low risk
- High risk (DCS Permitted)
- High risk (DCS Not Permitted).

Taking action and making adjustments

For all EQA Activities, a report will be produced by a competent EQA and reviewed by an EQA Officer before being issued to you.

Where no actions are set, or issues identified, the report will be issued and DCS may be rewarded, depending on the centre and qualification risk score.

Where issues are identified by the EQA, we will expand the sampling requested. This is done to help determine the scope of any issue identified, and to ensure that VQA gains the assurance required.

Where actions are issued following an EQA Activity, DCS will not be awarded.

Where an EQA has determined that the centre has incorrectly marked assessments, the EQA will set actions for the centre to mitigate the impact of the incorrectly marked assessment and prevent

reoccurrence. These actions will be detailed in the report and be SMART. The actions are monitored by the EQA Officer.

On occasions where the actions will not allow for further assessment and marking, a result or certificate may need to be revoked or amended. This will be done in line with our internal Certificate Invalidation process, which considers multiple factors to determine if revocation or an amendment to results is appropriate.

Where it is determined that the result will be changed, it is the responsibility of the centre to carry out the actions requested by the EQA Officer. Where a certificate has been issued, this will include ensuring that the certificate is received, or confirmation that the certificate has been destroyed and/or deleted.

All VQA EQA Activities consider VQA's Malpractice and Maladministration Policy and will manage and mitigate any instances of malpractice and maladministration in line with this policy. This includes, where necessary, applying sanctions in line with our Sanctions Policy.

Direct Claim Status

Direct Claims Status means that VQA has determined that you may claim and be issued certificates prior to an EQA Sampling Activity taking place.

The circumstances under which a centre can achieve DCS vary depending on the qualification and centre risk. Direct Claims Status is awarded for individual qualifications.

Transferring Direct Claims Status from another Awarding Organisation

VQA understands that centres who, prior to working with VQA, have a successful history of delivering regulated qualifications may hold Direct Claims Status for these qualifications with other Awarding Organisations.

You can apply to VQA to have this status transferred to equivalent VQA qualifications for which you are approved or are seeking approval. This can be requested by completing the relevant form along with the following evidence:

- a confirmation letter or email from the previous Awarding Organisation
- an External Quality Assurance activity report from the previous Awarding Organisation
- screen shot of the previous Awarding Organisation's website.

Any evidence submitted above must be dated within the last 12 months and allow VQA to clearly determine the:

- authenticity of the evidence
- previous Awarding Organisation
- qualification name and number for which DCS was achieved/maintained
- centre name being awarded DCS
- DCS and the date DCS was achieved/maintained.

The qualification from which the Direct Claims Status is being transferred for must be able to map to the equivalent VQA qualification. Upon receipt, VQA will review the form and evidence and communicate to the Centre whether the application has been accepted within five working days.

As VQA's processes for EQA and standards may differ to those from which DCS has been transferred, we will complete a round of sampling within 2 months of DCS being transferred.

VQA will request contact information for the Awarding Organisation from which DCS is being transferred. This will be used to validate the evidence that you submit. We will not contact the

transferring AO in all instances. These checks will be completed on a sample basis and/or if issues are identified as part of the 2-month DCS transfer EQA Sampling Activity.

Removal of Direct Claims Status

There are various situations where it may be necessary for VQA to remove Direct Claims Status as a result of a change in circumstance surrounding that qualification, for example:

- a centre does not meet the standards required by VQA, including have a risk rating that does not allow DCS or where an EQA identifies incorrect marking as part of an EQA Activity
- a sanction issued by VQA in relation to our processes for Maladministration and Malpractice
- as an outcome from an EQA activity
- there is not a claim on the qualification for a twelve-month period.

The above list is not exhaustive and VQA reserve the right to withdraw DCS at any time.

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