



QQI

Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

Quality Assuring Assessment

Guidelines for Providers

Revised 2013

(Version 2 - revised 2018)*

QQI has adopted policies, criteria and guidelines established by its predecessor bodies and saved under section 84 of the 2012 Act. These are adopted and adapted as necessary, to support new policies issued by QQI and the establishment of QQI services in accordance with the 2012 Act. Over time these policies will be replaced with new QQI policies under the QQI Comprehensive Policy development Programme. All references in this policy document to the predecessor bodies and the associated structures should be read as referring to QQI and its structures.

In the event that there is any conflict between the adopted and adapted legacy policy, criteria and guidelines and QQI policy, the QQI policy will prevail.

**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.*

Table of Contents	page
Providers Assessment Process: Overview	4
1. Purpose	5
2. Quality Assuring Assessment	5
2.1 Principles	5
2.2 Policy Statement	6
3. The Assessment Process	7
3.1 Roles	7
3.2 Assessment Procedures	8 - 12
3.3 Devising Assessment	13 - 19
3.4 Marking	20 - 21
3.5 Grading Classifications	22 - 23
4. The Authentication Process	24
4.1 Purpose	24
4.2 Internal Verification	24
4.2.1 Role of Internal verifier	24
4.2.2 Verification of assessment procedures	25
4.2.3 Verification of assessment results	25
4.3 External Authentication	25
4.3.1 Role of the External authenticator	26
4.3.2 Criteria for selection of an External authenticator	26
4.3.3 Moderation of results	26
4.3.4 Frequency of external authentication	27
4.3.5 Assigning external authenticators	27
4.4 Sampling	27-28
5. Results Approval Process	28
5.1 Results approval panel	28
5.2 Results approval	29
6. Appeals Process	29
7. Requesting certification	29
8. Computer based/E-assessment	30-31

Appendix 1	Quality Assuring Assessment: Summary	32
Appendix 2	Common Awards System	34
Appendix 3	Assessment of learners at levels 1, 2 and 3	35
Appendix 4	Assessment techniques – Summary	36
Appendix 5	Assessment criteria	37
Appendix 6	Sample Mark Sheet	39
Appendix 7	Sample Results Summary Sheet	40
Appendix 8	Template for the development of authentication and results approval processes	41
Appendix 9	Internal Verification Report (Template)	45
Appendix 10	External Authentication Report (Template)	48
Appendix 11	External authenticator: Code of Practice	51
Appendix 12	Sampling values for \sqrt{n}	52
Appendix 13	Glossary of Terms	53

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



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 providers 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. Purpose

The purpose of these guidelines is to assist providers in the development and implementation of quality assured processes and procedures for the fair and consistent assessment of learners. They set out best practice with regard to assessment, authentication, results approval and processing appeals.

Assessment of learners may take place in a range of settings including: classrooms, the workplace, on the job, community setting or by computer based/e-assessment. The assessment guidelines are applicable to all types of delivery and assessment settings.

2. Quality Assuring Assessment

Assessment for QQI awards is *criterion-referenced* i.e. learners are assessed and the assessment judgment is made based on whether the learner has reached the required national standards of knowledge, skill and competence for the award. National standards identify the knowledge, skill and/or competence that must be attained by a learner in order to achieve a specific award. These standards are expressed as learning outcomes and are outlined in the Award Specification (or Module Descriptors) for each named award. The Award Specification will also identify valid and reliable techniques for the assessment of learner achievement.

Quality assured assessment ensures learner achievement is assessed in a fair and consistent way in line with the national standards for the award.

Quality will be assured through establishing an *assessment framework* for providers which includes:

- the publication of nationally developed award standards (in the form of the Award Specification), including valid and reliable assessment techniques
- the publication of assessment guidelines
- providers' quality assurance including their procedures for fair and consistent assessment of learners
- the validation of assessment arrangements per programme
- the provider's own self evaluation procedures
- national monitoring.

2.1 Principles

The following principles underpin the policy on quality assuring assessment.

Validity

Validity is a key principle which underpins assessment. A valid assessment means that the assessment should measure what it is supposed to measure i.e. only the standards of knowledge, skill or competence required for the award should be assessed. An assessment is valid when it;

- is fit for/appropriate to the purpose (i.e. a practical assessment should be used to assess practical skills)
- allows the learner to produce evidence which can be measured against the standards
- facilitates reliable assessment decisions by assessors
- is accessible to all candidates who are potentially able to achieve it.

Reliability

Reliability refers to the accuracy with which an assessment measures the skill or attainment it is designed to measure. An assessment which is unreliable cannot be valid. A reliable

assessment consistently gives the same result under similar conditions. A reliable assessment produces reliable assessment decisions. To be reliable an assessment must:

- be based on valid assessment techniques
- 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

Fair

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.

Quality

Quality is a key principle in ensuring the credibility and status of QQI awards. Quality will be assured through the publication of national award standards, the providers' own quality assurance, the establishment of an assessment framework, programme validation, the process of self-evaluation and national monitoring.

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.

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 Qualifications Act.

2.2 Policy

QQI will ensure that providers operate fair and consistent assessment policies and practices by publishing - Award Specifications, a policy and guidelines on assessment, quality assuring providers' assessment processes and procedures, validating programmes including assessment arrangements and monitoring their fair and consistent implementation nationally.

QQI monitors 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
- an Authentication Process
- a Results Approval Process for the processing the approval of results
- an Appeals Process.

3. The Assessment Process

The Assessment Process is the process of judging learner achievement in relation to the standards of knowledge, skill and competence so that the successful learner may receive an award.

Assessment takes place following a learning activity the learner undertakes through a validated programme. The learning and assessment may take place in a number of contexts such as classrooms, the workplace, community settings, through e-learning/e-assessment. This process of judging learning achievement against the standards for the purpose of attaining an award is called *summative* assessment. It should be noted however that best practice in assessment indicates that learners benefit also from *formative* assessment i.e. where assessment takes place and feedback is given through the process of teaching and learning.

The key parties to the Assessment Process are; the provider and the assessor. Establishing procedures to ensure fairness and consistency in the Assessment Process is the responsibility of the provider. The process of judging learning achievement and making the assessment decision is the responsibility of the assessor.

3.1 Roles

The key parties to the Assessment Process and their respective roles are outlined below.

3.1.1 The Provider

The role of the provider is to develop and implement policies and procedures for the fair and consistent assessment of learners in line with the requirements outlined in this document. The provider is responsible for:

- developing best practice assessment policies and procedures
- agreeing their assessment policies and procedures.
- implementing their quality assured assessment policy and procedures
- applying all QQI requirements
- ensuring appropriate assessment personnel are in place
- establishing an Authentication Process to include;
 - internal verification
 - external authentication, including setting criteria for the selection and appointment of external authenticators
- establishing a Results Approval Process
- establishing an Appeals Process.

In addition, and as part of the application for validation providers must ensure that the programme structure, content and assessment arrangements meet the requirements of the named Award Specification to which the programme is designed to lead.

3.1.2 The Assessor

The role of the assessor is to evaluate learner evidence and make the assessment decision/judgment on whether the outcomes of knowledge, skill or competence, as outlined in the Award Specification, have been achieved. The assessor must determine that the evidence is valid, reliable and sufficient to make the assessment decision.

The assessor is a qualified practitioner who has responsibility for the assessment of learners. This may be the teacher, trainer or lecturer. It can also be a workplace supervisor, manager

or team leader. 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 of the award standards (learning outcomes) being assessed
- knowledge of the provider's assessment procedures
- familiarity with QQI assessment policy and guidelines.

The specific responsibilities of the assessor are to:

- implement the provider's assessment procedures across all assessment activities
- provide opportunities for learners to generate appropriate evidence
- design assessment instruments
- devise marking schemes and grading criteria
- review and judge learner evidence
- make the assessment decision
- provide information and feedback to learners.

3.2 Assessment Procedures

As part of their quality assurance agreement a provider must have appropriate procedures in place 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 in achieving it. This section (3.2) contains guidelines on best practice in relation to establishing procedures for the fair and consistent assessment of learners.

3.2.1 Planning Assessment

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

- a) the range of specific learning outcomes to be assessed
- b) the assessment techniques and instruments
- c) the timing of assessment activities
- d) any deadlines and due dates
- e) how marks are to be allocated and assessment criteria is to be applied.

A holistic approach should be taken in planning the assessment for a programme. The tendency to over assess should be avoided and opportunities to integrate assessment across a number of minor awards should be explored. The total assessment load and the needs of learners should be considered when the assessment is being planned.

Learners should have sufficient opportunities to generate evidence to demonstrate achievement of the standards of knowledge, skill or competence.

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

A systematic approach to assessment planning will ensure that assessment opportunities and planned evidence collection will meet the standards for the award.

3.2.2 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 QQI award to which the programme leads and of the assessment and grading requirements.

Learners should have access to the following:

- the relevant Award Specification
- appropriate information in relation to the assessment techniques
- provider's policy on deadlines and key dates and deadlines for submission of evidence
- information for learners with disabilities or other special requirements
- information on the provider's Appeals Process.

3.2.3 Assessment deadlines

Assessment must be fair and consistent across all assessment activities for all learners. To 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 he/she responsibility to present evidence for the assessment activity within the deadline specified and the resulting consequences should a learner fail to do this.

A provider should facilitate and give due consideration to a learner who provides evidence of extenuating circumstances. See guidelines in section 3.2.9 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.

3.2.4 Reliability of learner evidence

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 i.e. it is reliable learner evidence. This is particularly important when group assessment is used.

The following are ways in which the assessor may ascertain that the learner evidence produced is reliable and genuine. The assessor should where appropriate implement a range of these.

- **questioning**; this involves asking the learner to explain and describe part of 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 the learner 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 with regard to 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.

3.2.5 Security of assessment related processes and material

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

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 of assessment results and the appropriate need for retention of learner evidence for a sufficient period of time should be considered.

3.2.6 Records and documentation

A provider should make sure that all assessment, verification records and documentation are available both for internal verification and external authentication.

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 (if different)
- any specific learner requirements
- name(s) of the assessor(s)
- name(s) of internal verifier(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.

Assessment evidence submitted by the learner should be recorded as having been received to prevent any disagreement between the learner and the assessor. Learner receipts or signatures are mechanisms which may be used to record this.

3.2.7 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:

- 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
- impersonation of another learner
- fabrication of evidence
- alteration of results
- wrongly obtaining secure assessment material eg 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 sufficient 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.

3.2.8 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 standards 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 technique(s) or instruments disadvantages the learner in assessment.

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

- 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.

3.2.9 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 have been prevented from undertaking a specific assessment activity or who feel their performance is 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 during a period four to six weeks previously
- a physical disability or chronic or disabling condition such as epilepsy, glandular fever, 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, the nature of the assessment activity and the quality of past achievement of the learner where appropriate in making the decision to grant compassionate consideration.

3.2.10 Repeat of assessment activity

Where a learner is unsuccessful, on a first attempt in an assessment activity, it is good practice for providers to provide learners with 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 acknowledge 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.

3.3 Devising Assessment

Learners are assessed by the use of valid and reliable assessment techniques. Different techniques will be appropriate and valid to generate different forms of learner evidence for a range of specific learning outcomes. The assessment technique(s) will be outlined in the Award Specification.

For each technique the assessor is required to devise the following;

- an assessment instrument e.g. examination paper/ questions or assignment brief.
- accompanying instructions
- assessment criteria
- a marking scheme

3.3.1 Assessment Techniques

An assessment technique is a valid and reliable way of assessing learner evidence for a particular range of learning outcomes, e.g. practical skills should be assessment in a practical manner e.g. by a skills demonstration. Valid and reliable assessment techniques for QQI awards are grouped into the following six broad categories:

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

Awards at levels 1, 2 and 3 are designed to meet the needs of learners with a particular profile. Given the nature and profile of learner at levels 1, 2 and 3, specific assessment techniques have been identified as being valid and reliable for assessment of learners at these levels. Please refer to Appendix 3 for further information.

The following techniques are deemed valid for the assessment of learners at levels 1 - 3:

- Portfolio
- Assignment
- Skills Demonstration

3.3.2 Assessment Instrument

An assessment instrument is the specific activity/task or question(s) devised by the assessor based on the specified assessment technique.

All instruments devised by assessors must relate to one or more of these techniques e.g. a case study may be used as a part of an assignment, project.

For example, if the assessment technique specified in the Award Specification is an examination, the assessment instrument is the/an examination paper/ questions/case study. The design of assessment instrument(s) must

- be appropriate to the technique and fit for purpose
- allow learners to generate sufficient evidence
- enable evidence to be generated which can be measured against the learning outcomes outlined in the Award Specification
- enable reliable assessment decisions by assessors
- be selected to make the best use of available resources i.e. is 'practicable'.

The following details and guidelines are designed to assist the assessor in using each of the assessment techniques outlined above and in devising appropriate assessment instruments. A summary of all valid and reliable assessment techniques and examples of appropriate instruments is outlined in Appendix 4.

3.3.3 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 eg a practical assignment or a research activity/evaluation following investigation of a particular topic e.g. a written assignment. An assignment should reflect a range of learning outcomes. A brief should be devised for each assignment. The brief should be accompanied by guidelines and or instructions. The assignment brief and guidelines should be clear and unambiguous.

The assessor should ensure that the assignment brief:

- reflects a range of learning outcomes as outlined in the Award Specification
- 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.

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

3.3.4 Project

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

The assessment instrument for a project is the project brief. This is the specific 'brief' or instruction to the learner. The brief for the project should reflect a range of learning outcomes.

Where projects are undertaken by a group or as a collaborative piece of work the individual contribution of each learner should be clearly identified and procedures should be implemented to ensure the reliability of learner evidence. (See guidelines on ensuring reliability of learner evidence in section 4.3 of this document).

Projects enable learners to demonstrate 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 learning outcomes as outlined in the Award Specification
- 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.

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

3.3.5 Portfolio/collection of work

A portfolio or collection of work is a collection and/or selection of pieces of work produced by the learner over a period of time that demonstrates achievement of a range of learning outcomes.

The assessor devises guidelines and instructions for the learner. Using these guidelines provided by the assessor the learner compiles a collection of their own work. The collection may be self-generated or may be generated in response to a particular brief or tasks/activities devised by the assessor.

Portfolio/collection of work is particularly suitable for the assessment of learners at levels 1, 2 and 3

The assessor should ensure that the learner is provided with:

- a clear and unambiguous brief and instructions that reflect the range of learning outcomes being assessed
- guidelines on the extent and range of evidence a learner is expected to compile
- guidelines on the format and presentation of the evidence in the collection
- the assessment criteria
- the weighting of the portfolio/collection of work in the context of the total assessment of the award
- relevant information on resources and/or materials required.

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

3.3.6 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 ie in a live environment or in a simulated environment, as appropriate to the requirement of the Award Specification.

In some specific cases the demonstration must take place in a real / live environment.

Skills demonstration - 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 - workplace/live environment

A skills demonstration may be carried out in the workplace/live environment as part of the learner's normal work routine. In this environment the assessor may 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.

3.3.7 Examination

An examination 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 learning outcomes as outlined in the Award Specification
- instructions are clear and unambiguous
- where appropriate; examinations have a cover page outlining details such as; date, duration, choice and number of questions
- answer books/paper for learners to complete their answers should be provided where appropriate
- confidentiality is maintained during preparation and handling of 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 award
- learners are given 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.

3.3.7.1 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 a number of forms. Some short answer questions may seek specific words or phrases in the response
- 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 ensure national consistency and to avoid excessive demands on the learner the duration and format of the theory-based examination should generally fit within the appropriate range in the table below. It is recommended that written examinations should not exceed 3 hours in duration

Short answer questions are abbreviated to s/a in the following table

Structured questions are abbreviated to str in the following table

Time Allocated	Number of questions/range of options*
45 mins - 1.5 hours	10/12 short answer questions (s/a) 15/18 s/a 5/6 s/a and 1/2 structured questions (str) 7/8 s/a and 1/2 str
1.5 - 2 hours	18/22 s/a 10/12 s/a and 1/2 str 10/12 s/a and 2/3 str 5/6 s/a and 3/4 str 3/5 str
2 - 3 hours	10/12 s/a and 3/4 str 15/18 s/a and 2/3 str 3/4 str 4/6 str

When deciding on the duration and format of the examination, the percentage weighting of the examination needs to be considered.

3.3.7.2 Practical examinations

Practical examinations are generally used where a *set* period of time is allocated to the learner to demonstrate he/she practical knowledge, skills or competency.

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.

3.3.7.3 Practical examinations - preparing an audiotape

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

- adequate instructions and information is 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.

3.3.7.4 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 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.

3.3.7.5 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 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.

3.3.8. Learner Record

A learner record is the learner's self-reported and self-reflective record 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 learning outcomes
- the learner is aware of any requirements on the presentation of the learner record eg format
- a process for maintaining and updating the record is agreed with the learner.

3.4 Marking

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

It should be clear from the marking sheet how marks are being allocated to each criteria 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.

As outlined above, the achievement of learner 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 per technique and a summary marking sheet per minor award.

3.4.1 Devising assessment criteria

Assessment criteria is the criteria which will be used by the assessor when marking and judging learner evidence and making the assessment decision for a specific assessment activity. Assessment criteria state in qualitative terms what the learner must achieve in that assessment activity to attain a particular mark. The assessor devises assessment criteria and an appropriate marking scheme for each assessment activity.

It is essential that the assessment criteria are consistent with the learning outcomes in the Award Specification as a whole. When assessment criteria have been drafted, the assessor should ensure that there is a clear link between the assessment criteria and the learning outcomes.

The phrasing of assessment criteria should be consistent; all criteria on a single marking sheet should be expressed in the same grammatical format e.g. noun phrases can be used with a qualifying adjective e.g. 'complete mastery of tools and techniques'. Alternatively verb phrases can be used e.g. 'calculator used correctly'. Where a verb phrase is used the verb should be expressed in the past tense.

Examples of assessment criteria are provided in Appendix 5. An assessor may use these as a resource when devising assessment criteria. The criteria must however be specifically applied to the outcomes being assessed.

The marks allocated for each criterion should facilitate the assessor to mark efficiently. For example marks for specific criteria should as 5, 10, 15, 10, 25, 30 facilitate more reliable marking. Conversely a mark of for example 7, 11, or 22 make marking more difficult and potentially less reliable.

3.4.2 Devising a marking system

Assessors must devise a transparent and reliable marking system to allocate marks to each assessment criteria. A marking system should identify per technique:

- 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. Sample mark and results summary sheets are provided in appendices 6 and 7.

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 great 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.

3.4.2.1 Sample answers or solutions

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.

For a written examination, the assessor should identify outline answers or solutions.

3.5 Grading classifications

QQI awards are graded and classified as follows;

Awards at level 1, level 2 and level 3 are classified as **Successful** where a learner has achieved all the outcomes 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 standards for the award within the grading criteria.

- A **Pass** is a grade awarded to a learner who has attained the minimum standard. To be awarded a pass grade a learner must have achieved a mark of between 50-64%.
- A **Merit** is a grade awarded to a learner who has exceeded the minimum requirements. To be awarded a merit grade a learner must have achieved a mark of between 65-79%.
- A **Distinction** is a grade awarded to a learner who has substantially exceeded the minimum requirements. For a learner to be awarded a distinction he/she is must have achieved a mark of 80% or over.

When a learner has not achieved the minimum standards for an award the grade is recorded as **Referred**.

For competency based awards or awards with specific legislative requirements regarding levels of competences the assessment will be weighted accordingly and the grading criteria specified in the Award Specification will reflect the minimum standard of achievement required by the learner.

3.6.1 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.

Grading Criteria for Awards at level 1 - level 3

	Successful		
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Grading Criteria	The learner has achieved the 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 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 <i>some autonomy</i> of action and has taken <i>limited responsibility</i> for the activities and for generating evidence.	The learner has achieved the 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.

Grading Criteria for awards at Level 4 - Level 6

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

4. The Authentication Process

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

4.1 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 major, special purpose, or supplement award. The Authentication Process will ensure that QQI receive accurate and quality assured learner results.

The Authentication Process established by the provider must include;

- internal verification
- external authentication.

Providers must document their procedures pertaining to all elements of their Authentication Process. A template for the development of procedures for the Authentication Process is provided in Appendix 8. Providers may amend this as appropriate to their provision.

4.2 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 4.4), 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.

4.2.1 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.

4.2.2 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;

- 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.

4.2.3 Verification of assessment results

The internal verification process will involve the verification of assessment results on a sampling basis. This involves checking that assessment evidence is available for all learners presented and that results are recorded and grades are assigned according to QQI requirements.

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 (i.e. evidence for all minors is available for the major award)
- evidence is generated as per the technique identified in the Award Specification and using appropriate instruments as indicated in 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 the providers remit.

A sample of assessment results are internally verified prior to being submitted for external authentication and results approval.

4.3 External authentication

External authentication provides independent authoritative confirmation of fair and consistent assessment of learners in accordance with national standards.

It 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.

External authentication is undertaken through the assignment of an independent external authenticator by the provider for each major, special purpose and supplemental award. The external authenticator must be independent of the centre 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 marks/grades conform to national standards.

The external authenticators' reports will be made available to the QQI monitor.

4.3.1 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 provider's procedures and with QQI policy on quality assuring assessment
- review internal verification report(s) and authenticate the findings/outcomes
- apply a sampling strategy to moderate assessment results consistent with QQI requirements. See section 4.4
- moderate assessment results in accordance with standards outlined in the Award Specification
- visit the centre and meet with appropriate staff and learners
- participate in the results approval process as per the provider's agreed 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).

4.3.2 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 i.e. 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

4.3.3 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 standards outlined in the Award Specification.

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: Referred/Pass, Pass/Merit, Merit/Distinction.

Moderating assessment results involves:

- reviewing results and checking the standard of evidence at each grade band: Successful (levels 1 - 3) Distinction, Merit, Pass (levels 4 - 6) by examining *samples* of evidence within each grade band and at the borders of grades.

4.3.4 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.

4.3.5 Assigning external authenticators

The provider will:

- (i) ascertain the number of major/special purpose/supplemental awards on offer within its provision i.e. across one or more centres
- (ii) select and assign one or more external authenticator for each major/special purpose/supplemental award based on subject matter expertise, each external authenticator should be independent of the centre to which they are assigned.
- (iii) ensure that all major/special purpose/supplemental award areas and all centres have an external authenticator assigned per annum.

4.4 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.

As part of their quality assurance agreement, 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.

The sampling strategy devised by the Provider should be based on any of the following:

- a) a percentage of learner numbers; i.e. 20%-25% of the total population of learners
- b) a formula such as; $\sqrt[1]{n} + 1$ where n is the total population of learners (Appendix 12 identifies values for ' \sqrt{n} ')
- c) another appropriate scientific sampling formula/methodology.

¹ 'n' = statistical population i.e. the set of individuals/entire aggregation of items from which samples can be drawn

The total population of learners, from which the sample is taken, can be a combination of learners across a number of programmes or centres.

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.

4.4.1 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 or centre should ensure that the sample:

- is representative of all minor awards, all learner types including part time or full time and all assessment techniques
- 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 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 the assessment cycle
- 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.

5. Results Approval Process

The provider or centre as appropriate must establish a Results Approval Process. The purpose of the Results Approval Process is 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/centre should then instigate appropriate corrective action.

5.1 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.

5.2 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 immediately

- a) made available to learners and
- b) 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.

6. Appeals Process

A provider should put in place an Appeals Process. An Appeals Process will enable the learner to appeal

- a) the Assessment Process, if they perceive there to be irregularities/inequality in its implementation
- b) the assessment result.

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

- a) approve all results through the Results Approval Process
- b) inform learners of the outcome of this process i.e. give assessment result to learners
- c) 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 evidence which may be presented by the learner at appeal is that which has already been presented for assessment. New 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.

7. 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 once quality assured and fully authenticated results are received from the provider.

8. 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.

When assessing learners through an online/e-assessment the valid and reliable assessment techniques identified earlier should be adhered to. However it may not be possible to assess specific learning outcomes which require 'observation' by the assessor or for tightly timed 'closed book' examinations through this medium.

Objective tests i.e. with multiple choice questions, are particularly suitable to online assessment as answers may be inputted and marking can be automated. The questions devised for these types of tests must have a limited range of responses to ensure assessments can be marked accurately and consistently. This form of examination should not be used exclusively however and must be combined with other assessment instruments.

Where marking is not instantaneously and automated i.e. objective tests/multiple choice tests, arrangements must be made for the delivery of completed assessments to the assessor i.e. by email, hard copy in the post, and for providing feedback of the assessment result to the learner i.e. by email, telephone, one to one meetings arranged.

The provider should use professional judgement and the principles underpinning QQI assessment policy in deciding on the validity and reliability of using an online tool for assessment.

Prior to implementing e-assessment/on-line assessment or indeed a programme through this medium the provider must ensure that the learners;

- have the necessary technical skills required i.e. computer skills required.
- have access to appropriate resources such as the technical equipment required eg computer, printer.
- are provided with secure IDs
- are familiar with the operating system and assessment software before undertaking any assessment activities.
- have access to technical training and support
- are aware of procedures for ascertaining reliability of learner evidence
- are aware of procedures for accessing assessment information and for submitting learner evidence.

If assessing learners through an on-line medium the reliability of learner evidence is an important consideration. Specific procedures must be established in relation to ascertaining the reliability and ensuring the security of learner evidence generated through online assessment.

The guidelines for ensuring reliability of learner evidence outlined in section 3 should be applied in the use of online assessment. In addition the provider will need to implement appropriate privacy and security measures. This could take the form of issuing *personal IDs* for learners, this is something only the learner knows i.e. an individual user name, a unique password or PIN number, to ensure privacy and security in accessing online learning resources and assessments.

The provider must make learners aware of the procedures for dealing with plagiarism. Opportunities for plagiarism are reduced if different assessment instruments are devised for different groups of learners in different assessment periods i.e. different assignment brief/examination questions. The assessor could require the learner to submit the assessment in stages, i.e. action plan, first draft and final version, this would also help to reduce plagiarism and allow the provider to get a picture of the individual learner's approach.

The provider's online assessment system should enable ongoing monitoring and recording of information. It should be possible for a provider to view details of when a learner took an assessment activity, how long it took, from which IP address it was submitted, to record the date of submission, to generate a receipt and to record and store feedback and results.

The provider will need to ensure that they have the resources, technical and administration skills necessary to install and maintain the operating system and the software required to support an e-learning/e-assessment system.

Appendix 1 Quality Assuring Assessment: Summary

This table summarises the key elements and roles within assessment, authentication and results approval Processes.

Elements	Assessment	Internal verification	External authentication	Monitoring
Definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Process by which learner achievement is judged in line with the national standards of knowledge, skill and competence for the award as outlined in the Award Specification. Assessment should be consistent with and implemented according to the quality assured requirements of QQI as set out in the providers own documented procedures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Monitoring is the Process by which QQI and learners will be assured of the implementation of best practice in assessment across providers and by which the attainment of national standards will be monitored.
Roles	<p>Assessors will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ implement the centre's assessment procedures ▪ devise assessment instruments, marking schemes and assessment criteria ▪ mark/judge learners evidence ▪ record results 	<p>Internal verifiers will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ check adherence to provider's assessment procedures ▪ monitor results through sampling ▪ identify any irregularities 	<p>External authenticators will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ be appointed based on award/ field expertise ▪ be independent of the centre ▪ ensure adherence to QQI assessment requirements ▪ sample assessment evidence ▪ review internal verification report ▪ moderate results ▪ make recommendations for improvements 	<p>Monitors will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ be professionally trained, independent agents of QQI ▪ be regionally (not subject matter)based ▪ among other things, audit results approval Process within the providers quality assurance agreement

	Assessors will	Internal verifiers will:	External authenticators will:	Monitors will:
Results Approval Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ maintain documentation ▪ ensure records, documentation and learner evidence are available for internal verification and external authentication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ produce reports to confirm accuracy of Process and results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ produce reports to provide independent confirmation on the accuracy of results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ evaluate the reports of verifiers and authenticators
4. Frequency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All occurrences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All procedures ▪ Sample of learner results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sample of occurrences on all awards over a period of time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ As prescribed in National Monitoring Plan
5. Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide learner results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Draft verification report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Draft authentication Report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provider's activities re results and results approval are part of the monitoring report devised by monitors
6. Who briefs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Responsibility of the Provider 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Responsibility of the provider 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Responsibility of the provider ▪ We will provide guidelines for authenticators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Responsibility of QQI

Appendix 2

Common Awards System

Award types

The National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) was launched by the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland in October 2003. The framework comprises 10 levels ranging from level 1 - level 10. QQI makes awards at levels 1- 10 in the National Framework. The framework comprises a number of award types: major, minor, special purpose and supplemental. Each award type has a descriptor at levels 1 - 6.

Award structure

Major awards are the principal class of awards that QQI make. Major award standards are organised into a number of minor awards. A minor award may form part of one or more major award. Major awards may have groupings of mandatory and elective minor awards.

All FET awards are developed at a designated level. The volume and size of all four award types is determined by means of a numeric credit value and is described in terms of a minimum and maximum range.

Each named award will be devised in the context of the requirements of the framework and the appropriate award type descriptor. The details of each named award, e.g. the standards of knowledge, skill and competence, volume, title, assessment requirements, will be communicated to users by means of an Award Specification.

Award Specification

The Award Specification is the primary source of information pertaining to a specific named award and includes;

- the award purpose
- the standards of knowledge, skill and competence (expressed as learning outcomes)
- combination of minor awards
- any specific requirements in relation to programme validation
- general and specific assessment requirements including techniques

Assessment and Grading

An Award Specification will indicate general assessment requirements and specific assessment requirements, including valid and reliable assessment techniques, for a named award. Award are graded appropriate to the level and award type.

All FET awards at level 1, level 2 and level 3 are graded as **Successful**.

All FET awards at level 4, level 5 and level 6 are graded as **Pass, Merit or Distinction**.

Where a learner has not achieved the learning outcomes for the award the grade is recorded as **Referred**.

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 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 deemed most appropriate for the assessment of learners at levels 1 - 3:

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

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.

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.

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 summaries 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
Assignment	Level 1 - 6	Assignment brief	Knowledge, know-how and skill, competence
Project	Level 4 - 6	Project brief	Knowledge, know-how and skill, competence
Portfolio/collection of work	Particularly appropriate for levels 1 - 3	Instructions/tasks. Guidelines on compiling portfolio	Knowledge, Know-how and skill, competence
Skills demonstration	Level 1 - 6	Instructions, tasks, activities or brief	Particularly appropriate to know-how and skill and competence
Examination	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
Learner record	Level 4 - 6	Brief/instructions. Guidelines for learners on format of the record.	Knowledge, know-how and skill, competence

Appendix 5

Assessment criteria

The following are words/phrases that might be used to assist assessors when devising structure assessment criteria.

(This list is provided as examples only and is not intended to be exhaustive)

<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ <i>appropriate use of survey on...</i>▪ <i>appropriate conclusions drawn....</i>▪ <i>appropriate procedures followed....</i>▪ <i>appropriate recommendations made..</i>▪ <i>careful maintenance of....</i> <i>tools/equipment/documentation</i>▪ <i>careful planning of...</i>▪ <i>clear identification of....</i>▪ <i>comprehensive conclusions drawn on..</i>▪ <i>comprehensive evaluation of....</i>▪ <i>comprehensive summary of...</i>▪ <i>correct description of....</i>▪ <i>critical evaluation of...</i>▪ <i>correct completion of....</i>▪ <i>detailed explanation of...</i>▪ <i>detailed presentation of....</i>▪ <i>detailed description of problem presented....</i>▪ <i>effective use of.....</i>▪ <i>effective participation in.....</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ <i>inclusion of full details in...</i>▪ <i>ideas clearly developed....</i>▪ <i>independent actions demonstrated...</i>▪ <i>key issues identified.....</i>▪ <i>responsibility for activities taken.....</i>▪ <i>relevant information collected...</i>▪ <i>safe use of equipment</i>▪ <i>tasks planned and executed efficiently...</i>▪ <i>thorough understanding of.....</i>▪ <i>thorough analysis of.....</i>▪ <i>understanding of.....clearly demonstrated</i>▪ <i>use of effective teamwork.....</i>▪ <i>use of equipment correctly....</i>▪ <i>appropriate methodology used....</i>▪ <i>use of resources efficiently....</i>▪ <i>accurate calculations used..</i>▪ <i>coherent format used.....</i>
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Appendices 6 - 10 contain a range of appendices 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"> ▪ clear identification of -..... - - 	5 5 5		
Sub-total	15		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ critical evaluation of.... -..... - - 	5 5 5		
Sub-total	15		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ appropriate conclusions drawn on -..... - 	5 5		
Sub-total	10		
Total marks	40		

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

.....

Assessors signature _____ **Date** _____

Appendix 7

Sample Results Summary Sheet
(per learner, per minor award)

Learner Name: _____

Minor Award: _____

Assessment technique	Weighting	Max Marks	Learners Mark
Technique	50%		
Technique 2	50%		
Total Mark			
Grade			

Assessors 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).

Internal verification

Procedure	Guideline: <i>the procedure should seek to ensure that...</i>
Responsibility	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.
Methodology	<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"> ▪ the provider's agreed assessment procedures are adhered to ▪ monitoring of assessment results on a programme is undertaken on a sampling basis ▪ sampling strategy for internal verification is identified and implemented (i.e. sampling plan is devised and agreed) ▪ assessment evidence is available for internal verification ▪ an internal verification report is completed <p>Sampling Methodology The basis/method used to select the sample for internal verification is identified e.g. % or formula basis. 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>
Frequency	The criteria for setting how often internal verification should take place is identified and applied.

External authentication

Procedure	Guideline: <i>the procedure should seek to ensure that...</i>
Responsibility	The job title(s) of person(s) who will be responsible for co-ordinating the external authentication Process and selecting/assigning an external authenticator is identified.
Assignment and selection of an external authenticator	<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>
Frequency	The frequency on which the sample is to be taken is identified. All awards should be included in a sample over a two year cycle.
Methodology for moderation of assessment results	<p>Sampling Strategy The provider's overall sampling strategy; i.e. whether based on a % or on a formula basis. 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>Procedures for external authentication 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>

Results Approval Process

Procedure	Guideline: <i>the procedure should seek to ensure that....</i>
Assignment of responsibility	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.
Terms of reference	The terms of reference and scope of the results approval group(s) must be outlined. These should be consistent with the guidelines provided in section 4 and 5 of this document.
Methodology	Methodology for the presentation of and approval of results through the Results Approval Panel must be identified.
Frequency	The provider should identify when and how often it is intended that the Results Approval Panels will meet.
Request for certification	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.

Registered Provider/Centre Name:	
Registered Number:	

Named award(s) and codes Named award(s) for which results are being internally verified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ▪ ▪
---	---

Date of internal verification:	
---------------------------------------	--

Internal verifier(s): (names and signatures of staff member(s) carrying out the internal verification)	1. Name:	Signature:
	2. Name:	Signature:
	3. Name:	Signature:

Assessment Processes and procedures	Verification of adherence to provider's assessment procedures. Commentary should be provided as appropriate.					
Assessment procedures <i>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.</i>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="768 435 904 569">Yes</td> <td data-bbox="904 435 1171 569"></td> </tr> </table>	Yes		<table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="909 572 1171 707">No</td> <td data-bbox="1171 572 1839 707"></td> </tr> </table> <p>Comments/action points as appropriate</p>	No	
Yes						
No						

Internal verifier(s)

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix 10

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 outline for external authentication is adhered to and verified in the report.

Registered Provider/Centre Name:	
Registered Number:	
Date of external authentication Process:	

Indicate sample basis and sample size:	<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>
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Named award(s) and codes for sample selected (Named award(s) for which results are being externally authenticated)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ▪ ▪ ▪
--	--

External authenticator details	Name: (Please Print): Address/contact detail
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Awards moderated	
Number of grades changed	
% of grades changed	

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

Signatures:	External authenticator:	Date:
	Provider:	Date:

This report will be made available to the Monitor.

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 or 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**

Appendix 12

Sampling: Values for \sqrt{n}

Number of learners (ranges)	Sample size/sample evidence
0 → 12	All learners (all scripts)
12 → 144	12
144 → 168	13
169 → 195	14
196 → 224	15
225 → 256	16
257 → 289	17
290 → 324	18
325 → 361	19
361 → 400	20

Appendix 13

Glossary of Terms

Access	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.
Assessment	The Process by which evidence of performance is collected and compared with the standards of knowledge skill or competence and a judgement made on learner achievement of the standards.
Assessor	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.
Assessment Technique	An assessment technique is a valid and reliable way of assessing learner evidence for a particular range of learning outcomes, eg practical skills should be assessment in a practical manner eg by a skills demonstration.
Assessment Instrument	An assessment instrument is the specific activity/task or question(s) devised by the assessor based on the specified assessment technique.
Authentication Process	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.
Award	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.
Award type	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.
Competence	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.
Criterion referenced assessment	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 Award Specification and learners reach them or fail to do so. FET awards are criterion referenced.
Determining standards	The Process by which QQI determines the standards of knowledge, skill or competence for the purpose of making awards.

External authentication	The means by which learners, providers, assessors and QQI will be independently assured that the application of the provider's assessment procedures is carried out effectively.
External authenticator	Appointed by providers to provide independent authentication of fair and consistent assessment in line with QQI requirements.
Fields/subfields	There are 9 groups or fields of learning within FETs classification of awards. See Standards Policy. Fields of learning (eg Business) are subdivided into sub-fields (eg Marketing) and then domains (eg International Marketing). There are a wide range of domains.
Further Education and Training	Education and training other than primary or post primary or higher education and training.
Formative assessment	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
Internal verification	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.
Knowledge	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.
Learner	A person who is acquiring or who has acquired knowledge, skill or competence.
Major award	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 Childcare
Minor award	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.
National Framework of Qualifications	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.
National Qualifications Authority of Ireland	The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland, also referred to as the Authority or the NQAI, established in 2001 arising from the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999, with responsibility to establish and maintain the national Framework of Qualifications.
Norm referenced assessment	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.
Outcomes	Identify what the learner is able to do on successful completion of a learning experience.
Programme	A programme is a learning experience designed and offered by a provider based on predetermined national standards and leading to a QQI award.
Progression	Refers to a learner's ability to move to another programme leading to an award at a higher level of the framework, having received recognition for knowledge, skill or competence acquired.
Provider	A person who, or body which, provides, organises or procures a programme of education and training.
Quality Assurance	The system(s) put in place by a provider to maintain and improve the quality of its programme(s).

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)	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.
Skill	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.
Special Purpose	A special-purpose award is made for specific relatively narrow purposes. It does not have to link to a major award e.g. Fork Lift Truck Driving.
Standards	Standards identify the knowledge, Skill and/or competence that must be attained in order to achieve an award.
Supplemental	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 e.g. Gas Installation
Summative assessment	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.
Transfer	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
Validation	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.