

\*Edition 3 – revised in August 2024: interim revisions, pending a full review, to better align the guidelines with current FET practices and QQI policies on validation and standards determination. A major revision of these guidelines will commence in 2024 and is expected to complete in 2025. See the foreword for more detail.

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Edition 2 - revised 2018: document revised to remove the text (Page 6) “QQI put in place internal quality systems and processes including an integrated ICT system for the processing of results received from providers and will operate a National Appeals Process” this was incorrect - appeals are the responsibility of providers.

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# **DRAFT QUALITY ASSURING ASSESSMENT INTERIM GUIDELINES FOR PROVIDERS 2024**



**Dearbhú Cáilíochta  
agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann**  
Quality and  
Qualifications Ireland

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## FOREWORD

These guidelines for providers are an interim update of the 2018 guidelines pending a more substantial update that will be made in the next eighteen months or so following a systematic and in-depth review process to be carried out in consultation with stakeholders.

The main purpose of the interim update is to better align the guidelines with QQI's policies on validation, standards determination and making awards, its quality assurance guidelines for providers of blended and fully online programmes and current FET practices.

The main change relative to the 2018 edition is the explicit recognition that the award standard for a named QQI award is the set of minimum intended programme learning outcomes (MIPLOs) and minimum intended module learning outcomes (MIMLOs) associated with the programme that leads to that award. MIPLOs and MIMLOs are determined at validation and may be adjusted by the provider after validation within limits and following their documented quality assurance procedures for making such changes. The guidelines also clarify that while QQI's Common Awards System awards specifications routinely include assessment techniques, providers are not obliged to use these techniques but are expected to comply with the assessment strategies set out in their validated programmes. Any changes to assessment subsequent to validation must be managed in accordance with the relevant quality assurance procedures.

The interim guidelines include multiple minor changes and clarifications, e.g. some additional guidance on academic integrity and the introduction of inclusive assessment as one of the principles.

We hope this interim update of the guidelines will be useful as we work with the FET sector towards the development of a more comprehensive update.

August 2024

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## Providers' Assessment Process

### Overview: 5 Key Stages

#### 1. Assessment

- establish and implement assessment policies, processes and procedures
- devise assessment instruments, marking schemes and assessment criteria
- assess and judge learner evidence
- record outcome
- provide timely and constructive feedback to the learner that they can use to support their learning

#### 2. Authentication Process

##### A. Internal verification

- verify that all assessment procedures have been applied
- monitor the outcome of the Assessment Process i.e. the assessment results on a **sample** basis

##### B. External authentication

- assign an external authenticator per award based on broad award/field of learning expertise
- external authenticator to moderate assessment results by sampling learner evidence according to the provider's own sampling strategy

#### 3. Results Approval

- establish a Results Approval Panel
- approve and sign-off assessment results
- make results available to learners

#### 4. Appeals Process

- establish an appeals process
- allow a minimum of 14 days for learners to lodge an appeal of the assessment process or result
- process all appeals

#### 5. Request for Certification

- submit all learner results
- when doing so, flag results under appeal

## 1. INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

These guidelines are primarily for providers of further education and training and specifically for those responsible for developing quality assurance policies and procedures and programmes of education and training. The guidelines are also intended for external authenticators. They are not intended to guide frontline teaching staff on the assessment of learners. Such guidance should come from the provider including through the relevant programme documentation and the provider's policy and procedures for assessment.

For the purposes of these guidelines, assessment of learning can be understood to mean inference (e.g. judgement or estimation or evaluation) of a learner's knowledge, skill or competence by comparison with a standard based on appropriate evidence. For the purposes of this definition, to maximise its generality, the 'standard' can be as narrow or broad as required and may be tacit or explicit. It can involve knowledge, skill, competence or attitudes.

Standard in the preceding paragraph refers to the yardstick that is used by the person/entity doing the assessment. This may, in the case of a learner self-assessing, be an internalised standard based on what they have been informed about the intended learning outcomes for the relevant programme and module or what they have inferred from past assessments. It may mean minimum intended programme and module learning outcome statements used by an assessor in conjunction with national standards such as QQI awards standards and the NFQ, professional standards, national or international regulatory standards and perhaps tacit standards associated with a community of practice.

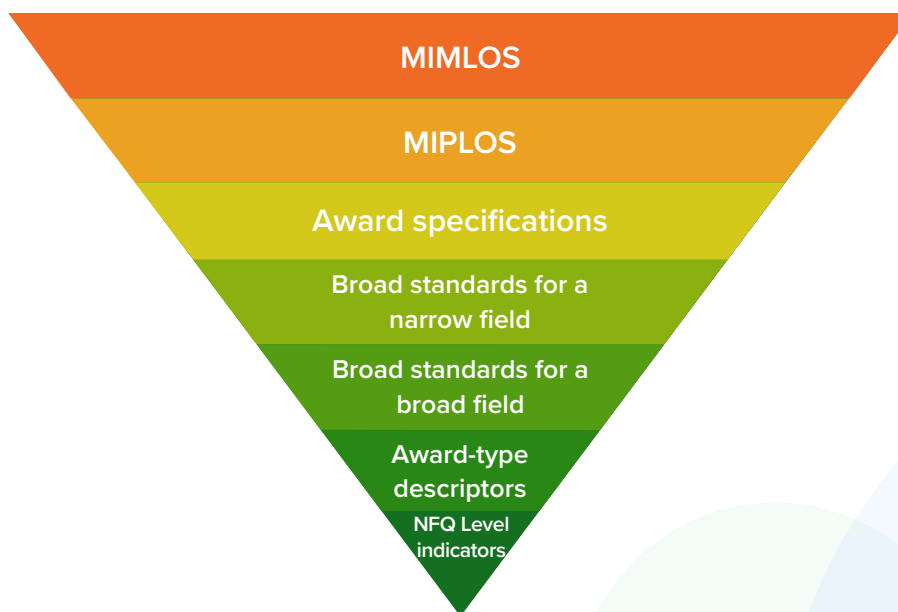
For the purposes of this document the relevant standards range from the most general in the form of the NFQ level indicators to the most specific in the form of minimum intended programme outcomes (MIPLOs) and minimum intended module learning outcomes (MIMLOs). MIPLOs and MIMLOs are determined at validation and may be adjusted by the provider after validation within limits<sup>2</sup> and following their documented quality assurance procedures for making such changes.

In summary, the standards of knowledge, skill and competence that a learner must achieve to be granted a QQI named award are specified by the intended programme and module learning outcomes of a validated programme leading to the named award and these must be consistent with the applicable QQI awards standards applying to the relevant named award.

The following figure illustrates the relationship between the various kinds of standards. Standards need to be consistent with, but not identical to, the standards that support them.

<sup>1</sup> This introduction is adapted from Section 2 of QQI's Green Paper on Assessment, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> An indication of the amount of change permitted before a (differential) validation is required is set out in the validation policy.



**Figure 1: Standards of varying levels of specificity.**

The evidence referred to in the first paragraph is not only the learner response to the assessment task but the task itself and the context in which it was set and the assessment results. In the remainder of this document **evidence** is used in a somewhat narrower sense.

Learner assessment means the assessment of learning achievement by the learner. Assessment of learning may be done for many different purposes including, for example, summative, formative and diagnostic purposes.

Learner assessment may be done by the learner themselves or by another person and it may be done for any of many different purposes. In general, assessment may, for example, be used to:

- determine entitlement to a qualification (e.g. summative assessment);
- confirm learning progress (by the learner or by another);
- to determine a learner's 'learning' competence;
- identify gaps in learning (to, e.g., enable and inform the development of formative feedback to the learner or to adapt learning strategy);
- help determine special educational or training needs (e.g. diagnostic assessment);
- provide a learning opportunity;
- inform the evaluation of the quality of a programme of education and training<sup>3</sup>;
- recognise experiential learning;
- support the learner to monitor their own progress;
- determine eligibility to enrol on a programme;

<sup>3</sup> Typically, we use the term education and training (which is used in the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012). The motivation is to be maximally inclusive of formational activity intended to enable learners to develop knowledge, skill or competence. Any text in these Guidelines that refers to education or training without reference to the other should be understood to apply equally to both.



- place a person at a level in a language programme;
- competitively determine who may access restricted higher education places.

Frequently, assessment has multiple purposes. Both teaching and learning always involve assessment. When the purpose of assessment is formative it may aim not only to determine whether the primary learning objective has been achieved but also the learner's attitude to learning and learning-related knowledge, skill and competence more generally. This underlines the interrelatedness of teaching, learning, intended learning outcomes and assessment.

Assessment may have consequences that can be problematic where it is not valid for its legitimate expected purposes. Summative assessment may, for example, establish actual (de facto) standards or curricula that are different from the legitimate ones.

**Although in general assessment takes place in multiple contexts and for multiple purposes, the focus in this document is on the quality assurance of summative assessment for the purpose of granting QQI awards.**

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## 2. GUIDELINES

These guidelines are intended to assist providers in the development and implementation of quality assured processes and procedures for the fair and consistent assessment of learners for the purpose of determining whether they have achieved the relevant **intended learning outcomes** and to support teaching and learning. They guide on the effective practice of

- assessment,
- the maintenance of **academic integrity**,
- internal and external authentication,
- results approval and appeals processing.

Learners may be assessed in diverse settings and by diverse means provided always that assessment procedures are **valid** and **reliable** for determining whether the relevant learners have achieved the relevant intended learning outcomes for the relevant award as specified by the validated programme leading to that award. Programme and module-specific assessment arrangements are developed or procured by providers and approved during the **programme validation process**. **Minimum intended programme learning outcomes (MIPLOs) and minimum intended module learning outcomes (MIMLOs)** must be specified for each award to which a programme leads and these must be consistent with the relevant **QQI awards standards**, including any attached **special validation conditions**, which are designed to be consistent with the **National Framework of Qualifications**.

Providers of programmes leading to QQI awards are responsible for the assessment of learners enrolled on those programmes. Specifically, they are required to “establish procedures which are fair and consistent for the assessment of enrolled learners to ensure the standards of knowledge, skill or competence determined by the Authority under section 49(1) are acquired, and where

appropriate, demonstrated, by enrolled learners” (Section 45(3)(b) of the 2012 Act<sup>4</sup>).

In this context standards are determined by QQI with varying levels of specificity. The most specific de facto standards are the MIPLOs and MIMLOs approved through a QQI validation process and thereafter maintained by the relevant provider. The validation process and criteria ensure that these the minimum intended programme/module learning outcomes to qualify for the QQI award sought are consistent with the relevant QQI awards standards.

Please refer to QQI’s **Policy for Determining Awards Standards** and **Validation Policy and Criteria** for more details.

The foregoing implies that assessment for QQI awards must be criterion-referenced (i.e. assessed against a pre-determined standard) rather than norm referenced (i.e. relative to other learners). The assessment criteria must relate to the standards e.g. MIPLOs and MIMLOs.

### 3. QUALITY ASSURING ASSESSMENT

The quality assurance of assessment is underpinned by:

- the publication of assessment guidelines by QQI
- the programme validation process
- providers’ quality assurance policy, procedures and culture
- providers’ procedures for the assessment of learners
- external authentication processes.

#### 3.1 PRINCIPLES

The following principles underpin the policy on quality assuring assessment.

##### 3.1.1 Validity

Validity is a key principle which underpins assessment. In simple terms a valid assessment measures what it claims to measure. Validity depends on many factors including, for example,

- the standards against which the learners are being assessed
- the purposes of the assessment
- the learners being assessed (an assessment may be valid for one learner but not another all other things being equal – this has to do with inclusivity)
- the programme of education and training designed to prepare learners to achieve the relevant standard (e.g., test validity may be compromised if learners are taught to the test)
- the robustness of the assessment against academic malpractice (also called academic misconduct) of any kind by anybody involved.

### 3.1.2 Reliability

Reliability refers to the consistency and accuracy with which an assessment measures what it is designed to measure. An assessment which is unreliable cannot be valid. A reliable assessment consistently gives the same result under similar conditions. To be reliable an assessment must:

- ensure evidence is generated under consistently applied conditions of assessment
- ensure reliability of learner evidence
- produce consistent decisions across the range of assessors applying the assessment in different situations and contexts and with different groups of learners
- be consistent over time
- be robust against academic malpractice (also called academic misconduct) of any kind by anybody involved.

### 3.1.3 Fairness

A fair assessment in addition to being valid and reliable provides equity of opportunity for learners. Unfairness in assessment is based on unequal opportunities i.e. lack of resources/equipment, inappropriate techniques, inexperienced assessors. For assessment procedures and practices to be fair and equitable for learners the influence of these factors must be taken into account in the design and implementation of assessment.

### 3.1.4 Quality assured

Providers are responsible for the quality of their assessment of learning. Quality assurance is a key principle in ensuring the credibility and status of QQI awards. Quality of assessment will be assured through providers' quality assurance procedures; the establishment and maintenance of an assessment strategy for each programme and module; programme validation, monitoring and review; and ultimately the culture within a provider and the integrity of its staff and learners.

### 3.1.5 Transparency

A transparent assessment policy and guidelines will ensure clarity and understanding by all relevant stakeholders. This will include clear and unambiguous definitions and requirements with regard to fairness, consistency, validity and reliability.

### 3.1.6 Complementarity

The principle of complementarity acknowledges the separate and distinct roles of the provider and QQI in the context of their explicit responsibilities relating to assessment as outlined in the 2012 Act. In essence providers are responsible for assessment and QQI is responsible for validation of the provider's programmes which is always conditional on providers establishing *"procedures which are fair and consistent for the assessment of enrolled learners to ensure the standards of knowledge, skill or competence determined by [QQI] under section 49(1) [of the 2012 Act] are acquired, and where appropriate, demonstrated, by enrolled learners"*.

### 3.1.7 Inclusivity

All assessment of learners should be designed from the outset to be as inclusive as practicable and, in addition to this, reasonable accommodations should be made where required.

### 3.1.8 Academic integrity

Academic integrity means “*compliance with ethical and professional principles, standards, practices and a consistent system of values, that serves as guidance for making decisions and taking actions in education, research and scholarship.*”<sup>5</sup>

Well-designed assessment (including, for example, its governance, oversight, policy, procedures, implementation, strategy, methodology, instruments, tasks, and criteria) can help promote academic integrity and prevent academic malpractice.

The validity and reliability of assessment are compromised when the assessment is not robust against academic malpractice.

## 3.2 POLICY

QQI monitors and reviews providers, their programmes and the attainment of national standards to ensure the effective implementation of fair and consistent assessment within and across the totality of providers.

Providers are required to put in place the following:

- an assessment process
- academic integrity policy and procedures
- an assessment strategy for each programme and module
- an authentication process
- a results approval process for the processing the approval of results
- an appeals process.

## 4. THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

In the context of a validated programme, assessment typically takes place following a learning activity. The learning and assessment may take place in diverse contexts.

The process of judging learning achievement against relevant standards for the purpose of granting academic credit (this may include granting an award) is called **summative assessment**. Providers also undertake **formative assessment, which is used primarily to identify progress and provide feedback** and to support learning. A given assessment may have both summative and formative purposes.

The key parties to the assessment process are;

- the provider,

<sup>5</sup> [ACADEMIC INTEGRITY – ENAI and used in https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2021-11/academic-integrity-national-principles-and-lexicon-of-common-terms.pdf](https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2021-11/academic-integrity-national-principles-and-lexicon-of-common-terms.pdf)

- the learner,
- the assessor.

The provider is responsible for establishing procedures for assessment of learners.

The learner is responsible for undertaking prescribed assessment tasks with due diligence and academic integrity.

The assessors are responsible in the first instance for assessing learners with due diligence and academic integrity. Their inferences typically feed into a formal **assessment committee (e.g. results approval panel)** operated by the provider for a final decision.

## 4.1 ROLES

The key parties to the assessment process and their respective roles are outlined below.

### 4.1.1 The provider

The provider is responsible for:

- establishing *“procedures which are fair and consistent for the assessment of enrolled learners to ensure the standards of knowledge, skill or competence determined by [QQI] under section 49(1) [of the 2012 Act] are acquired, and where appropriate, demonstrated, by enrolled learners”*
- establishing and implementing effective assessment policies and procedures including procedures for their periodic review
- establishing and maintaining policy and procedures for upholding academic integrity
- implementing programmes as validated and keeping them updated
- periodically reviewing programmes
- ensuring that there are learning opportunities for the programme’s intended learning outcomes (except those that are satisfied by prior learning)
- ensuring appropriate assessment personnel are in place
- the management of internal and any external assessors
- establishing and managing an **authentication process** to include:
  - **internal verification**
  - **external authentication**, including the establishment of criteria for the selection and appointment of external authenticators and their training and support
- establishing a **results approval process**
- establishing an **appeals process**.

Providers should ensure that learners are well informed about how and why they are assessed.

- Learners need to be familiar with and understand the intended module and programme

learning outcomes, and the relevant programme and module assessment strategies. They should be reminded of these and the provider's assessment policies and procedures on a regular basis.

- Providers should communicate this information to learners in an appropriate and accessible manner (e.g. in a programme handbook, programme web page, virtual learning environment etc.).
- Learners should be involved in the periodic review of assessment procedures.

#### 4.1.2 Programme validation and assessment

The application for validation of a new or revised programme must address how the programme and its constituent modules and embedded programmes are to be assessed. This includes specification of programme and module assessment strategies among other things. The assessment arrangements are approved when the programme is validated.

Changing the assessment from that specified by the validated programme documentation can only be done by the provider in accordance with its approved quality assurance procedures, rather than by any individual acting independently. Changes to a validated programme can be approved by the provider but substantial changes that impact materially on the original validation decision may require differential validation.

See the validation policy and criteria for a definitive position on this.

#### 4.1.3 The assessor

The assessor is responsible for assessing learners. This will involve setting assessment tasks to be undertaken by the learner under prescribed conditions. It will also involve inferring whether the learner has achieved the relevant standard based on consideration of the learner's responses to those tasks.

The assessor is a qualified practitioner who has responsibility for the assessment of learners.

This may be a teacher, trainer or lecturer employed by the provider (**internal assessors**). It can also be a workplace supervisor, manager or team leader not employed directly by the provider (**external assessors**). Whatever the context of the assessment, assessors need to have the appropriate assessment skills. These should include:

- subject matter/technical expertise; the assessor must be proficient in the subject/technical area in which they are assessing
- knowledge of, and proficiency in, the intended learning outcomes being assessed
- understanding of the relevant programme and module assessment strategy
- knowledge of the provider's assessment procedures
- familiarity with these guidelines.

Assessors also need to be accountable to the provider for their assessment related activities. When external assessors are involved (e.g. workplace assessors) this may require establishing formal agreements with their employers.

Where a centralised system of assessment design, maintenance or implementation is employed the functions of the 'assessor' may be distributed over more than one person. The provider is ultimately responsible for the assessment of learners enrolled on its programmes.

The specific responsibilities of the assessor in the context of summative assessment are to:

- implement the provider's assessment procedures across all relevant assessment activities
- design valid and reliable assessment instruments
- design marking schemes and grading criteria and submit these to review where required
- support the integrity of the assessment process (e.g. maintain confidentiality of unseen tasks)
- provide opportunities (with the provider's support) for learners to generate appropriate evidence
- review and judge learner evidence
- make the assessment decision (this may be subject to ratification or moderation by the relevant **assessment committee (e.g. results approval panel)** which has the final decision)
- provide information and feedback to the learner
- report any suspected breaches of academic integrity
- assist with any relevant appeals or complaints processes

Assessors who are involved in the teaching (or instruction etc.) of learners are also expected to provide formative assessment opportunities to learners and to provide timely formative feedback that learners can use to support their achievement of the relevant standards.

#### 4.1.4 The learner

Learners must take an active part in assessment for it to be possible at all<sup>6</sup>.

- Learners are responsible for demonstrating their learning achievement when requested, and provided with the opportunity, to do so.
- A learner who is enrolled on a programme should submit to assessment for the purpose of demonstrating attainment of the programme's intended learning outcomes.
- With the support of the provider, each learner is expected to strive for academic integrity, and to undertake assessment tasks honestly and truthfully, shunning plagiarism, contract cheating, collusion with other students in academic malpractice, unauthorised help with assessment tasks, unauthorised use of generative artificial intelligence, and all other forms of academic malpractice, dishonesty or impropriety.

## 4.2 ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES

Providers' established quality assurance procedures must include appropriate procedures

to demonstrate that the assessment process is fair and consistent and that learners are kept informed of what is expected of them and of their progress towards achieving it. This section provides some guidance on the establishment of such procedures.

#### 4.2.1 Planning assessment

The assessment for each programme should be planned before commencing learning and assessment activities. This would include planning:

- A. the intended learning outcomes to be assessed
- B. the assessment strategy, techniques, instruments, feedback points, marking schemes, rubrics, grading criteria, etc.
- C. the provisions for making reasonable accommodations
- D. the timing of assessment activities including opportunities for reassessment or second opportunities for assessment if warranted
- E. the deadlines and due dates for submitted work
- F. the deadlines and due dates for the return of results to the provider and to learners including feedback to learners
- G. how marks are to be allocated and assessment criteria are to be applied

An holistic approach should be taken in devising the assessment strategies for a programme and its modules. Over-assessment should be avoided because it can be a barrier to learning and it is wasteful of staff and learner resources. Attention should be given to peak assessment workloads as well as the overall workload because such peaks may exceed learner capacity even if the overall workload is achievable if evenly distributed. Opportunities to integrate assessment across modules should be explored. Learners should have sufficient opportunities to generate evidence to demonstrate achievement of the intended learning outcomes (i.e. the relevant standards).

An assessment strategy and plan should be devised for each programme to include when assessments will take place, deadlines for submission etc.

Assessment should be designed to be as inclusive as possible at the outset.

#### 4.2.2 Information for learners

All pertinent information relating to the assessment process should be made available to learners prior to undertaking assessment activities. Learners must be fully aware of the following:

- details of the award(s) to which the programme leads
- the **minimum intended learning outcomes** for each of the awards
- information about how they will be assessed and the grading requirements
- the provider's policies and procedures on assessment and academic integrity
- deadlines and key dates
- information for learners with disabilities or other special requirements
- information on the provider's appeals process.



### 4.2.3 Assessment deadlines

Assessment must be fair and consistent across all assessment activities for all learners. To help ensure fairness and consistency providers should have a clear, transparent policy and procedures on deadlines for submission of learner evidence.

Learners are expected to present assessment evidence within the deadline identified by the assessor unless there are extenuating circumstances.

The provider's procedures on assessment deadlines should make clear to the learner their responsibility to present evidence for the assessment activity within the deadline specified and the consequences of failing to do this.

A provider should facilitate and give due consideration to a learner who provides evidence of extenuating circumstances. See section 4.2.9 below on compassionate consideration.

Any consequences for late submission of evidence should not however interfere with the marks awarded. Once learner evidence is accepted by the provider it should be marked and graded in accordance with the standards for the award. The actual marks and grade awarded are determined solely on the basis of the evidence submitted in accordance with the standards for the award.

Providers can refuse to accept the evidence from learners after the deadline has passed, subject to compassionate consideration and extenuating circumstances. The provider must judge each application for compassionate consideration or extenuating circumstances on its own merits.

### 4.2.4 Reliability of learner evidence

Reliability of the evidence must be a key consideration at the assessment design stage.

It is good practice to establish and implement procedures to ensure the reliability of learner evidence. Where the assessor is not in a direct position to observe the learner carrying out the assessment activity or collecting the evidence first hand, e.g. when a portfolio or project is used, he/she must be confident that the evidence was actually produced by the learner without any unauthorised assistance. This section overlaps with the next on assessment malpractice.

Written work should ideally be scanned by a plagiarism detection tool and learners should be informed in advance that this will be done.

Learners should be made aware of the importance of academic integrity and of the penalties for breaching it. They should be informed about the practices that they must avoid and warned that they are at risk of being targeted online by contract cheating services designed to lure them into practices that constitute academic malpractice.

Generative artificial intelligence has the potential to benefit learners and providers and its use in programmes when properly controlled and transparent can be a good thing. Nevertheless, learners must be left in no doubt that unauthorised use of artificial intelligence or unattributed inclusion of material obtained using artificial intelligence is academic malpractice (i.e. misconduct) and will attract sanction.

The following are ways in which the assessor may ascertain that the learner evidence produced is

reliable and genuine. The assessor should appropriately implement a range of these.

- **plagiarism checking (using a reputable software tool)** should **ideally** be performed for all written submissions produced by learners in settings that are not proctored.
- **questioning** the learner about the evidence. It is important to concentrate on how the evidence was produced. This will enable the learner to show that they were responsible for producing the evidence and will also give them the opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills required.
- **authorship statement** from the learner testifying the evidence as being his/her original work. An authorship statement could be provided for all evidence submitted.
- **personal log** – this is a record of how the learner planned and developed the evidence. A personal log should identify problems and how they were overcome by the learner.
- **personal statements** – a personal statement may be used to explain the actions of the learner in carrying out activities or producing the evidence. Personal statements should be clear and explain the learner’s role and the context in which the evidence was produced. Personal statements can provide evidence of knowledge and understanding.
- **peer reports** – these are especially suitable for group work. Peer reports are reports drafted by group members which can help explain individual involvement in a task or project.
- **independent testimony** – this is a statement produced by an individual other than the assessor, which confirms that the learner has carried out a series of tasks or produced a product. It should record what the learner has demonstrated and corroborate the learner evidence submitted. The identity and role of the individual to provide the testimony for the learner should be agreed in advance between the assessor and the learner. The use of independent testimony is not intended as a mechanism for assessing learner evidence but as a tool to corroborate the reliability of that evidence.

#### 4.2.5 Assessment malpractice

The Provider should have procedures in place to investigate and deal with any form of assessment malpractice which could impact on the validity of assessment.

Appropriate security measures to prevent and guard against assessment malpractice to ensure the integrity of the assessment process should be implemented.

Examples of assessment malpractice activities include (but are not limited to):

- learner plagiarism i.e. passing off someone else’s work as the learner’s own with or without their permission. This may involve direct plagiarism of another learner’s work or getting another individual to complete the assessment activity (contract cheating)
- the unattributed use of generative artificial intelligence in the production of the work submitted for assessment
- impersonation of another learner
- fabrication of evidence
- alteration of results
- wrongly obtaining secure assessment material, e.g. examinations

- behaving in any way such as to undermine the integrity of the Assessment Process.

All allegations of malpractice must be investigated by the provider.

When investigating an allegation of malpractice, the provider should ensure that it is completed in a reasonable timescale which does not disadvantage a learner against whom an unproven allegation is made.

The outcome of an assessment malpractice investigation should be included in the final report of the external authenticator.

#### 4.2.6 Security of assessment related processes and material

Assessment procedures and systems should incorporate secure mechanisms for recording, storing and accessing learners' assessment records.

Learners' assessment records constitute personal data and GDPR applies to them.

Specific assessment techniques such as examinations require secure mechanisms for storage and confidentiality to ensure their validity and consistency. Providers should ensure adequate provision is made for storing secure material.

In designing this procedure, the potential for learner appeals should be considered including the need to retain learners' submissions until appeals processes are exhausted.

#### 4.2.7 Records and documentation

A provider should make sure that all assessment, verification records and documentation are retained appropriately and made available for internal verification and external authentication purposes inter alia.

The following are examples of what may be contained within an assessment record for an individual learner:

- learner's name
- contact details
- title of the QQI award
- title of the programme
- any specific learner requirements
- name(s) of the assessor(s)
- name(s) of internal verifier(s) and external authenticator(s) where appropriate
- dates and details of learner feedback
- dates and results of assessment activities i.e. recorded grade (cross referenced to the appropriate award)
- outcome of results approval process, including appeals
- date award received.

**In addition to the above** each item of assessment evidence submitted by the learner should be recorded as having been received (description, date and time) to prevent any disagreement between the learner and the assessor. Learner receipts or signatures are mechanisms which may be used to evidence this.

#### 4.2.8 Reasonable accommodation

The Equal Status Acts, 2000 to 2004, require education and training establishments to provide reasonable accommodation to meet the needs of a service user (i.e. learner) who has a disability.

In the context of assessment, reasonable accommodation is the term for the adaptation of assessment as necessary to cater for the needs of learners whose personal situation means that the assessment would otherwise be unfair e.g. learners with a disability, and/or other learners covered by equality legislation.

Any adaptation of the assessment by the assessor should facilitate the learner to demonstrate their achievement of the standard (intended learning outcomes) without significantly altering the standard.

Special assessment arrangements/adaptations are not intended to and should not reduce the validity and reliability of the assessment or compromise the standard.

The adaptation should seek to amend the aspects of the assessment technique or instrument which prevent a learner's participation in the assessment. It should be used where the particular assessment techniques or instruments disadvantage the learner in assessment.

Adaptations of assessment for a learner may be implemented by the provider without having to request permission from QQI. For example, these adaptations may include the following and/or other reasonable accommodations:

- modified presentation of assignments/examination papers e.g. enlargements
- scribes/readers
- use of sign language
- practical assistants
- rest periods
- adaptive equipment/software
- use of assistive technology
- extra time.

The implementation of these adaptations will ensure that all learners are assessed on an equitable basis. A provider is responsible for their implementation and any associated costs incurred.

#### 4.2.9 Compassionate consideration

Procedures may be put in place to enable learners to apply for compassionate consideration in relation to their assessment. A provider could enable learners who are prevented from undertaking a specific assessment activity, or who feel their performance would be seriously impaired because of exceptional circumstances, to apply to defer the assessment i.e. to be

allowed to complete the assessment activity on another occasion.

The following are examples of circumstances under which a provider may consider giving compassionate consideration to the learner:

- a physical injury or emotional trauma
- a physical disability or chronic or disabling condition or other incapacitating illness of the learner
- recent bereavement of close family member or friend
- severe accident
- domestic crisis
- terminal illness of a close family member
- other extenuating circumstances.

Any procedure in relation to compassionate consideration should require the learner to provide appropriate evidence/documentation e.g. a statement from a medical practitioner.

The provider should consider the severity of the circumstances and the nature of the assessment activity in making the decision to grant compassionate consideration.

#### 4.2.10 Repeat of assessment activity

Where a learner is unsuccessful, on a first attempt in a summative assessment activity, it is good practice for the provider to grant learners an opportunity to repeat the assessment activity to achieve a pass grade.

Opportunities to repeat an assessment activity are dependent on the nature of the activity and the practical and/or operational issues involved. It is acknowledged that there may be specific constraints on providers which prevent them from offering repeat assessment opportunities to learners.

Providers should inform learners of whether opportunities are available or not to repeat assessment opportunities and the associated procedures if applicable.

A provider does not need to notify QQI in relation to occurrences of repeat assessment activities. The final approved result is returned to QQI.

## 4.3 DEVISING ASSESSMENT

Learners are assessed using diverse assessment techniques. Assessment must always be valid and reasonably reliable. Note that validity and reliability depend on more than the technique used for assessment and therefore assessment techniques are neither valid nor reliable in themselves.

QQI's Common Awards System awards specifications include assessment techniques. Providers are **not obliged** to use these techniques but are expected to comply with the assessment strategies set out in their validated programme (see also 4.1.2).

A small number of QQI standards include special conditions of validation that address some aspect of assessment or how it is expected to be conducted. Providers are obliged to comply with such conditions.

When developing an assessment based on a technique the provider is expected to ensure the development of the following:

- an assessment instrument e.g. examination paper/questions or assignment brief.
- accompanying instructions
- assessment criteria (subject to the validated programme documentation)
- a marking scheme

It is essential that learners are clear about what is being required of them. Preparation and communication of assessment briefs and such like warrant keen attention and briefs can be communicated in several ways e.g. by video or audio media as well as by text.

Prior to undertaking an assessment learners must be provided (via an assessment brief where used or otherwise) with clear guidance on:

- The provider's policies and procedures in relation to academic integrity. Information on the various types of malpractice, their detection and the penalties which may be incurred in the event of instances of academic malpractice.
- The required standards for presentation and submission of assessment work including any specific formatting or referencing requirements to be applied.
- Submission timeframes for assessment work.

Learners should know how and why they will be assessed. Being clear about the minimum intended learning outcomes they are expected to be able demonstrate is a good way of doing this. Being clear about the generic criteria (Section 4.6) for a merit or distinction is also important.

However, when providing assessment criteria to learners, care must be taken not to provide criteria that are so specific that they undermine the validity of the assessment.

#### 4.3.1 Assessment techniques

There are numerous means by which learning can be assessed. The following techniques have been commonly used in further education and training in Ireland and are included here for reference only.

- Assignment
- Project
- Portfolio
- Skills Demonstration
- Examination
- Learner Record

Subject to validation of the relevant programmes, providers are free to use **any** techniques in those programmes that result in fair, consistent, valid and reliable assessment of their learners

against the relevant standard and **not only** those listed above. Please refer to the introduction of Section 4.3.

An assessment instrument is the specific activity/task or question(s) devised by the assessor. The design of assessment instrument(s) must

- enable evidence to be generated by the relevant learners which can be measured against the relevant intended learning outcomes
- enable reliable assessment decisions by assessors
- be selected to make the best use of available resources.

The reference material below on commonly used FET assessment techniques is designed to assist providers.

### 4.3.2 Assignment

An **assignment** is an exercise carried out in response to a **brief** with specific guidelines as to what should be included. An assignment is usually of short duration and/or may be carried out over a specified period of time. Assignments may take the form of a practical activity e.g., a practical assignment or a research activity involving the investigation of a particular topic and resulting in an artefact. An assignment should reflect a range of learning outcomes.

A brief should be devised for each assignment. The brief should be accompanied by guidelines or instructions. The brief and guidelines should be clear and unambiguous. The assessor should ensure that the assignment brief:

- reflects a range of relevant intended learning outcomes
- is clear and unambiguous and contains all instructions required to complete the task
- indicates the percentage weighting of the assignment
- takes into account the availability of resources and/or materials required by the learner
- contains clear assessment criteria and appropriate weighing
- indicates the percentage weighting of the assessment technique
- includes information regarding evidence and submission deadlines
- includes statement regarding academic integrity expectations
- includes statement about plagiarism checking software that will be used.

A clear marking scheme including assessment criteria should also be devised that highlights how the submission is to be graded.

### 4.3.3 Project

A **project** is a response to a **brief** devised by the assessor and carried out over a period specified by the brief. Projects may involve research, require investigation of a topic, issue, or problem. Alternatively, they may involve a process such as a design task, a performance, a practical activity, or a production of an artifact or an event.

The assessment instrument for a project is the project brief. The brief for the project should reflect

a range of learning outcomes.

Where projects are undertaken by a group the brief must require that the individual contribution of each learner be clearly identified and procedures should be implemented to ensure the reliability of learner evidence.

Projects enable learners to demonstrate the achievement of a range of learning outcomes which includes: understanding and application of concepts, use of research and information, the ability to design and evaluate, the ability to produce or construct.

The assessor should ensure that the project brief:

- reflects a range of relevant intended learning outcomes
- is clear and unambiguous
- indicates the percentage weighting of the project
- takes into account availability of resources and/or materials that will be required by learners such as access to research sources
- includes notice of agreed deadline for submission of evidence
- includes relevant information such as; requirements for presentation of the project, guidelines on group or collaborative work
- includes statement regarding academic integrity expectations
- includes statement about plagiarism checking software that will be used.

#### 4.3.4 Portfolio/collection of work

A **portfolio** or **collection of work** is a collection and/or selection of pieces of work produced by the learner in response to a **brief**, over a period that demonstrates achievement of a range of learning outcomes.

The assessor devises guidelines and instructions for the learner and communicates these through the brief. Using the brief the learner compiles a collection of their own work.

The assessor should ensure that the portfolio brief:

- reflects a range of relevant intended learning outcomes
- is clear, unambiguous and contains instructions that reflect the range of learning outcomes being assessed
- includes guidelines on the extent and range of evidence a learner is expected to compile
- includes guidelines on the format and presentation of the evidence in the collection
- outlines the assessment criteria
- outlines the weighting of the portfolio/collection of work in the context of the total assessment of the award
- includes relevant information on resources and/or materials required
- includes statement regarding academic integrity expectations
- includes statement about plagiarism checking software that will be used.



### 4.3.5 Skills demonstration

A **skills demonstration** is used to assess a wide range of practical based learning outcomes including practical skills and knowledge, such as laboratory skills, interpersonal skills or oral language skills. An assessor must devise a **brief** or set of instructions and/or tasks for learners.

Sufficient learner evidence must be made available from the skills demonstration for internal verification and external authentication. In the case of a practical task-based demonstration this may include a range of the following:

- product / outcome of the tasks where applicable i.e. computer print out
- photographic or video evidence of learner completing the task
- learner account of task.

A skills demonstration may take place in the workplace i.e. in a live environment or in a simulated environment, as appropriate to the requirement of the relevant intended learning outcomes and programme. In some specific cases the demonstration **must** take place in a real/live environment.

In addition to the guidance below, the assessor should ensure that the skills demonstration brief:

- reflects a range of relevant intended learning outcomes
- includes information regarding evidence and submission deadlines
- includes statement regarding academic integrity expectations

#### **Skills demonstration in a simulated environment**

A skills demonstration may be carried out in a simulated environment using for example, role play or simulated scenarios. The environment should enable the learner to demonstrate a broad range of learning outcomes.

When using simulated environment observation, the assessor should ensure that:

- the learner receives clear instructions and guidelines on how the assessment will proceed and what will be assessed e.g. duration, inclusion of oral questions as appropriate
- the environment is carefully prepared and the necessary equipment and/or materials are available to the learner
- the tasks and conditions should be as realistic and close to the 'actual' environment as possible
- learner evidence to be generated is identified.

A clear marking scheme including assessment criteria should also be devised that highlights how learner evidence is to be graded.

#### **Skills demonstration in the workplace or a live environment**

A skills demonstration may be carried out in the workplace or a live environment as part of the learner's normal work routine. In this environment the assessor may, for example, be the trainer or workplace supervisor, mentor or job coach.

Skills demonstrations in the workplace may be part of on-the-job training. The learner is observed performing tasks within the workplace to the required standard and within a specified time.

When carrying out a skills demonstration in the workplace the best practice guidelines outlined above should be adhered to and sufficient learner evidence must be generated. In addition, all issues related to workplace health and safety should be applied.

#### 4.3.6 Examination

An examination (closed book, unseen, proctored) provides a means of assessing a learner's ability to recall and apply knowledge, skills and understanding within a set period of time and under clearly specified conditions.

Examinations are a form of assessment which normally require a fixed timeframe and a sight unseen question paper and range of questions. The assessment instrument for examinations is the examination paper i.e. questions or tasks devised for the learner.

Examinations may be:

- **practical;** assessing specified practical skills demonstrated in a set period of time under restricted conditions
- **interview style;** assessing learning through verbal questioning, one-to-one or in a group
- **aural testing;** assessing listening and interpretation skills
- **theory-based examination;** assessing the learner's ability to recall, apply, recognise and understand concepts and theory. This may require responses to a range of question types, for example, objective, short answer, structured essay. These questions may be answered in different media for example in writing or orally.

When devising an examination, the assessor should ensure that:

- questions or tasks reflect the relevant intended learning outcomes
- instructions are clear and unambiguous
- examinations have a cover page outlining details such as the title of the examination, the date, the start and finish times, instructions on the questions that are to be attempted, and the marks available
- answer books/paper for learners to complete their answers should be provided where appropriate
- confidentiality is maintained during preparation and handling of unseen examination documents
- groups of learners being assessed at different times are provided with different examination questions
- specific resources or equipment required are available and in good working order
- the allocation and weighting of marks is clear to the learner
- the learner is aware of the weighting of the examination in relation to the module, stage or programme as appropriate
- learners are provided with a quiet environment in which to complete the examination.

A clear marking scheme should also be devised that highlights how specific marks are to be allocated.

#### **4.3.6.1 Theory based examination**

Theory based examinations may be used to assess the ability of the learner to recall, apply and understand specific theory and knowledge.

Theory based examinations may comprise a range of question types such as:

- Short answer questions require a response of limited length and may take several forms.
- Structured questions are divided into a number of related parts and generally require the learner to demonstrate more in-depth knowledge and understanding of a topic. Structured questions may also seek evidence of cognitive skills such as ability to discuss, compare, analyse, evaluate, translate or solve an issue, problem or topic
- Essay type questions, like structured questions require the learner to demonstrate an in-depth knowledge and understanding of a topic. Essay type questions usually focus on one particular area of knowledge and seek evidence of cognitive skills such as ability to discuss, compare, analyse, evaluate, translate or solve an issue, problem or topic.
- Multiple choice tests/questions may be used to test factual knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, problem solving and evaluation. As MCQ's are not open-ended, they are not useful in assessing communication skills such as the ability to organise and express information and to write fluently and quickly.

To avoid excessive demands on the learner it is recommended that written examinations should not exceed 3 hours in duration. When deciding on the duration and format of the examination, the percentage weighting of the examination needs to be considered.

#### **4.3.6.2 Practical examinations**

Practical examinations are generally used where a set period of time is allocated to the learner to demonstrate their practical knowledge, skills or competence.

To ensure that the learner is adequately prepared for a practical examination they should be provided with a set of instructions outlining:

- the location and duration of the exam (the duration will depend on the nature of the task)
- details of the learning outcomes that will be assessed and/or instructions to carry out the assessment e.g. file names
- materials and/or equipment that the learner is required to have or that will be provided
- allocation of marks.

#### **4.3.6.3 Practical examinations, preparing an audio or video recording**

When devising a practical examination, the assessor may be required to prepare material for use by the learner e.g. an audio or video recording. When preparing this type of material, the assessor should ensure that:

- adequate instructions and information are provided for learners

- an introduction is included with each task with clear instructions regarding the requirement of the separate elements/tasks
- individual tasks are clearly identified by number
- a slight pause is left between each task and clear unambiguous diction, tone and pace is used.

#### 4.3.6.4 Aural examinations

Aural examinations may be used where listening skills and competencies are being assessed, for example, in language awards. To ensure that learners are adequately prepared for an aural examination, they should be provided with a set of instructions, generally in writing, outlining:

- the title, location and duration of the examination
- details of the intended learning outcomes being assessed
- how the examination will proceed, for example learners may have a set period of time to read text prior to commencement and the tape may be played a set number of times
- details on dictionaries or other reference materials learners may use
- allocation of marks.

#### 4.3.6.5 Interview-style examinations

When using an interview-style examination the assessor should ensure that:

- The full range of potential questions devised are clear and unambiguous and are based on the specific intended learning outcomes.
- The learner is aware of the outcomes being assessed and how marks are allocated.
- Open questions that require a detailed answer and provide an opportunity for the learner to demonstrate their knowledge of the topic(s) are used.
- The interview adheres to a similar format and length for each learner.
- The answer to a question is not prompted by the question or sequenced in a way that one question provides the answer to the following one. This is known as leading. Leading questions either assume or suggest a particular answer.
- Supplementary questioning is used to understand why a learner has done a task in a specific way. This may also be used to ensure reliability of learner evidence.

#### 4.3.7 Learner record

A **learner record** is the learner's self-reported and self-reflective record in response to a **brief** in which he/she describes specific learning experiences, activities, responses and skills acquired.

The record may take a number of forms: it can be a structured logbook, a diary, a selective record of events or experiences over a period of time, a learning journal, a lab notebook or a sketchbook.

For example, a lab notebook could record specific tasks or activities carried out and the analytical results obtained by the learner. Sketchbooks may contain learner's original drawings, paintings or

sketches and can provide evidence of the process of reaching a finished art, craft or design piece.

When using a learner record the assessor should ensure that:

- the learner has a clear brief or set of instructions on the format of the record and is aware of what details should be included
- the brief is based on a range of intended learning outcomes
- the learner is aware of any requirements on the presentation of the learner record e.g., format
- a process for maintaining and updating the record is agreed with the learner
- the brief includes statement regarding academic integrity expectations
- the brief includes statement about plagiarism checking software that will be used.

## 4.4 MARKING

Assessors are required to mark and grade candidate evidence for each technique. Assessors should devise marking sheets for all **assessment instruments** identifying the assessment criteria and a range of specific marks linked to each criterion.

It should be clear from the marking sheet how marks are being allocated to each criterion and how the grade is to be awarded.

Where possible the total assessment marks allocated should be out of 100 or multiples of 100, since this eliminates the need for complicated calculations by assessors.

The achievement of learners' outcomes at levels 1, 2 and 3 is not usually marked numerically. The assessor will however still need to devise and apply assessment criteria and make a judgment on the quality of evidence.

Assessors are required to devise a **marking scheme** and **marking sheet** for each assessment instrument and a **summary marking sheet** for each module and programme.

### 4.4.1 Devising assessment criteria

The provider is always ultimately responsible for the assessment of learners enrolled on its programmes. The provider may delegate some of this responsibility to assessors operating within its approved quality assurance procedures. The programme documentation sets out how learners are to be assessed i.e. the programme and module assessment strategies. Some programmes may use some centrally developed assessment instruments and tasks. Assessors are responsible for implementing the programme and module assessment strategies. Often, the assessor is the teacher but not always.

Assessment criteria are the criteria used by the assessor when marking a learner's response to an assessment task. Assessment criteria state in qualitative terms what the learner must achieve in that assessment activity to attain a particular mark. The assessor typically<sup>7</sup> devises assessment

<sup>7</sup> For simplicity, the guidelines assume the assessor both devises the criteria and marks the learner response to the assessment task. However, it is possible that the criteria and assessment task may be devised separately from the person doing the marking.

criteria and an appropriate marking scheme for each **assessment instrument**.

It is essential that the assessment criteria are consistent with the relevant intended learning outcomes and the programme and module assessment strategies. The assessor and ultimately the provider are responsible for ensuring this.

The phrasing of assessment criteria should be consistent.

The marks allocated for each criterion should facilitate the assessor to mark efficiently. For example marks for specific criteria such as 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30 facilitate more reliable marking.

#### 4.4.2 Devising a marking system

Assessors must devise a transparent and reliable marking system to allocate marks to each assessment criterion. A marking system should identify for each assessment instrument:

- marks allocated to each assessment criterion
- sub totals
- total mark

As outlined above where possible the total assessment marks should be out of 100 or multiples of 100.

##### **Marking scheme out of 100**

Where the marking system is out of 100, the total marks for each assessment technique should correspond to the allocated percentage e.g. where there are two assessment techniques, for example a skills demonstration = 70% and an assignment = 30% then total marks for each is 70 and 30 respectively. The summary sheet should total all marks out of 100.

##### **Marking system greater than 100**

In some cases assessors may deem it is necessary to devise assessment marks which total to greater than 100. If so the total marks for each assessment technique should correspond to the allocated percentage e.g. where there are two assessment techniques with the skills demonstration =70% and the assignment = 30%, the total marks for each is 350 and 150 respectively. These are totalled to marks out of 500 in the summary sheet and divided by 5 to get the overall % mark per minor award.

Where marks are greater than 100 the summary sheet should be used to total all marks and divide by the appropriate number to obtain the % mark and associated grade.

##### **4.4.2.1 Sample answers or solutions (for assessors and not for learners)**

For all assessment (assessment rubrics), the assessor should develop a marking scheme that includes model responses or artefacts.

When devising assessment instruments and corresponding assessment criteria and marking schemes it is good practice to identify what will be accepted as evidence and how this will be marked or measured. This should ideally be devised when devising the assessment instrument. For example, when devising the tasks for a skills demonstration the assessor could devise an observation checklist identifying the skills and activities they expect to see during the assessment.

## 4.5 GRADING AND CLASSIFYING AWARDS

The **minimum intended learning outcomes** for an award are the **minimum intended programme/module learning outcomes** of the validated programme/module that leads to the award.

When a learner has been assessed as not having achieved the **minimum intended learning outcomes** for an award to be made, the grade is recorded as **unsuccessful**.

QQI awards are **classified** (graded) as follows.

- Awards at level 1, level 2 and level 3 are classified as **successful** where learners have been assessed as having achieved **the minimum intended learning outcomes**<sup>8</sup> for the award.
- Awards at level 4, level 5 and level 6 are classified as **pass, merit** or **distinction** where a learner has achieved the minimum intended learning outcomes for the award within the grading criteria.

A **pass** is a grade awarded to a learner who has attained the minimum intended learning outcomes for the award. The band of percentage marks associated with this grade is **50-64%**.

A **merit** is a grade awarded to a learner who has exceeded the minimum requirements. The band of percentage marks associated with this grade is **65-79%**.

A **distinction** is a grade awarded to a learner who has substantially exceeded the minimum requirements. The band of percentage marks associated with this grade is **80-100%**.

For competency-based awards or awards with specific legislative requirements regarding levels of competences the assessment will be weighted accordingly and the relevant grading criteria may be specified in the QQI award standard reflecting the minimum standard of achievement required by the learner.

<sup>8</sup> Achieving the minimum intended learning outcomes means achieving all the outcomes included in the list of minimum intended learning outcomes. This applies to MIMLOs when assessing for successful completion of a module and MIPLOs for a programme.

## 4.6 GRADING CRITERIA

Grading criteria describe what a learner must attain to achieve a particular grade for an award at a particular level. The following tables outline the grading criteria for QQI awards at levels 1 – 6.

### 4.6.1 Generic grading criteria for awards at levels 1 to 3

	Successful <sup>9</sup>		
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
<b>Grading Criteria</b>	The learner has achieved the minimum intended learning outcomes for the award in a structured and supported learning setting. The outcomes have been achieved with <i>significant support</i> and <i>direction</i> from the assessor, but the learner has demonstrated <i>sustentative achievement</i> on their own.	The learner has achieved the minimum intended learning outcomes for the award in a <i>structured</i> and <i>supported</i> setting with <i>clear direction</i> from the assessor. The learner has demonstrated some <i>autonomy</i> of action and has taken <i>limited responsibility</i> for the activities and for generating evidence.	The learner has achieved the minimum learning outcomes for the award with <i>some supervision</i> and <i>direction</i> . The learner has demonstrated <i>autonomy of action</i> and has taken <i>responsibility</i> for generating appropriate evidence.



## 4.6.2 Generic grading criteria for awards at levels 4 to 6

Pass	Merit	Distinction
<p>A Pass indicates that the learner has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• achieved the relevant minimum intended learning outcomes (a pass is the minimum acceptable standard for the award)</li> <li>• used the language of the vocational/specialised area competently</li> <li>• attempted to apply the theory and concepts appropriately</li> <li>• provided sufficient evidence which has relevance and clarity.</li> </ul>	<p>A Merit indicates that the learner has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• achieved the relevant minimum intended learning outcomes (a merit implies that a good standard has been achieved)</li> <li>• used the language of the vocational/specialised area with a degree of fluency</li> <li>• expressed and developed ideas clearly</li> <li>• demonstrated initiative, evaluation and analytical skills</li> <li>• presented coherent and comprehensive evidence.</li> </ul>	<p>A Distinction indicates that the learner has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• achieved the relevant minimum intended learning outcomes (a distinction implies that an excellent standard has been achieved)</li> <li>• used the language of the vocational/specialised area fluently and confidently</li> <li>• demonstration-depth understanding of the subject matter</li> <li>• demonstrated a high level of initiative, evaluation skills</li> <li>• demonstrated analytical and reflective thinking</li> <li>• expressed and developed ideas clearly, systematically and comprehensively</li> <li>• presented coherent, detailed and focused evidence</li> </ul>

## 5. THE AUTHENTICATION PROCESS

As part of the assessment framework, providers are required to put in place an **Authentication Process**.

### 5.1 PURPOSE

The purpose of the authentication process is to ensure fairness, consistency and validity of assessment and of the outcome of assessment i.e. learner results across each programme and award. The authentication process assists the provider to ensure that QQI is provided with accurate and quality assured learner results.

The authentication process established by the provider must include;

- internal verification and
- external authentication.

Providers must document their procedures pertaining to all elements of their authentication process.

### 5.2 INTERNAL VERIFICATION

Internal verification is the process by which the provider's assessment policies and procedures relating to planning, managing and operationalising all aspects of assessment practices will be internally verified i.e. monitored by the provider itself.

The process includes checking that the provider's assessment procedures have been applied across the range of assessment activities from planning to finalising results including checking/monitoring the accuracy of assessment results to ensure learner evidence exists and that results and grades are correctly computed and recorded.

Internal verification should take place on a sampling basis. Internal verification is undertaken by the assignment of one or more internal verifiers. Based on the provider's sampling strategy, (see guidelines on sampling in section 5.4), the internal verifier will verify i.e. monitor the assessment process including the accuracy of the assessment results.

The outcome of the internal verification process is an internal verification report.

A sample template for the internal verification reports is provided in Appendix 9.

#### 5.2.1 Role of the internal verifier

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 accuracy of assessment results.

The internal verifier(s) will:

- check that the provider's assessment procedures were adhered to
- monitor assessment results on a sample basis
- produce an internal verification report.

### 5.2.2 Verification of assessment procedures

Internal verification checks that the provider's assessment procedures have been applied consistently across assessment activities. The internal verification process will ensure that

- the provider's assessment procedures are adhered to
- learning has been assessed using the techniques and instruments as indicated in the validated programme
- assessment results are documented and recorded as per the provider's procedures.

### 5.2.3 Verification of assessment results

A sample of assessment results are internally verified prior to being submitted for external authentication and results approval. Verification involves checking that assessment evidence is available for all learners presented and that results are recorded and grades are assigned according to the validated programme.

This is achieved by applying systematic checks of the evidence presented by a sample of learners to ensure that:

- evidence is available for learners presented for an award
- evidence is generated in accordance with the validated programme
- assessment results are available for each learner
- that marks are totalled, and percentage marks are calculated correctly
- the percentage marks and grades awarded are consistent with QQI grading bands

In devising an effective internal verification process the provider should consider the following:

- the number of assessors
- the number of learners
- the number, range and diversity of awards being offered
- the number of centres within its remit.

## 5.3 EXTERNAL AUTHENTICATION

External authentication provides independent authoritative confirmation of fair and consistent assessment of learners in accordance with minimum intended programme and module learning outcomes and with national standards.

Additional guidelines for external authenticators are provided by QQI's *Quality Assuring*

*Assessment Interim Guidelines for External Authenticators 2024.* External authentication establishes the credibility of the provider's assessment processes and ensures that assessment results have been marked in a valid and reliable way and are compliant with the requirements for the award as set out in the validated programme.

Providers must assign an independent external authenticator to each principal programme (and centre where necessary) that leads to one or more QQI awards (covering that programme and its principal award and its constituent sub-programmes or modules or groups of modules that lead to embedded awards of any class). The external authenticator must be independent of the centre (and provider) to which they are assigned. The external authenticator will moderate assessment results for an award or across a number of awards within a related field or sub-field of the major, special purpose, supplemental of learning. The external authenticator will have subject matter expertise in the appropriate field or subfield to which they are assigned.

The outcome of the external authentication process is an external authentication report which will comment on the effectiveness of the application of the assessment process and procedures and in particular comment on the extent to which the learners' achievements and the marks/grades awarded conform to national standards.

The external authenticators' reports will be made available to QQI upon request.

### 5.3.1 Role of the external authenticator

The role of the external authenticator is to provide independent confirmation of fair and consistent assessment of learners in line with QQI requirements and to ensure consistency of assessment results with national standards. External authenticators will:

- confirm the fair and consistent assessment of learners consistent with the validated programme, the provider's policy and procedures and with QQI standards and guidelines
- review internal verification report(s) and authenticate the findings/outcomes
- apply a sampling strategy to moderate assessment results consistent with QQI requirements (see section 5.4)
- moderate assessment results in accordance with the minimum intended programme and module learning outcomes
- visit the centre and meet with appropriate staff and learners
- participate in the results approval process as per the provider's assessment policies and procedures and quality assurance procedures
- identify any issues/irregularities in relation to the assessment process
- recommend results for approval
- produce an external authentication report (see template in Appendix 10).

### 5.3.2 Criteria for selection of an external authenticator

Prior to assigning an external authenticator the provider should devise a profile of the individual required. The following criteria should be applied when devising this profile: the external assessor should:

- have technical/subject matter expertise within the appropriate award area/field of learning

- have experience of delivering programme assessment or work in the industry/field
- agree to undertake appropriate training and attend appropriate briefings
- have the qualities necessary to interact with learners, assessors and senior staff members e.g. communication skills
- have administrative and IT skills e.g. report writing, time-management skills
- undertake to operate within the code of practice and guidelines issued by QQI (see Appendix 11)
- be available to the provider at appropriate times
- be independent of the centre to which they are assigned.

### 5.3.3 Moderation of results

External authentication involves the moderation of assessment results within an award or across a number of awards in a specific field or sub-field of learning. This is done by judging the marked evidence presented according to the relevant intended learning outcomes.

The external authenticator will moderate results for awards in which they have relevant expertise in the field/sub-field of learning.

Given their professional status it is expected that all external authenticators will possess the expertise necessary to moderate results in general award areas e.g. communications.

The critical points at which judgment is applied are the boundaries between bands/grades: Unsuccessful/Pass, Pass/Merit, Merit/Distinction.

Moderating assessment results involves reviewing results and checking the standard of evidence at each grade band by examining samples of evidence within each grade band and at the borders of grades.

### 5.3.4 Frequency of external authentication

The frequency of external authentication will depend on the frequency at which certification is being sought by the provider, the number of learners and the range and type of awards being offered within a field or sub-field and the sampling strategy of the provider.

A sample of all assessment results being submitted to QQI for awards in a specific field/sub-field through the results approval process must be externally authenticated to ensure the credibility of the provider's assessment processes and the fair and consistent assessment of learners.

All programmes leading to major/special purpose/supplemental awards and all centres have an external authenticator assigned each year. Not all elements (e.g. components) of such programmes need to be authenticated each year.

New assessor judgements/decisions must be always authenticated at least once during their first assessment year.

Subject to the preceding paragraphs which may require authentication in every instance in some cases, all modules leading to minor awards should be authenticated **at least** once every two years or at every instance if offered less frequently.

### 5.3.5 Assigning external authenticators

The provider will:

- i. ascertain the number of programmes leading to QQI awards on offer across its centres
- ii. select and assign one or more external authenticators for each programme based on subject matter expertise with each external authenticator being independent of the centre to which they are assigned
- iii. ensure that all major/special purpose/supplemental award programmes and all centres have an external authenticator assigned per annum.

## 5.4 SAMPLING

Sampling is the process of selecting a portion of learner results and learner evidence for the purposes of completing internal verification and external authentication of assessment, within each major/special purpose/supplemental award area.

Providers are required to devise an appropriate sampling strategy suitable to their provision. The sample must be fair and consistent and enable the provider to identify any deviation from best practice. The sample should help the provider to ascertain whether their procedures are being implemented appropriately.

The precise size and nature of the sample will depend on a number of factors e.g. the total learner numbers, the number of centres for which the provider is responsible, and the number of programmes being delivered.

When devising a strategy for sampling and determining total learner numbers from which the sample will be taken, the criteria below should be applied by the provider or centre.

### 5.4.1 Criteria for sampling

The sampling strategy for each provider or centre will vary according to a number of factors. In devising a sampling strategy, the provider should ensure that the sample:

- is, subject to Section 5.3.4 on authentication frequency, representative of each programme and module that leads to a QQI award; each learner type (including part-time or full-time); and each assessment instrument
- is sufficient in size to enable sound judgments to be made about the fairness and consistency of assessment decisions
- covers the full range of attainment in terms of grades achieved
- includes a random selection of evidence (i.e. learner submissions) for each grade/band
- identifies evidence which is borderline between grades e.g. learners who have not or learners who have only just achieved within the grading band
- ensures new assessor judgments/decisions are sampled at least once during their first assessment year
- includes all named awards offered

- includes all of the provider's centres

The provider's strategy for sampling should be documented as part of their authentication process.

## 6. RESULTS APPROVAL PROCESS

The provider must establish a **results approval process** to ensure that results are fully quality assured and signed off by the provider prior to submission to QQI.

The results approval process ensures that appropriate decisions are taken regarding the outcome of the assessment and authentication processes. The process must include consideration of the internal verifier and external authenticator reports.

In the event that an external authenticator has concerns regarding the results, he/she will submit a report to the provider outlining their concerns and identifying the irregularities found. The provider should then instigate appropriate corrective action.

### 6.1 RESULTS APPROVAL PANEL

As part of their results approval process, a **results approval panel** must be established by the provider to ensure assessment decisions and results are reviewed, judged and processed in a fair, consistent and transparent manner. The role of the results approval panel is to

- meet as required to review and approve assessment results
- review reports of the internal verification and external authentication process
- agree to the submission of final results to QQI to request certification
- identify any issues arising in relation to the results and make recommendations for corrective action.

The membership of the results approval panel may include senior staff member(s), heads of departments/sections and assessors. The internal verifier and external authenticator reports should be considered by the panel.

### 6.2 RESULTS APPROVAL

Procedures should be put in place to ensure that results are approved and signed off by the results approval panel.

Once the results are approved, they should be as soon as practicable

- made available to learners and
- submitted to QQI.

Learners should be given a minimum of 14 days to lodge an appeal. QQI will issue certificates for all the results received except those flagged as under appeal.

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## 7. APPEALS PROCESS

A provider should put in place an appeals process. An appeals process will enable the learner to appeal

- the assessment process, if they perceive there to be irregularities/inequality in its implementation; or
- the assessment result.

Only approved results can be formally appealed by the learner. Therefore, the provider should:

- approve all results through the results approval process
- inform learners of the outcome of this process i.e. give assessment results to learners
- provide sufficient time to enable learners to lodge an appeal i.e. a minimum of 14 days should be allowed.

The appeals procedures should involve a review of the assessment process for the specific learner concerned including, where appropriate, the review of learner evidence and the assessment results. The individual/assessor who evaluates a learner appeal **should not** be the individual/assessor who made the original assessment decision.

The only assessment evidence which may be presented by the learner at appeal is that which has already been presented for assessment. New assessment evidence may not be added by the learner for the appeal.

The learner should be informed of the outcome of the appeals process within an agreed timescale.

Following the completion of the provider's appeal process, the results for the learner(s) concerned are forwarded to QQI as the final result. These final results are the basis on which QQI will issue certificates.



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## 8. REQUESTING CERTIFICATION

The outcome of the results approval process is that final results are submitted for the purpose of issuing certificates.

At the point of requesting certification for learners the provider must confirm that it has implemented all elements of the authentication process and adhered to all agreed procedures. All appropriate learner data will need to be supplied with the learner results e.g. Personal Public Service Number (PPSN).

QQI will issue certificates to learners at the next certification period following submission of quality assured and fully authenticated results by the provider.

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## 9. COMPUTER BASED/E-ASSESSMENT

The increased use of information and communication technologies means that providers can now offer alternative and more flexible methods of assessment such as computer based or on-line assessment (e-assessment). This may be particularly appropriate to a specific profile of learner i.e. distant learners, part-time learners or programme types.

When assessing learners through an online/e-assessment the validity and reliability of assessment is critical. This can be more challenging when using remote online assessment. Please refer to QQI's [Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines For Providers of Blended and Fully Online Programmes](#).

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## 10. ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Whilst academic integrity has always been an important consideration for providers in the quality assurance of assessment, in recent years threats to academic integrity have become more sophisticated and complex.

To support the implementation of new statutory provisions on academic integrity, QQI has consulted on a [White Paper](#), outlining a proposed policy approach to support a robust and coordinated national approach. A central pillar of this approach is that “Providers of programmes leading to awards within the NFQ are responsible for developing, implementing, and monitoring the effectiveness of policies, procedures and processes that support and promote academic integrity; providers are also responsible for the secure and valid assessment of learners to support academic integrity and enable trust in the achievement by learners of the knowledge, skill and competence associated with the relevant award”.

The National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN) has produced a range of [resources](#) which may be helpful for providers in reviewing and adapting their assessment policies and procedures to support the integrity of assessment, standards and awards.

## APPENDIX 1: QUALITY ASSURING ASSESSMENT – SUMMARY

This table summarises the key elements and roles within the assessment, authentication and results approval processes. The definitive guidance on these processes is provided in the body of this document.

Elements	Assessment	Internal verification	External authentication
<b>Definition</b>	<p>Assessment of learning can be understood to mean inference (e.g. judgement or estimation or evaluation) of a learner's knowledge, skill or competence by comparison with a standard based on appropriate evidence.</p> <p>See section two for a discussion of what standards should be used.</p> <p>Assessment should be consistent with and implemented according to the quality assured requirements of QQI as set out in the provider's own documented procedures</p>	<p>Internal verification is the process by which the provider's assessment policies and procedures relating to planning, managing and operationalising all aspects of assessment practices will be internally verified i.e. monitored by the provider itself. Any deviations will be identified and rectified</p>	<p>Process by which the provider and other stakeholders will be assured that its internal assessment process and procedures are consistent with best national practice and that the assessment results are consistent with national standards across providers. Any deviations will be identified and rectified</p>

Elements	Assessment	Internal verification	External authentication
<b>Roles</b>	<p>Assessors will (see section 4.1.3):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>implement the provider's assessment procedures across all relevant assessment activities</li> <li>design valid and reliable assessment instruments, marking schemes and grading criteria and submit these to review where required</li> <li>support the integrity of the assessment process (e.g. maintain confidentiality of unseen tasks)</li> <li>provide opportunities (with the provider's support) for learners to generate appropriate evidence</li> <li>review and judge learner evidence</li> <li>make the assessment decision (this may be subject to ratification or moderation by the relevant assessment committee (e.g. results approval panel) which has the final decision)</li> <li>provide information and feedback to the learner</li> <li>report any suspected breaches of academic integrity</li> <li>assist with any relevant appeals or complaints processes</li> </ul>	<p>Internal verifiers will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>check adherence to provider's assessment procedures</li> <li>monitor results through sampling</li> <li>identify any irregularities</li> </ul>	<p>External authenticators will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>be appointed based on award/ field expertise</li> <li>be independent of the centre</li> <li>ensure adherence to QQI assessment requirements</li> <li>sample assessment evidence</li> <li>review internal verification report</li> <li>moderate results</li> <li>make recommendations for improvements</li> </ul>
<b>Results Approval Process</b>	<p>Assessors will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>maintain documentation</li> <li>ensure records, documentation and learner evidence are available for internal verification and external authentication</li> </ul>	<p>Internal verifiers will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>produce reports to confirm accuracy of process and results</li> </ul>	<p>External authenticators will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>produce reports to provide independent confirmation on the accuracy of results</li> </ul>

Elements	Assessment	Internal verification	External authentication
<b>Reporting</b>	Assessors will provide learner results	Internal verifiers will draft a verification report	External authenticators will draft an authentication report
<b>Frequency</b>	All occurrences	All procedures  Sample of learner results	<p>Sample of occurrences on all awards over a period of time. See section 5.3.4 for details concerning frequency.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All programmes leading to major/special purpose/ supplemental awards and all centres have an external authenticator assigned each year. Not all elements (e.g. components) of such programmes need to be authenticated each year.</li> <li>New assessor judgements/decisions must be always authenticated at least once during their first assessment year.</li> <li>Subject to the guidelines in 5.3.4 (which may require authentication in every instance in some cases), all modules leading to minor awards should be authenticated at least once every two years or at every instance if offered less frequently.</li> </ul>
<b>Who briefs?</b>	Responsibility of the provider	Responsibility of the provider	Responsibility of the provider but QAI will provide guidelines for external authenticators

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## **APPENDIX 2: [REMOVED]**



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## APPENDIX 3: ASSESSMENT OF LEARNERS AT LEVELS 1, 2 AND 3

Awards at levels 1, 2 and 3 aim to meet the needs of learners who may be returning to education and training or who may be engaging with learning for the first time, and learners with few or no previous qualifications.

Learners at levels 1, 2 and 3 should only be assessed when the assessor believes that they are capable of achieving all the relevant intended learning outcomes for the award.

It is recognised that learners at these levels will achieve the standards in different ways and at their own pace. Some learners may achieve a number of learning outcomes together while others may achieve for example one outcome at a time.

The following techniques are often used for the assessment of learners at levels 1 to 3:

- Portfolio/collection of work
- Assignment
- Skills demonstration.

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### 1.1 LEVEL 1

Learners at Level 1 are assessed in familiar contexts with the learner assuming a familiar role i.e. assessment tasks will have been completed successfully a number of times before selection of evidence for the purposes of the award. Learners are expected to demonstrate knowledge, skill or competence within a well-structured and supported setting.

The assessor may support learner performance through, for example, visual/auditory clues or other prompts. However the learner's achievement must be substantively their own, the support provided by the assessor should facilitate the learner to demonstrate their achievement of the standard without compromising the standard (intended learning outcomes).

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### 1.2 LEVEL 2

Learners at level 2 are assessed in familiar contexts and in familiar roles i.e. assessment tasks have familiar elements that have been previously encountered by the learner who will have completed similar tasks successfully a number of times prior to completion of assessment activities for the purpose of the award.

Learners at level 2 are expected to demonstrate knowledge, skill or competence across a narrow range of related and familiar, well structured settings. The Assessor may generally support learner performance. Visual/auditory clues and prompts may be occasionally provided. However the learner's achievement must be substantively their own and must clearly be approaching independent performance.

### 1.3 LEVEL 3

Learners at level 3 are assessed in a limited range of contexts and in familiar roles with limited autonomy i.e. assessment tasks have a familiar element that has been previously encountered by the learner though not necessarily within the same context.

Learners at level 3 are expected to demonstrate knowledge, skill or competence across a limited range of familiar contexts within a managed setting. The assessor may direct and support the learner's performance but learner achievement must be wholly their own and must clearly show independent performance and some autonomy in demonstrating the standards.

## APPENDIX 4: ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUES – SUMMARY

The following table summarises the assessment techniques identified for assessing learners, and their appropriateness to the level of the award and the learning outcomes being assessed.

Assessment technique	Level appropriateness	Assessor needs to prepare:	Learning outcomes assessed
<b>Assignment</b>	Level 1-6	Assignment brief	Knowledge, know-how and skill, competence
<b>Project</b>	Level 4-6	Project brief	Knowledge, know-how and skill, competence
<b>Portfolio/collection of work</b>	Particularly appropriate for levels 1-3	Instructions/tasks. Guidelines on compiling portfolio	Knowledge, Know-how and skill, competence
<b>Skills demonstration</b>	Level 1-6	Instructions, tasks, activities or brief	Particularly appropriate to know-how and skill and competence
<b>Examination</b>	Level 4-6	Examination paper, examination questions, instructions for learners e.g. time allowed	Theory based examination is particularly suitable for the assessment of knowledge outcomes. Practical examinations can be used to assess know-how and skill and competence
<b>Learner record</b>	Level 4-6	Brief/instructions. Guidelines for learners on format of the record.	Knowledge, know-how and skill, competence



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## **APPENDIX 5: [REMOVED]**



Appendices 6-10 contain a range of material that will assist the provider in developing and implementing quality assured procedures. Alternatively, providers may devise their own templates.

## APPENDIX 6: SAMPLE MARK SHEET (PER TECHNIQUE)

Title of minor award	Assessment technique	Weighting
	Assignment	40%

**Learner's name:**

**Date:**

Assessment criteria	Allocated marks	Learner mark	Comments/ Feedback
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• clear identification of</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">5</p> <p style="text-align: center;">5</p> <p style="text-align: center;">5</p>		
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>15</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• critical evaluation of....</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">5</p> <p style="text-align: center;">5</p> <p style="text-align: center;">5</p>		
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>15</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• appropriate conclusions drawn on</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">5</p> <p style="text-align: center;">5</p>		
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>10</b>		
<b>Total marks</b>	<b>40</b>		

**Overall comment/feedback (additional sheets may be used for this if necessary)**

**Assessor's signature:**

**Date:**

## APPENDIX 7: SAMPLE RESULTS SUMMARY SHEET

Sample results summary sheet (per learner, per minor award)

Learner Name:

Minor Award:

Assessment technique	Weighting	Max Marks	Learner's Mark
Technique	50%		
Technique 2	50%		
<b>Total Mark</b>			
<b>Grade</b>			

Assessor's signature:

Date:

## APPENDIX 8: TEMPLATES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF AUTHENTICATION AND RESULTS APPROVAL PROCESSES

The following templates may be used by providers for developing procedures for their authentication and results approval processes.

The provider's procedures for each of these processes should make it clear how the process is to be carried out within that provider.

The procedures should identify who is responsible (responsibility), how it is to be done (methodology) and when or how often it is to be undertaken (frequency).

### 1.1 FRAMEWORK FOR AN INTERNAL VERIFICATION PROCEDURE

This framework is not a procedure and does not contain detailed guidance in what should be contained in a procedure. It is only a framework. In developing its procedure, a provider will need to refer to the detailed guidance in the body of this document.

Procedure	Guideline: <i>the procedure should seek to ensure that...</i>
<b>Responsibility</b>	The job title(s) of the person(s) who will co-ordinate and conduct the internal verification is identified. The person should be in a position to conduct effective internal verification i.e. management should demonstrate commitment to allocate resources, time, expertise and staff development to support the internal verification process.
<b>Methodology</b>	<p>It is clear how internal verification of a programme is to be carried out. This includes ensuring;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the provider's agreed assessment procedures are adhered to</li> <li>monitoring of assessment results on a programme is undertaken on a sampling basis</li> <li>sampling strategy for internal verification is identified and implemented (i.e. sampling plan is devised and agreed)</li> <li>assessment evidence is available for internal verification</li> <li>an internal verification report is completed</li> </ul> <p><b>Sampling Methodology</b></p> <p>The basis/method used to select the sample for internal verification is identified. The value on which total learner numbers are based is identified. For example, is the total learner number taken from combined numbers across related programmes?</p>
<b>Frequency</b>	The criteria for setting how often internal verification should take place is identified and applied.

## 1.2 FRAMEWORK FOR AN EXTERNAL AUTHENTICATION PROCEDURE

This framework is not a procedure and does not contain detailed guidance in what should be contained in a procedure. It is only a framework. In developing its procedure a provider will need to refer to the detailed guidance in the body of this document along with Quality Assuring Assessment Interim Guidelines for External Authenticators 2024.

Procedure	Guideline: <i>the procedure should seek to ensure that...</i>
<b>Responsibility</b>	The job title(s) of person(s) who will be responsible for coordinating the external authentication process and selecting/assigning an external authenticator is identified.
<b>Assignment and selection of an external authenticator</b>	<p>The <i>criteria and profile</i> to be used when selecting an external authenticator is identified. (This should be based on the criteria provided in section 4 of these guidelines)</p> <p>It should be clear from the procedure the basis on which a provider will assign external authenticators i.e. within a field or sub-field of learning</p>
<b>Frequency</b>	The frequency on which the sample is to be taken is identified.
<b>Methodology for moderation of assessment results</b>	<p><b>Sampling Strategy</b> The provider's overall sampling strategy. The value on which total learner numbers are based is identified. For example, it should be clear if 'n' is to be a combination of learner numbers from a number of centres/within a specific region.</p> <p><b>Procedures for external authentication</b> This should include procedures for communicating with the external authenticator and for conducting external authentication. The roles of appropriate staff and the external authenticator should be identified clearly.</p> <p>The procedure should ensure that the outcome of the external authentication process i.e. the external authentication report is included in the results approval process.</p>

### 1.3 FRAMEWORK FOR A RESULTS APPROVAL PROCESS PROCEDURE

This framework is not a procedure and does not contain detailed guidance in what should be contained in a procedure. It is only a framework. In developing its procedure a provider will need to refer to the detailed guidance in the body of this document.

Procedure	<i>Guideline: the procedure should seek to ensure that</i>
<b>Assignment of responsibility</b>	The membership profile of the results approval group is identified. Specific staff members do not need to be identified, but the profiles of staff should be indicated.
<b>Terms of reference</b>	The terms of reference and scope of the results approval group(s) must be outlined. These should be consistent with the guidelines provided in this document.
<b>Methodology</b>	Methodology for the presentation of and approval of results through the results approval panel must be identified.
<b>Frequency</b>	The provider should identify when and how often it is intended that the results approval panels will meet.
<b>Request for certification</b>	The methodology for submission of quality assured and approved results to QQI must be identified. The provider should ensure there are 'checks' in place to ensure the correct learner results are submitted.

## APPENDIX 9: INTERNAL VERIFICATION REPORT TEMPLATE

This template is provided as a tool for providers. A provider may however devise their own internal verification report. They must ensure the Process outline for internal verification is adhered to and verified in the report.

<b>Registered Provider/Centre Name:</b>	
<b>Registered Number:</b>	
<b>Named award(s) and codes</b>  Named award(s) for which results are being internally verified	
<b>Date of internal verification:</b>	
<b>Internal verifier(s):</b> (names and signatures of staff member(s) carrying out the internal verification)	<b>Name:</b> Signature:  <b>Name:</b> Signature:  <b>Name:</b> Signature:

<p><b>Assessment processes and procedures</b></p>	<p><b>Verification</b> of adherence to provider’s assessment procedures. Commentary should be provided as appropriate.</p>	
<p><b>Assessment procedures</b></p> <p>I (we) confirm that the assessment procedures as agreed through this provider’s quality assurance have been applied across all assessment activities for this award.</p>	<p><b>Yes</b></p>	
	<p><b>No</b></p>	
	<p><b>Comments/ action points as appropriate</b></p>	

**Internal verifier(s)**

Name: .....

Signature: .....

Date: .....



**Internal verification**  
**Monitoring of assessment results: report**

**Number of assessors for whom assessment results were sampled:**

**Number of learners in the sample:**

Please complete for each named award/group of assessment results verified	Is the documentation available and completed correctly, e.g. mark sheets, learner records?		Is sufficient and reliable assessment evidence available for all learners presented?		Was evidence generated in accordance with the validated programme?		Have marks been correctly totalled and grades awarded in line with QQI requirements?		Comments/action points (if 'No' please identify issues/make recommendations)
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Named award title									

**Internal verifier:**

**Name:**

**Signature:**

**Date:**

## APPENDIX 10: EXTERNAL AUTHENTICATION REPORT TEMPLATE

### External authentication report (template)

This template is provided as a tool for providers and external authenticators. A provider may however devise their own external authentication report. They must ensure the process outlined for external authentication is adhered to and verified in the report.

<b>Registered Provider/Centre Name:</b>	
<b>Registered Number:</b>	
<b>Date of external authentication Process:</b>	
<b>Indicate sample basis and sample size:</b>	<p>The basis on which the sample was selected should be identified here. i.e. the sample was taken for Named Award 'X' from learners across 3 centres. Total number of learners = 220 Sample size (selected on a random basis across the spread of grades) = 15</p> <p>Where the sample is taken from across more than one centre, the centres included in the sample should be listed in this report.</p>
<b>Named award(s) and codes for sample selected</b>  (Named award(s) for which results are being externally authenticated)	
<b>External authenticator details</b>	<p>Name: (Please Print):</p> <p>Address/contact details</p>

### Report on external authentication of assessment results

Please complete for each named award/group of assessment results being authenticated	Have the results been internally verified by the provider?		Was evidence generated in accordance with the validated programme?		Are the results presented consistent with national standards for the award? (If no, identify results which have been changed).		Comments/Action Points (If 'No' identify issues/make recommendations).
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	
<i>Named award title</i>							<b>Comments</b>

Awards moderated	
Number of grades changed	
% of grades changed	

Describe examples of good practice observed/identify concerns:	
Outline areas for improvement	

<b>Signatures:</b>	External authenticator:	Date:
	Provider:	Date:

This report may be made available to QQI.

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## APPENDIX 11: EXTERNAL AUTHENTICATOR CODE OF PRACTICE

The role of the external authenticator is to provide independent authentication of fair and consistent assessment of learners in line with QQI requirements and national standards. This code of practice identifies the key areas of the role and the standards of professionalism which external authenticators are expected to maintain. External authenticators must undertake to work within this code of practice.

The external authenticator will undertake to:

- exercise their role with utmost integrity and professionalism when undertaking external authentication for a provider
- comply with QQI policies and procedures specifically in relation to awards and assessment
- fully comply with the provider's policies and procedures
- inform the provider of any potential conflict of interest which may compromise their role
- inform the provider of availability
- communicate appropriately with the provider and inform them of planned visits and information required
- provide constructive feedback to the centre management and staff
- compile an external authentication report on time and based on an independent evaluation of the process and procedures.

**Name of external authenticator:**

**Signed:**

**Date:**

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## **APPENDIX 12: [REMOVED]**



## APPENDIX 13: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

<b>Academic integrity</b>	“Compliance with ethical and professional principles, standards, practices and a consistent system of values, that serves as guidance for making decisions and taking actions in education, research and scholarship.” <sup>10</sup>
<b>Academic malpractice (also referred to as academic misconduct, academic dishonesty, cheating, academic impropriety, academic violation, academic mis-practice)</b>	Behaviours perpetrated by individuals or institutions that transgress ethical standards held in common between other individuals and/or groups in institutions of education, research or scholarship. <sup>11</sup>
<b>Access</b>	Refers to a learner’s ability to avail of appropriate opportunities to enter and succeed in programmes leading to awards, with recognition of learning already achieved.
<b>Assessment</b>	Assessment of learning can be understood to mean inference (e.g. judgement or estimation or evaluation) of a learner’s knowledge, skill or competence by comparison with a standard based on appropriate evidence.
<b>Assessor</b>	The assessor devises assessment instruments/marketing schemes and assessment criteria, provides opportunity for learners to generate evidence, judges learner evidence and makes an assessment decision.
<b>Assessment technique</b>	An assessment technique is a way of assessing a learner’s achievement of intended learning outcomes. The technique together with its implementation should be valid and reliable for the purposes to which it is put. The technique should be suited to the ILOs e.g. practical carpentry skills are more likely to be suited to assessment by a skills demonstration than a written examination.
<b>Assessment instrument</b>	An assessment instrument is the specific activity/task or question(s) devised by the assessor based on the assessment technique specified by the programme/module documentation.
<b>Authentication process</b>	The process by which providers will quality assure the devising, recording and verification of the assessment procedures. This process will include both internal verification and external authentication.

<sup>10</sup> [ACADEMIC INTEGRITY – ENAI](https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2021-11/academic-integrity-national-principles-and-lexicon-of-common-terms.pdf) and used in <https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2021-11/academic-integrity-national-principles-and-lexicon-of-common-terms.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> [Academic Integrity: National Principles and Lexicon of Common Terms \(NAIN, 2021 1st ed.\)](https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2021-11/academic-integrity-national-principles-and-lexicon-of-common-terms.pdf) [academic-integrity-national-principles-and-lexicon-of-common-terms.pdf \(qqi.ie\)](https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2021-11/academic-integrity-national-principles-and-lexicon-of-common-terms.pdf)

<b>Award</b>	That which is conferred, granted or given by an awarding body and which records that a learner has acquired a standard of knowledge, skill or competence.
<b>Award type</b>	Refers to a class of named awards sharing common features and level. These include major, minor, special purpose and supplemental award types. Different award types reflect different purposes of award and allow for the recognition of all learning achievement.
<b>Competence</b>	One of the framework strands (outcomes of knowledge, skill and competence). It refers to the process of governing the application of knowledge to a set of tasks that is typically acquired by practice and reflection. It is the effective and creative demonstration and deployment of knowledge and skill in human situations. Such situations could comprise general, social and civic ones as well as specific occupational ones.
<b>Criterion referenced assessment</b>	FET awards are criterion referenced.  Criterion-referenced assessment has set criteria to be achieved; meeting/not meeting these criteria, is the most important aspect. The driving test is a good example of a criterion-referenced assessment. The standards of knowledge, skill and competence are specified in the intended programme and module learning outcomes of a validated programme leading to the award and these must be consistent with the applicable QQI awards standards.
<b>Determining standards</b>	The process by which QQI determines the standards of knowledge, skill or competence for the purpose of making awards.
<b>External authentication</b>	External authentication provides independent authoritative confirmation of fair and consistent assessment of learners in accordance with minimum intended programme and module learning outcomes and with national standards.
<b>External authenticator</b>	Appointed by providers to conduct external authentication.
<b>Fields/subfields of learning</b>	These refer to fields of education and training that are classified in accordance with the ISCED classification system. <sup>12</sup>
<b>Further education and training</b>	Education and training other than primary or post primary or higher education and training.

<sup>12</sup> <https://circabc.europa.eu/sd/a/286ebac6-aa7c-4ada-a42b-ff2cf3a442bf/ISCED-F%202013%20-%20Detailed%20field%20descriptions.pdf>

<b>Feedback<sup>13</sup></b>	<p>McKeachie (1999)<sup>14</sup> suggests five feedback conditions that result in improvement.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. 'Feedback needs to convey information that is understood by the recipient.'</li><li>2. 'Feedback is not helpful if one does not know what to do to improve.'</li><li>3. 'Feedback is more likely to be helpful if it can be generalised.'</li><li>4. 'Feedback is more helpful if it not only facilitates learning a helpful concept, theory, or strategy but also helps the individual develop skills or strategies that will facilitate further learning.'</li><li>5. 'Feedback may help if we are motivated to improve.'</li></ol>
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13 The interpretation quotation taken from Assessment and Standards 2022 and cites other sources.

14 McKeachie, W.J. (1999) Commentary Feedback and reflection in facilitating further learning in Messick (1999) pp. 57-61.



<b>Formative assessment<sup>15</sup></b>	<p>Supports the learner in attaining specified learning outcomes. It does not normally penalise error. ‘Formative assessment is concerned with how judgements about the quality of student responses (performances, pieces, or works) can be used to shape and improve the student’s competence by short-circuiting the randomness and inefficiency of trial and error learning’ (Sadler, 1989).<sup>16</sup></p> <p>Nitko (1996)<sup>17</sup> identifies four basic uses to which formative continuous assessment is put:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. ‘Sizing-up a group.’</li> <li>2. ‘Diagnosing individual students’ learning needs.’</li> <li>3. ‘Diagnosing the group’s learning needs.’</li> <li>4. ‘Planning instruction.’</li> </ol> <p>Formative assessment informs a learner how to improve their learning and is generally carried out in the early stages of, or during, a programme. Formative assessment provides feedback on a learner’s work, and is not necessarily used for certification purposes. The emphasis in formative assessment is on encouraging more understanding by learners of their respective strengths, weaknesses and gaps in knowledge</p>
<b>Internal verification</b>	<p>The process by which learners will be assured that the provider’s assessment procedures are applied in a consistent manner across the provider’s assessment activities.</p>
<b>Knowledge</b>	<p>One of the framework strands (outcomes of knowledge, skill and competence). It is the form of outcome commonly identified with declarative knowledge i.e. the cognitive representation of ideas, events or happenings. It can comprise description, memory, understanding, thinking, analysis, synthesis, debate and research.</p>
<b>Learner</b>	<p>A person who is acquiring or who has acquired knowledge, skill or competence.</p>
<b>Major award</b>	<p>A major award is the principal class of award made at each level. It represents a significant volume of learning outcomes. A major award will prepare learners for employment, participation in society and community and access to higher levels of education and training e.g. Level 5 Certificate in Early Learning and Care.</p>

<sup>15</sup> The first two paragraphs are taken from QQI’s Assessment and Standards 2022 and cite other sources

<sup>16</sup> Sadler, D. R. (1989) Formative assessment and the design of instructional systems *Instructional Science*, 18 (1989):119-144. (in Harlen W. (2008) *Student Assessment and Testing Volume 2 Sage Library of Educational Thought and Practice London: Sage pp. 328*)

<sup>17</sup> Nitko, A.J. (1995) Curriculum-based continuous assessment: a framework for concepts procedures and policy *Assessment in Education*, 2(3), 321-337 (in Harlen W. (2008) *Student Assessment and Testing Volume 2 Sage Library of Educational Thought and Practice London: Sage 289-306*)

<p><b>Minimum intended programme learning outcomes (MIPLOs)<sup>18</sup></b></p>	<p>The minimum achievement (in terms of knowledge, skill and competence) that the learner is certified to have attained if he/she successfully completes a particular programme (i.e. passes all the required assessments). The minimum intended programme learning outcomes define the minimum learning outcomes for a particular programme at the programme level. These must always be specified by the provider. If the programme allows substantial choice, there may need to be variant forms of the minimum intended programme outcomes — e.g. a programme might allow a person to choose from a number of specialisations.</p> <p>A learner who completes a validated programme is eligible for the relevant award if he or she has demonstrated, through assessment (including by recognition of prior learning), attainment of the relevant minimum intended programme learning outcomes.</p> <p>In addition to minimum intended programme learning outcomes, the programme provider may aspire to describing other ‘intended programme learning outcomes’ beyond the minimum. In this document, ‘intended learning outcomes’ refers to all or any of the intended outcomes, including the minimum ones. ‘Minimum intended learning outcomes’ refers exclusively to the minimum ones. The minimum intended programme learning outcomes identify the principal educational goal of the programme — effective assessment helps learners to attain that goal. Minimum intended programme learning outcomes are developed and maintained by providers. Programmes are designed to enable learners to achieve minimum intended programme learning outcomes. Minimum intended learning outcomes are specified for each of a programme’s constituent modules.</p> <p>The number of learning outcomes in a statement of intended learning outcomes is variable (depending, for example, on the semantics and the level of explicitness used). This is not a proxy for credit.</p> <p>Teachers and learners may strive for additional learning outcomes that are beyond the minimum. In addition to ‘minimum intended programme learning outcomes’, providers may describe other levels of intended programme learning outcomes beyond the minimum.</p>
<p><b>Minimum intended module learning outcomes (MIMLOs)</b></p>	<p>A module can be regarded as a programme embedded in a bigger programme. Therefore, see minimum intended programme learning outcomes.</p>

<sup>18</sup> Definition taken from QQI's Assessment and Standards 2022.

<b>Minor award</b>	A minor award is an award that is derived from, and must link to, at least one major award. Minor awards are smaller than their parent major award(s). Achievement of a minor award provides for recognition of learning that has relevance and value in its own right e.g. Word Processing, Safety and Health at Work. In the FET awarding system they are referred to as components.
<b>National framework of qualifications</b>	The single nationally and internationally accepted entity through which all learning achievements may be measured and related to each other in a coherent way and which defines the relationship between all education and training awards. The Framework has 10 levels, reflecting all learning from introductory to doctorate levels.
<b>Norm-referenced assessment</b>	Norm-referenced assessment expresses the learners' scores in rank order, based on a distribution of scores. It is comparative. Normal distributions curves are often associated with norm-referenced assessment.
<b>Outcomes</b>	Identify what the learner is able to do on successful completion of a learning experience.
<b>Programme</b>	A programme is a learning experience designed and offered by a provider based on predetermined national standards and leading to a QQI award.
<b>Progression</b>	Progression can be interpreted in different ways. It can refer to progression within a module (e.g. the successful completion of activities and acquisition of learning within the module); progression within a programme (e.g. the successful completion of programme components); or within the qualifications system (e.g. progressing to a programme leading to an award at a higher level of the NFQ, having received recognition for knowledge, skill or competence required).
<b>Provider</b>	A person who, or body which, provides, organises or procures a programme of education and training.
<b>Quality assurance</b>	The system(s) put in place by a provider to maintain and improve the quality of its programme(s).
<b>Recognition of prior learning (RPL)</b>	Recognition of Prior Learning i.e. recognition of learning that has taken place but not necessarily been assessed or measured prior to entering a programme. Such prior learning may have been acquired through formal, non-formal or informal routes.

<b>Skill</b>	One of the framework strands (of knowledge, skill and competence outcomes). It reflects know-how and skill and involves demonstration by the learner of ability in terms of mastery of skill or application of knowledge. The level and degree of skill are reflected in the level indicators in the framework.
<b>Special purpose award</b>	A special purpose award is made for specific relatively narrow purposes. It does not have to link to a major award.
<b>Standards</b>	Standards identify the knowledge, skill and/or competence that must be attained in order to achieve an award.
<b>Supplemental</b>	A supplemental award is an award to recognise learning which involves updating/ up-skilling and/or continuing education and training with specific regard to occupations
<b>Summative assessment</b>	Summative assessment is generally carried out at the end of a programme or 'unit' of learning, e.g. written examination. It is comprehensive in nature and is generally used for certification purposes. It is based on the cumulative learning experience that takes place in a programme or 'unit'. Assessment undertaken for the purpose of submitting authenticated results to QQI for the purpose of requesting an award is summative assessment.
<b>Transfer</b>	Refers to a learner's ability to move from one programme leading to an award to another, including at the same level of the framework, having received recognition for knowledge, skill or competence acquired
<b>Validation</b>	Validation is the process through which QQI determines that the programmes devised by providers will enable learners to achieve the standards required for an award.

