Document Title	Assessment of Learners (QQI Programmes)
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Applies to	☐ All ☒ Specific *(QQI Programmes Only).* ☐ Staff only ☐ Learners only ☒ Staff and Learners

Document Owner	Director of Quality and Academic Affairs
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Related legislation, policies, procedures, guidelines and local protocols	This policy has been designed with due regard to the following: - Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016), QQI - Sector Specific Independent/Private Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016), QQI - Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 - European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), et. al (2015), Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) - Assessment and Standards (2022 - Revised), QQI - Quality Assuring Assessment Guidelines for Providers (2013), QQI - Effective Practice Guidelines for External Examining (2015 - Revised), QQI - Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Education and Training to International Learners, (2015 - Revised), QQI - Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended and Fully Online Programmes (2023), Quality and Qualifications Ireland

Table of Contents

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to define a fair and consistent policy and associated procedures for the assessment of learners registered on QQI validated programmes.

2. SCOPE/APPLICATION

This document applies to programmes validated by QQI only. Specific sections are relevant to QQI (FET – Further Education) or QQI (HET – Higher Education) only. These sections are clearly indicated within the section header.

3. DEFINITIONS[1]

- **Criterion Referenced Assessment (CRA):** Assessment that test students' knowledge or skill against a pre-defined standard of performance, target, desirable performance, benchmark, or criterion. In education, CRAs usually are made to determine whether a student has mastered the material taught in a specific grade or course[2].
- **External Examiner:** An external examiner is an independent expert who is a member of the broader community of practice within the programme's field of learning and whose accomplishments attest to his/her likelihood of having the authority necessary to fulfil the responsibilities of the role.
- **FET:** QQI Further Education and Training programmes
- **HET:** QQI Higher Education and Training programmes.
- **Internal Assessor:** In the context of SQT, the programme Assessor is generally the programme Tutor.
- **Mark:** This means the same as grade — i.e. to award marks to or to grade (an assessment response, a learner etc.).
- **Marking Scheme:** A written specification of how to grade a response to an attempted assessment task. For an essay, this might take the form of a matrix describing different performance thresholds for each of the criteria being used to assess the essay.
- **Norm Referenced Assessment:** Norm-referenced tests are designed to compare and rank test takers in relation to one another.
- **Sectoral Conventions:** A very small set of regulations and benchmarks which, in the interest of fairness and consistency, are agreed at the sectoral level by QQI and by all associated providers, and where any right to unilateral deviation is waived.
- **Summative Assessment:** Aims to determine if (or sometimes the extent to which) a set of specified learning outcomes has been attained by a person and (typically) their entitlement to

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[1] Definitions have been derived from Assessment and Standards, (2013), Quality and Qualifications Ireland
[2] UIS Glossary, UIS-UNESCO.
http://uis.unesco.org/en/glossary

academic credit. It normally contributes to learner's results for a module or a programme. It includes results from continuous assessment, project work, oral assessment, written examinations etc.

4. POLICY STATEMENT

SQT is committed to a teaching and learning approach that fosters active learning and allows learners to take ownership of their learning. Assessment policies reflect this approach and assessment processes are carried out in a fair, transparent and consistent manner. In doing so, SQT strictly adheres to the policies, criteria and guidelines outlined in the following QQI documents:

- Assessments and Standards (Revised 2013) and
- Quality Assuring Assessment Guidelines for Providers (Revised 2013).

5. RESPONSIBILITY

The administration and coordination of assessment rests with the Accreditation Manager. The process and associated policies and procedures are overseen and reviewed by the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs. These functions are overseen by the Academic Council and its relevant subcommittees.

5.1 Individual Roles and Responsibilities

Detailed roles and responsibilities of individual personnel with respect to assessment is presented as follows.

5.1.1 Learner

- Actively engage with the assessment activities, and act on feedback provided by the Tutor.
- Ensure that they familiarise themselves and fully understand assessment guidelines and assessment briefs. Advice and guidance should be sought if necessary.
- Submit legible work for assessment, as required.
- Ensure that all assessment deadlines are met or that approval for an extension has been granted in advance of the original deadline.
- Understand what constitutes academic malpractice and plagiarism.

5.1.2 Internal Assessor (Tutor)[3]

- Contribute to the design and development of the programme and module assessment strategies.

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[3] In the context of SQT, the Assessor is always the Tutor unless in exceptional circumstances apply.

- Maintain and monitor the effectiveness of the programme assessment strategy and the module assessment strategies to ensure fairness, consistency and compliance with the intended learning outcomes.
- Communicate assessment requirements to learners.
- Note and report possible cases of plagiarism or breach of assessment regulations with respect to assessment.
- Provide mentoring and guidance to learners completing assessments and provide on-going feedback in a timely and formative manner.
- Mark learner assessment in accordance with the agreed marking schemes and regulations.
- Track and monitor learner progress.
- Participate in Examination Board meetings and other relevant meetings as designated by SQT.
- Support the SQT assessment complaints and appeals processes, as necessary.
- Act ethically and professionally.
- Declare (at the appropriate times) any relevant circumstances that might give rise to a conflict of interest (actual or potential, real or apparent).
- Act as Examination Invigilator for written classroom examinations.
- Carry out internal moderation, where necessary.

5.1.3 Programme Director

- Prepare draft summative assessment tasks in line with the module and programme assessment strategies.
- Review and suggest revision of assessment methodologies to the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs, when necessary.
- Ensure the programme assessment document and other supporting documents are accurate and up to date.
- Develop and maintain assessment briefs and associated marking schemes, as appropriate.
- Oversee internal moderation for a programme.

5.1.4 Accreditation Manager

- Deal with assessment queries from learners and programme staff in a timely manner.
- Ensure security in all matters pertaining to assessment.
- Act as a point of contact for all awarding bodies.
- Securely print and distribute examination papers (where applicable).
- Collect and manage learner assessment material.
- Acknowledge receipt of assessment material from learners.
- Ensure the secure transfer of written examination papers to Tutors.
- Ensure that requests for mitigating circumstances are reviewed and implemented, as necessary.
- Maintain relevant records and documents.
- Provide administrative support for all External Examiners.
- Organise and prepare relevant information for all Examination Board meetings.
- Ensure that accurate results, assessment material and other data such as statistical data is available for the External Examiner and Examination Board meeting.

- Ensure that requests for special accommodations are reviewed and arrangements are in place where necessary.
- Administration of learner appeals of assessment results.
- Participate in Examination Board meetings and other relevant meetings.
- Communication of provisional and approved assessment grades to learners.

5.1.5 Director of Quality and Academic Affairs

- Overall responsibility for the conduct of assessment and the implementation of policies and procedures approved by Academic Council. She/he is supported in her/his role by the Accreditation Manager.
- Investigation of possible cases of plagiarism or misconduct with respect to assessment.
- Manage the appointment of External Examiners, subject to approval by the Academic Council.

5.1.6 Internal Verifier

Internal verification is generally undertaken by the Accreditation Manager or an alternative member of the administration team as nominated by the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs. The role of the Internal Verifier is to:

- Check adherence to SQT's quality assured assessment procedures.
- Check results are recorded for all learners entered for the award.
- Confirm the accuracy of assessment results for a sample of learner evidence.
- Identify and correct any errors.
- Note any irregularities and take corrective action.
- Produce an Internal Verification report (F17).

5.1.7 External Examiner

The main functions of the External Examiner are as follows:

- Review the appropriateness of the minimum intended programme learning outcomes (i.e. the programme's basic educational goal), and other programme objectives.
- Probe the actual attainment of learners (actual programme learning outcomes) using information agreed with and supplied by SQT.
- Compare and contrast both the minimum intended programme learning outcomes and the actual attainment of learners with the relevant awards standards, the National Framework of Qualifications, and corresponding data from other programmes in the same discipline.
- Determine whether or not the applied procedures for assessment are valid, reliable, fair and consistent.
- Review the appropriateness of the programme assessment strategy and the assessment procedures.
- Carry out external moderation of SQT's APEL process and review of APEL applications for entry onto a programme (QQI HET programmes).
- Examine representative samples of assessment material in line with SQT's sampling policy (Appendix 1 - Sampling Policy).
- Meet and discuss findings with relevant programme and administrative staff.

- Attend Examination Board meetings as per schedule (generally 3 times per year).
- Report findings and provide recommendations for continuous improvement to SQT.
- Prepare External Examiner reports.
- External Examiners may be requested to review programme assessment strategies at programme design stage and provide on-going review and feedback, as necessary.

5.2 Academic Council & Subcommittees – Roles and Responsibilities

The function of the Academic Council and its subcommittees with respect to assessment is documented in Table 1 below.

Board / Committee	Roles and Responsibilities with respect to the Assessment Process
Academic Council	- Note examination results - Review External Examiner Reports and minutes of Examination Board and take appropriate action when necessary - Approval of External Examiners - Approve proposed amendments to QA policies and procedures in respect to assessment - Review outcome of academic appeals
Quality Committee	- Oversight of internal QA audits and implementation of associated actions in respect to assessment
Programme Board	- Review and monitor learner throughput and assessment statistics - Suggest on-going updates and continuous improvement to the programme with respect to assessment - A relevant member(s) of the programme board considers learner requests for extenuating circumstances together with the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs - Review statistics/trends and benchmarking regarding assessment results of programme(s) under consideration
Examination Board (HET programmes only)	- Review outcomes of External Examiner moderation of programme(s) under consideration - Ratify assessment results for all learners of programme(s) under consideration - Review penalties applied to assessment activities of programme(s) under consideration - Review statistics/trends and benchmarking regarding assessment results of programme(s) under consideration
Results Approval Panel (FET programmes only)	- The Results Approval Panel (RAP) is a decision-making forum which formally reviews and approves provisional assessment results and authorises requests for certification. - The RAP reviews all information submitted, including the Examiner Report, the Internal Verification Report along with all appropriate assessment-related records and reports. - Having adjudicated on the evidence presented, the RAP will then make a decision on the authorisation of certificate requests to QQI.
Disciplinary Committee	- Review disciplinary cases including misconduct and alleged assessment malpractice
Appeals Board	- Review appeals wrt assessment, mitigating circumstances, entry onto a programme and decisions made with regard to assessment malpractice.

Table 1: Functions of Board and Committees with regard to Assessment

6. ASSESSMENT - INTRODUCTION

This section describes the principles, strategies and process operated by SQT with respect to assessment.

6.1 Principles of Assessment

The principles that underpin the assessment of learners enrolled on QQI programmes at SQT are derived from QQI policy as follows[4]:

- Learners are responsible for demonstrating their learning achievement.

- Assessment supports standards based on learning outcomes.

- Assessment promotes and supports effective teaching and learning.

- Assessment procedures are credible.

- Assessment methods are reviewed and renewed, as necessary, to adapt to evolving requirements.

- Learners are well informed about how and why they are assessed.

- Assessments are valid (fit for purpose), fair and reliable.

6.2 Assessment Strategies and Marking Criteria

Specific programme assessment strategies are documented for all QQI programmes offered by SQT. The **programme assessment strategy** is developed at programme design stage and should:

- Link programme assessment instruments (summative and formative including continuous and repeat assessment) to the minimum intended learning outcomes.
- Describe and provide a rationale for each choice of assessment task[5].
- Describe specific 'special' regulations associated with a programme i.e. learners may be required to achieve a minimum grade in each assessment.
- Match the programmes assessment instruments to the requirements of SQT's marking system, particularly concerning the recording and combination of module marks (i.e. provide clear criteria for marking).
- Ensure that the programme workload is appropriately balanced and distributed and that the effort required is proportionate to the credit allocated.
- Relate to the programmes teaching and learning strategy.

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[4] Derived from Assessment and Standards (2013) and Quality Assuring Assessment Guidelines for Providers (2013), Quality and Qualifications Ireland

[5] SQT are guided by the Assessment Techniques documented in the Component Specification for CAS awards (FET programmes)

Assessment strategies and relevant marking schemes are reviewed on an on-going basis and changes are implemented as appropriate by the Programme Director (subject to recommendations from the Programme Board and within the scope of minor changes allowed ref **QAP3-2: Updating Programmes and Course Material**).

6.3 Criterion Referenced Assessment

SQT operate a system of criterion referenced assessment for all QQI accredited programmes. Criterion referenced assessment is assessment based on agreed learning outcomes. In practice, each QQI module / programme is marked by the Tutor(s) against a set of agreed criteria which are clearly set out in a published marking scheme. Classification of awards is criterion-referenced as distinct from norm-referenced assessment which expresses the learners' scores in rank order, based on a distribution of scores.

6.4 Grading Criteria – FET Programmes Only

Grading criteria describes what a learner must attain to achieve a particular grade for an award at particular levels. In the case of SQT these NFQ levels are specifically Level 5 and Level 6. Table 1 below sets out the grading classifications for QQI FET programmes.

PASS	MERIT	DISTINCTION
Percentage Mark: 50-64%	**Percentage Mark: 65-79%**	**Percentage Mark: 80-100%**
A Pass indicates that the learner has: ▪ 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.	A Merit indicates that the learner has: ▪ 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.	A Distinction indicates that the learner has: ▪ 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

Table 2: Grading Classifications (QQI FET programmes)

6.5 Sectoral Conventions – HET Programmes Only

Sectoral conventions for assessment comprise a set of regulations and benchmarks which, in the interest of fairness and consistency, are agreed at the sectoral level by QQI and all associated providers. SQT's Special Purpose HET programmes, below 60 ECTS credits are unclassified. The pass mark for such programmes is 40%.

Special-purpose awards of 60 or more ECTS credits are comparable to a major award (at the same NFQ level) and may be classified in accordance with the convention for the relevant major award.

7. OBJECTIVITY OF THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS – EXTERNAL EXAMINATION

The key purpose of the external examination process is to ensure objectivity and validity of the learner assessment by introducing an independent element. Procedures for external examination have been designed in compliance with a number of QQI publications including:

- Assessment and Standards (2013 - Revised)
- Quality Assuring Assessment Guidelines for Providers (2013) and
- Effective Practice Guidelines for External Examining (2015 - Revised).

External examination is carried out by an External Examiner and provides independent authoritative confirmation of fair and consistent assessment of learners in accordance with national standards.

7.1 Functions of the External Examiner

An External Examiner is an independent expert who is a member of the broader community of practice within the programme's field of learning and whose accomplishments attest to his/her likelihood of having the authority necessary to fulfil the responsibilities of the role.

The External Examiner also has a key role in ensuring that the programme assessment procedures are valid, reliable, fair and consistent. The focus of the external examination is to ensure the quality of the overall programme and learner performance, and in doing so to highlight areas to be addressed or enhanced.

SQT welcomes recommendations and feedback from External Examiners and is committed to considering and implementing such items. All recommendations / actions set out in the Examination Board minutes and External Examiner reports are implemented by relevant SQT personnel and overseen by the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs. When actions are required, a follow-up report is sent to all Examination Board members noting actions required and status of same. Detailed role and function of the External Examiner is set out in 5.1.7 above.

7.2 Procedure for Appointment of External Examiners
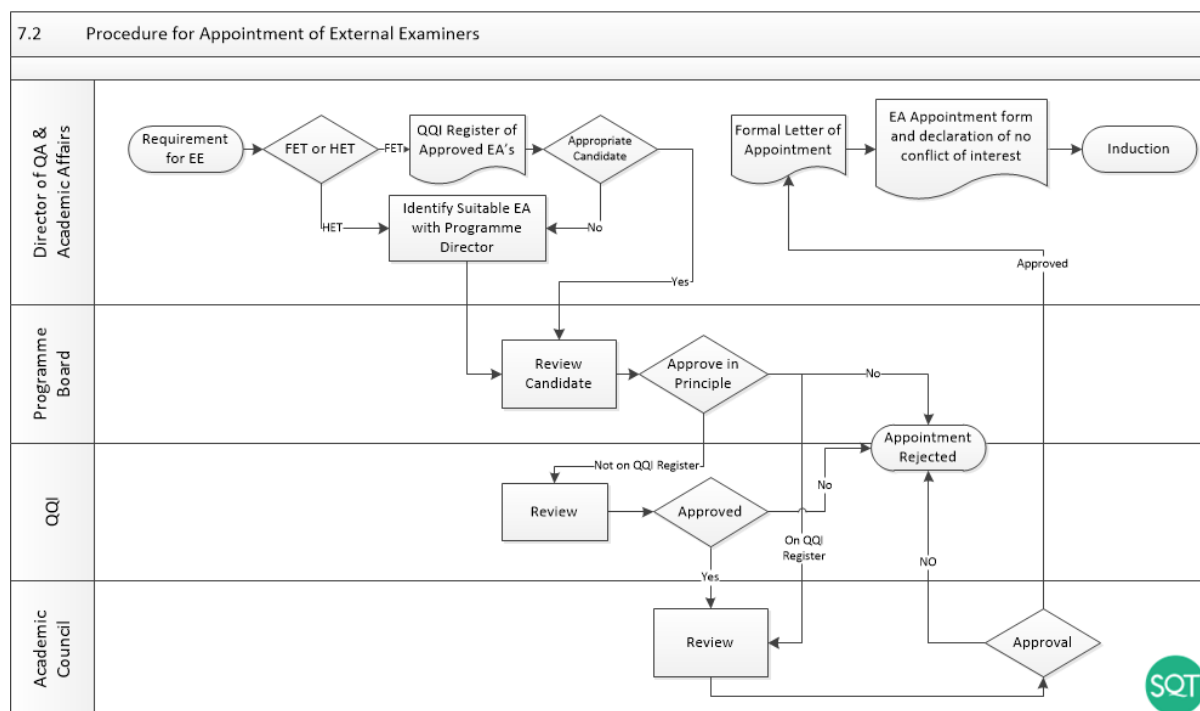
Procedures for external examination are developed to ensure compliance with Effective Practice Guidelines for External Examination (QQI, 2015) and Assessment and Standards (QQI, 2013).

1. In the case of QQI FET programmes, the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs consults QQI's register of approved External Authenticators to identify an appropriate External Examiner. If an appropriate candidate is not identified, Step. 2 onwards applies, otherwise Step 3 onwards applies.

2. Any member of the Programme Board or Academic Council may nominate an individual to the position of External Examiner.

3. Nominations are brought to the attention of the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs who makes a proposal to the Programme Board who approves to the appointment in principle.

4. To ensure appropriateness and best practice with regard to the appointment of External Examiners, the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs may propose the candidate to QQI at this stage. If agreed by QQI, Step 4 onwards applies. If not approved by QQI, the process recommences at Step 2 above.

5. The Academic Council must be satisfied that the proposed External Examiner:
   - Possesses academic and professional qualifications that are appropriate to the discipline, programme or subject to be examined at a minimum; and should not, unless in exceptional circumstances, be below the level of qualification to be awarded on the basis of the examinations in question.
   - Has appropriate academic standing and expertise and has sufficient academic experience to adjudicate on comparability of standards.
   - If the nominated External Examiner is retired, there should be evidence of continuing involvement in the academic area in question.

- There must be no conflicts of interest, whether personal, professional or commercial, that would undermine or be seen to undermine the independence of the proposed External Examiner and their role as an External Examiner.

6. Once the above conditions are satisfied, the Academic Council approves the nomination.

7. Once a verbal agreement and commitment has been made with the nominee, details are confirmed in a formal letter of appointment by the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs and a formal induction is provided prior to commencing the role.

8. External Examiners are required to complete an External Examiner Appointment Form (F34) and Declaration of No Conflict of Interest. Both documents are maintained by the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs.

9. External Examiners are normally appointed for a period of 3 years after which time a replacement is identified. External Examiners may be nominated to serve for an additional year subject to approval from both the Academic Council and QQI.

10. The Director of Quality and Academic Affairs notifies QQI of the appointment and relevant information is provided as requested.

7.3 Induction and On-going Support for External Examiners

Newly appointed External Examiners are provided with a formal induction prior to commencing their role. An External Examiner induction pack includes the following:

i. Programme Aims and Objectives

ii. Programme Learning Outcomes

iii. Programme Assessment Strategies

iv. Quality Assurance Procedures

v. Sample assignments, marking schemes and feedback

vi. Contact details of relevant internal staff, together with details of their key functions

vii. External Examiner report template

viii. Copies of recent external examiner reports

ix. Appropriate QQI policy documents

The External Examiner is supported in his/her role by the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs and the Accreditation Manager.

7.4 Replacement of an External Examiner

Should an External Examiner need to be replaced prior to their 3-year appointment, the procedure for the appointment of an External Examiner above applies.

8. MANAGEMENT & ADMINISTRATION OF THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Figure 1 below summarises 13 stages of the assessment process which are documented within this section.
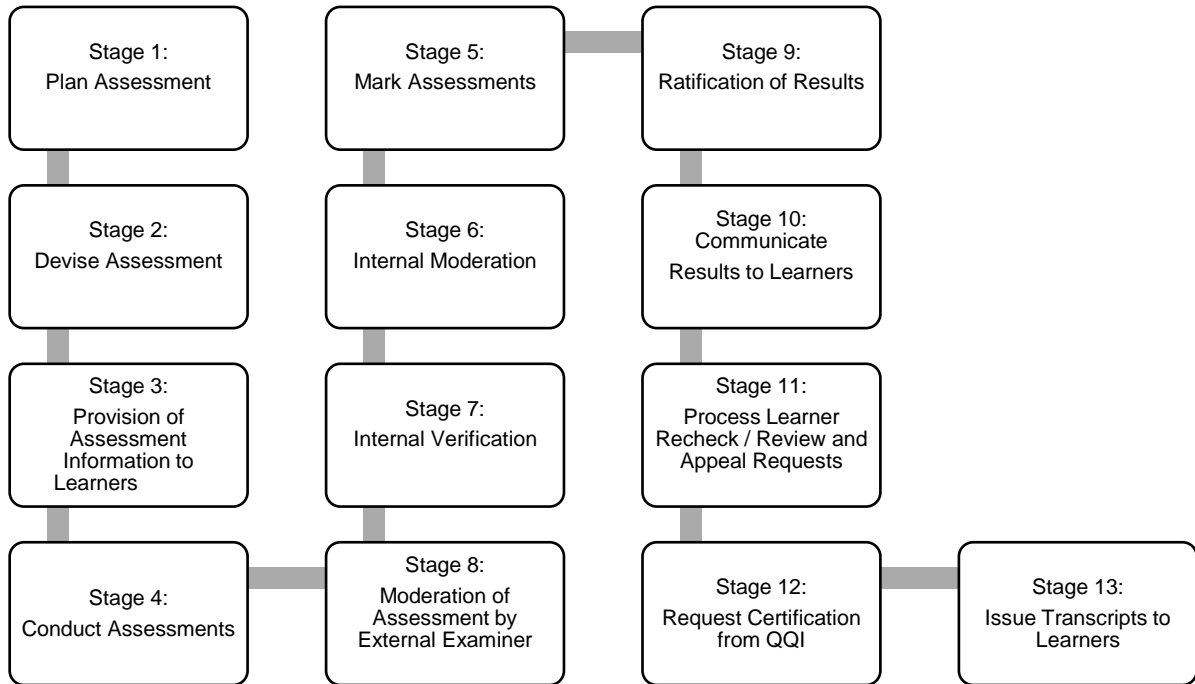

Figure 1: Stages of the Assessment Process

8.1 Stage 1: Plan Assessment

An assessment plan is prepared by the Accreditation Manager and Tutor in advance of each programme. This plan is provided to learners on commencement of the programme which includes relevant assessment deadlines.

8.2 Stage 2: Devise Assessment

8.2.1 Assessment Briefs

In order to ensure fair and consistent assessment of learners it is essential that all learners receive clear and accurate instruction in the form of an assessment brief. An assessment brief is a set of written instructions outlining the requirements and assessment criteria of each piece of an assessment. Briefs are required for every assessment technique apart from written examinations where an examination paper is used.

All Assessment Briefs must contain the following information:

- Assessment instrument i.e. the specific activity/task or questions devised by the assessor based on the specified assessment technique e.g. case study, report, project, diary etc.
- The weighting of the assessment.
- Clear instruction on what the learner is required to do for the assessment.
- Evidence needed.
- How marks will be allocated - Whatever the learner is asked to do in the assessment brief must be allocated marks in the marking scheme.
- Deadline for assessments.

8.2.2 Marking Schemes

In order to ensure fairness and consistency, there must be a transparent and reliable marking scheme with a detailed breakdown of how the marks are allocated to the assessment criteria or parts/elements of each question for each assessment task.

8.2.3 Devising Examinations[6]

Examinations are devised by the Programme Director in conjunction with the relevant Tutors. When devising an examination, the Programme Director should ensure that:

- Questions reflect the learning outcomes as outlined in the Award Specification.
- Instructions are clear and unambiguous.
- Written examinations have a cover page outlining details such as; date, duration and number of questions.
- Answer books for learners to complete their answers should be provided, where appropriate.
- Confidentiality is maintained during preparation and handling of examination documents.

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[6] Adapted from Quality Assuring Assessment Guidelines for Providers (2013), Quality and Qualifications Ireland.

- Groups of learners assessed at different times are provided with different written examination papers.
- Specific resources or equipment required are available and in good working order.
- Marks per section and marks per question are 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.

8.3 Stage 3: Provision of Assessment Information to Learners

Learners are informed about how they are assessed in an open and transparent manner. Assessment information is made available to all potential learners via the following channels:

- Individual programme brochures are available on the SQT website and are sent to learners in advance of the programme.

- Detailed assessment briefs are provided for all assessment tasks with the exception of written examinations where an examination paper is used.

- Specific queries regarding assessment are addressed with the Tutor or the Accreditation Manager.

- Information pertaining to all policies, procedures and regulations is available in the Learner Handbook which is made available to learners on commencement of a programme. The Learner Handbook is reviewed and updated, as necessary, to reflect current practices, policies, procedures and regulations within SQT.

8.4 Stage 4: Conduct Assessments

In order to ensure mechanisms are in place for the security, supervision, and integrity of assessment, examination papers must be printed by SQT and securely distributed for each programme. Note that Tutors perform the role of Invigilators for all in class assessments carried out at SQT.

8.4.1 Instructions for Examination Invigilators

- Invigilators should ensure that 'Quiet Please – Examination in Progress' signs are placed outside the room prior to the commencement of assessment.
- Invigilators should receive the examination papers in a sealed envelope and ensure that there are sufficient examination papers and answer sheets available.
- If a discrepancy occurs, papers should not be distributed and the Accreditation Manager should be contacted immediately.
- If everything is in order, examination papers should be distributed and left face down until the Invigilator instructs learners to turn them over when the examination commences.
- The Invigilator should be familiar with the Supports for Reasonable Accommodations (**QAP7-2**) and implement any decisions, as appropriate.
- The Invigilator should refer to the In so far as is practicable, SQT provides reasonable accommodation to meet the needs of learners with disabilities or specific learning difficulties. SQT's policy and procedure with respect to Reasonable Accommodation is set out in **QAP7-2: Supports for Reasonable Accommodation**.

- Regulations for Written Examinations at this stage.
- Invigilators must remain vigilant for the duration of the examination.
- Where a suspected incident of assessment malpractice occurs, the Invigilator must contact the Accreditation Manager immediately after the examination.
- The learner should be informed that a suspected incident of malpractice is being reported and they should be allowed to complete the examination.
- On completion of the examination, the Invigilator should ensure the secure storage of assessments. Any unused examination papers and answer books should be included also.

8.4.2 Procedure for Use of Bilingual Dictionaries in Examinations

If a learner's level of English is such that he/she requires to use a bilingual dictionary during examinations he/she may request approval for the use of a bilingual dictionary during a written examination.

1. The learner must seek approval from the Accreditation Manager at least 2 weeks prior to the examination.
2. The request is reviewed by the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs and the outcome is communicated to the learner within 5 working days of receipt of the request.
3. If the use of a bilingual dictionary is approved, the Invigilator is informed of this in advance of the examination.
4. The learner is responsible for bringing his/her own dictionary to the examination. This must be checked by the Invigilator prior to commencement of the examination.
5. The use of an electronic dictionary, single language dictionary or thesaurus is not permitted.
6. Dictionaries should be word-to-word dictionaries so that a learner is not given an unfair advantage by using a dictionary with explanations.
7. Examination Invigilators must check the dictionary beforehand to ensure that it is free of any notes or other unauthorised material.

8.4.3 Regulations for Skills Demonstrations

A skills demonstration is used to assess a wide range of practical based learning outcomes including practical skills and knowledge. The following regulations apply:

- Every learner shall be given an equal opportunity to perform well, every skills demo shall be of a comparable standard and the marking criteria shall be clear to learners in advance of the assessment.
- Sufficient learner evidence must be made available from the skills demonstration for assessment. 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 outs, photographic or video evidence of the learner completing the task.
- The Tutor shall keep an official record of the marking sheet for learners and this is submitted to the Accreditation Manager for review by the External Examiner.

8.4.4 Regulations for Oral Examinations

An oral examination is an assessment which tests a learner's achievement of a particular set of learning outcomes through the medium of spoken communication. The following regulations apply:

- Where a grade is allocated to the oral examination, every learner shall be given an equal opportunity to perform well, the questions put to every learner shall be of a comparable standard and the marking criteria shall be clear to learners in advance of the assessment.
- The Tutor shall keep an official record of the marking sheet for learners and this is submitted to the Accreditation Manager for review by the External Examiner.

8.5 Stage 5: Mark Assessments

Tutors are required to mark learner evidence for each assessment element in accordance with detailed marking schemes developed for each assessment element. The use of standard assessment marking schemes ensures accurate criterion-referenced assessment against the relevant learning outcomes. It is clear from the marking sheet how marks are allocated to each criteria. Assessors are required to complete marking sheets which are provided by the Accreditation Manager and are specific to each programme. These marking sheets are developed in MS Excel and include built in verification to ensure that marks are totalled correctly etc.

8.6 Stage 6: Internal Moderation

Internal moderation is a process of ensuring consistency of standards and fairness across all Tutors on a programme. It allows them discuss and reach agreement in a transparent, valid and consistent manner. The following procedure applies:

1. Tutors on programmes with multiple Tutors must have a sample of their assessments internally moderated at least once in a 12-month period. This process is managed by the Accreditation Manager and Programme Director with oversight from the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs. In addition, internal moderation is also carried out in the following cases:
   - Where an External Examiner has noted inconsistencies in the grading of particular learners or by specific Tutors.
   - In all borderline cases (+ / - 5%)

2. Internal moderation is undertaken by a Tutor who was not involved in marking the original assessment.

3. The moderator reviews all the assessment material related to the module in question and completes a new learner marking sheet. The original learner marking sheet is not made available to the moderator.

4. Having completed the moderation, both marking sheets are reviewed and both parties should seek to reach agreement on any matters identified and adjust grades / marks,, if required.

5. Where agreement cannot be reached, the matter should be referred to the Director of Academic Affairs. In such cases the decision to adjust the mark will be made by the External Examiner.

6. In all cases, an Internal Moderation Report Form (F48) is completed and made available to the External Examiner in advance of his/her review of assessment material.

7. All forms are stored and retained in accordance with the data retention register.

8.7 Stage 7: Internal Verification

Internal verification is the process by which SQT's assessment policies and procedures relating to planning, managing and operationalising all aspects of assessment practices are internally verified i.e. monitored by SQT itself. This process includes checking that the 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 marks and awards are correctly computed and recorded. The procedure for Internal Verification is as follows:

1. Internal verification is undertaken on a sampling basis as per Appendix 1 - Sampling Policy.
2. The process is undertaken by the Accreditation Manager or an alternative member of the administration team as nominated by the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs.
3. The Internal Verifier monitors the assessment process including the accuracy of the assessment results. Specifically, on a sample of learners the Internal Verifier should:
    -   Check marks are totalled and percentage marks calculated correctly.
    -   Check marks are transferred correctly from learner evidence to learner marking sheet/record.
    -   Check percentage marks and grades allocated are consistent with HET or FET award bands.

The outcome of the Internal Verification process is an Internal Verification Report (F17).

8.8 Stage 8: Moderation of Assessment by External Examiner

The Accreditation Manager is responsible for arranging the External Examiners' review process for each certification period at SQT. The function of the External Examiner is outlined in detail in the relevant guidelines.

In advance of their review, the External Examiner selects an appropriate sample of learner materials for review in accordance with Appendix 1 - Sampling Policy.

The following documentation is made available to the External Examiner during their review, whether conducted in person or virtually:

-   Learner results
-   Component specifications / module descriptor(s)
-   Assessment briefs
-   Marking scheme
-   Internal moderation report(s)
-   Internal verification report
-   All learner assessment material for the chosen sample, collated by the Accreditation Manager
-   APEL application forms (HET programmes)

External Examiners may conduct their authentication sessions virtually. In such cases, all documentation will be made available digitally via secure platforms, typically on MS SharePoint. The Accreditation Manager will coordinate the virtual review process, ensuring that the Examiner has remote access to all necessary materials. Virtual meetings between the Examiner, Accreditation Manager, and relevant academic staff will be arranged to discuss findings and queries. This approach ensures flexibility while maintaining the integrity of the external examination process.

8.9 Stage 9: Ratification of Results

The overall function of the Examination Board is to satisfy itself that learners have been appropriately graded and classified and ratify results. This function is fulfilled through the following mechanisms for QQI programmes:

- FET Results Approval Process (RAP)
- Examination Board (HET)
- External Examiner Reports

8.9.1 FET Results Approval Panel (RAP)

The Results Approval process is used for QQI FET programmes only. The purpose of the process is to formally ratify results prior to submission to QQI. The process is an administrative exercise to "ensure that appropriate decisions are taken regarding the outcome of the assessment and authentication processes."[7]

The Results Approval meeting takes place following completion of the moderation of results by the External Examiner. The process considers both the Internal Verification report and feedback received from the External Examiner.

The Results Approval meeting is chaired by the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs and attended by the Accreditation Manager and at least 1 other member of SQT administrative staff (nominated by the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs).

The role of the Results Approval Panel is to ensure that:

- Results are fully quality assured and signed off by authorised personnel prior to submission to QQI

- Appropriate decisions are taken regarding the outcome of the assessment and verification processes.

- SQT assessment procedures are observed.

- Appropriate evidence and records are available.

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[7] QQI Quality Assuring Assessment, Guidelines for Providers, Revised 2013, p. 28

- Decisions of the External Examiner and cross moderation activities have been implemented (changed marks, capped marks etc.).
- The outcome of the learner review, recheck and appeals process has been implemented.

The minutes of the Results Approval Panel (RAP) meeting are filed for internal monitoring and external self – evaluation purposes and are available as part of the QQI monitoring process on request.

8.9.2   Examination Board (HET)

This section sets out the process's and protocols related to HET Examination Board meetings.

8.9.2.1   Preparing for Examination Board Meeting

The dates of Examination Board meetings are agreed as part of the annual certification schedule, and all relevant personnel are notified in advance. A checklist of required information and reports is maintained on SQT's internal network and used to ensure all necessary materials are prepared for each meeting.

The following materials are provided for each Examination Board meeting by the Accreditation Manager:
- Draft broadsheet of results (printed on green paper)
- Any additional information to be considered by the Examination Board, including reports on extenuating circumstances
- APEL statistics
- Completion rates report

For virtual Examination Board meetings, the Accreditation Manager ensures that all necessary documentation is provided securely via digital platforms. The meetings will be conducted using approved virtual meeting tools, and all participants will have access to the required materials electronically.

8.9.2.2   Confidentiality

The proceedings and deliberations of the Examination Board meetings, whether held in person or virtually, are strictly confidential. A Confidentiality Declaration is signed (or agreed verbally) and retained for each meeting, ensuring that all participants, including virtual attendees, commit to maintaining the confidentiality of the meeting. No decision, document, information, or opinion considered at the meeting may be disclosed to any other person, except as required for reporting purposes. In the case of virtual meetings, all are recorded.

8.9.2.3   Authority

The Academic Council delegates responsibility to the Examination Board for the ratification of results and the recommendation of awards to QQI. This authority applies to both in-person and virtual meetings, ensuring that decisions made in virtual sessions carry the same weight and validity as those made in traditional face to face settings.

If the Examination Board is unable to reach agreement on a learner's mark, the Chair of the Board may defer to the External Examiner(s) present to determine the final result. Any disagreements raised by other members of the Examination Board are recorded in the minutes and brought to the attention of the subsequent Academic Council meeting. This process applies equally to virtual Examination Board meetings, ensuring continuity and fairness regardless of the format in which the meeting takes place.

8.9.3 External Examiner Reports

The following procedure applies to the receipt of External Examiner reports.

1. The External Examiner is required to submit a written report to SQT within 3 weeks of the Examination Board or external moderation of assessment in the case of QQI FET programmes. The SQT External Examiner Report Form is used in all cases.

2. The report is submitted to the Accreditation Manager who forwards a copy to the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs, Programme Directors and all Tutors.

3. Should the External Examiner Report include specific recommendations requiring action, the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs is responsible for overseeing the implementation of such action and drafting a response.

4. External Examiner reports, together with SQT's response are retained indefinitely and are used to inform ongoing programme monitoring, programme review and revalidation, and for consideration by the Quality Committee and Academic Council at their next scheduled meeting.

8.10 Stage 10: Communicate Results to Learners

Final, approved results are issued to learners within 5 working days of ratification of approved assessment results i.e. Examination Board (HET programmes) or Results Approval meeting (FET programmes). Results communicated to learners prior to formal ratification are considered provisional results.

8.11 Stage 11: Process Learner Recheck / Review and Appeal Requests

Learner recheck, review and appeals are managed by the Accreditation Manager. Learners can only appeal approved / ratified results. The process for Grade Recheck, Review and Appeals is detailed in Section 10.8 below.

8.12 Stage 12: Request Certification from QQI

The Accreditation Manager is responsible for requesting certification from QQI through their QBS system following formal ratification of results. The timing of all assessment activities is set out in SQT's annual accreditation calendar. This schedule is developed by the Accreditation Manager and Director of Quality and Academic Affairs in line with QQI's certification dates and is made available to Tutors on SQT's Tutor Portal on Moodle.

8.13 Stage 13: Issue Transcripts to Learners

Once received from QQI, learner transcripts are issued to learners by registered post.

8.13.1   Diploma Supplements (QQI Level 8 Black Belt Learners Only)

SQT issues Diploma Supplements in accordance with the standards agreed by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO. The Diploma Supplement is also part of the Euro pass framework transparency tools.

The Diploma Supplement (DS) is a document accompanying a higher education award which provides a standardised description of the nature, level, context, content and status of the studies completed by its holder. This document provides information additional to the official award documents, such as: the skills and competences acquired; the level of the qualification; and entry requirements and access opportunities to the next level of education. It also explains the Irish educational system and references the qualification against the European Qualifications Framework.

In accordance with QQI policy, Diploma Supplements are issued to all leaners who successfully complete a HET award worth 60 ECTS Credits or more. In the case of SQT, this applies to the Lean Six Sigma Level 8 Black Belt (Special Purpose Award). Diploma Supplements are issued together with the official QQI parchment.

9. ARCHIVING OF ASSESSMENTS AND RECORDS MANAGEMENT

Tutors must guarantee the integrity of learner assessment data for which they are responsible and ensure that it is stored in a safe and secure manner in accordance with **SQT's Data Protection policy (QAP8-2)** and Data Protection agreements which are in place with all Training Partners.

- Any breach or suspected breach of the security of learner data must be reported to the Senior Management team immediately.
- All assessed work including examination scripts shall be retained by the Assessor (Tutor) in safe storage until it is returned to SQT.
- Assessment material is stored securely at SQT until after the Academic Council meeting subsequent to the Examination Board or Results Approval Panel (RAP) meeting following the release of final results to learners.
- Records relating to assessment shall be disposed of by SQT using a secure and confidential disposal service.

10. ASSESSMENT REGULATIONS

This section sets out assessment regulations pertaining to the following areas:

- Reasonable Accommodation
- Regulations for Written Examinations
- Submission of Learner Assessment Material to SQT
- Extenuating / Personal Mitigating Circumstances
- Late Submission of Assessment

- Regulations for Failed and Repeat Assessment
- Feedback on Approved Results
- Grade Recheck, Review and Appeals
- Withdrawal from a Programme of Study
- Deferrals (HET Programmes Only)
- Group Based Assessment
- Moodle Based MCQ Assessments

10.1 Reasonable Accommodation

In so far as is practicable, SQT provides reasonable accommodation to meet the needs of learners with disabilities or specific learning difficulties. SQT's policy and procedure with respect to Reasonable Accommodation is set out in **QAP7-2: Supports for Reasonable Accommodation**.

10.2 Regulations for Written Examinations

The conduct of written examinations is set out in Section 8.4 (Stage 4:) above. Learners should observe the following regulations during written examinations.

- Any behaviour which causes inconvenience or disruption to other learners is not permitted.

- If a learner requires attention during the examination, he/she must raise his/her hand to attract the attention of the invigilator, taking care not to disturb other learners.

- The instructions of the invigilator must be obeyed promptly at all times.

- Learners must stop writing immediately when instructed to do so by the invigilator. Answer books must be handed to the invigilator immediately upon request.

- Silence must be maintained in the examination room at all times.

- Mobile phones must be 'powered off' for the entire duration of the examination.

- No learner shall have in his/her possession any materials other than those permitted for that examination.

- No learner shall take out of the examination hall any answer books, rough work paper, or other supplied material, whether used or unused. Learners found to be in possession of such material are liable to disciplinary procedures and serious penalties may be imposed.

10.3 Submission of Learner Assessment Material to SQT

All assessments (other than written and oral examinations) are submitted via Moodle. This is communicated to all learners on commencement of the programme and within the Assessment Brief. Learners must accept a declaration of authenticity within Moodle prior to assignment submission. The system will not accept submissions after the deadline. Both the Learner and Tutor will receive an automated email when the assessment material has been successfully submitted.

In all cases, learners are advised to retain a copy of all assessment work and projects submitted. The Director of Quality and Academic Affairs has the discretion to allow material which was uploaded incorrectly to be assessed in the normal manner.

10.4 Extenuating / Personal Mitigating Circumstances

Extenuating circumstances also known as personal mitigating circumstances are considered to be exceptional conditions that temporarily prevent a learner from completing an assessment activity or that would seriously impair a learner's performance in an assessment. SQT's policy and procedure for extenuating / mitigating circumstances is set out in **QAP7-3: Personal Mitigating Circumstances**.

10.5 Late Submission of Assessment

There are 2 scenarios for late submission of QQI assessments as set out below.

10.5.1 QQI (HET Programmes)

If assessment material is received after the due date (and an extension is neither sought nor granted or an extended deadline is missed), late submissions of assessments are penalised as follows:

- 20% penalty for submissions within 2 calendar weeks of the submission deadline (for example a learner who achieves a mark of 80% will have 16% deducted from their mark, reducing it to 64%).

- Late submissions after 2 weeks are not accepted.

10.5.2 QQI (FET Programmes)

In the case of work submitted for QQI FET programmes, if an assessment is received after the due date (and an extension is neither sought nor granted or an extended deadline is missed), it is not accepted for marking.

10.6 Regulations for Failed and Repeat Assessment

The following regulations apply with respect to failed and repeat assessment.

- Learners who fail to submit work in respect of a continuous assessment element of a programme (and have not sought or been granted an extension or a deferral) are not to be given an opportunity to be reassessed if the overall grade achieved in that module/programme is greater than a pass result (unless specifically stated on programme documentation).

- Any learner who fails an element of coursework and subsequently fails the programme are normally permitted a further attempt at the unsuccessful assessment element(s) within a specified period and subject to a reassessment fee. Learners who wish to resubmit assessment material are advised to contact the Accreditation Manager no later than 10 working days after the approved / ratified results have been issued. Requests to repeat / resubmit failed assessment after this time period will not be accepted. The requirements for resubmission, including the period allowed is agreed by the Programme Director and Programme Tutor. In certain circumstances the opinion of the External Examiner may also be sought.

- In cases where it is not possible to set a repeat assessment element (due to the live nature of the assessment), learners may be required to attend all or part of the training, complete new assessments and pay relevant fees (generally a percentage of the original programme fee which will be calculated based on the level of attendance required and the nature of the assessment).
- Information pertaining to resubmission (including the revised deadline) is communicated to the learner via email by the Accreditation Manager.
- Learners who meet the criteria for the award through the first reassessment opportunity will not be penalised. However, any subsequent attempts will be capped at a passing grade (40% HET & 50% FET).

10.7 Feedback on Approved Results

It is SQT policy that where practicable, programmes should include sufficient, timely, and fit-for-purpose feedback on assessments. Where draft assessments are submitted to Tutors, formative feedback and constructive suggestions are provided to assist the learner to improve their performance (if necessary).

It is acknowledged that feedback on shorter programmes (2-day programmes for example) is not practicable. Where the duration of the programme does not allow for the submission of draft assessments for feedback, the Tutors provide feedback to learners by request.

SQT does not automatically provide feedback to learners on their final assessment result. However, the procedure below should be followed for learners wishing to avail of feedback on approved / ratified results. This is particularly encouraged for learners who have not successfully achieved an award.

10.7.1 Procedure for Requesting Feedback on Approved Results

1. Feedback pertaining to final assessment grades is managed through the Accreditation Manager.

2. Following the issue of approved results, learners who wish to seek feedback on their results are advised to contact the Accreditation Manager in the first instance. This should be done within 5 working days of receiving the approved result.

3. The Accreditation Manager liaises with the Tutor to arrange for relevant feedback to be provided. All requests for such feedback are processed in a timely manner. SQT will endeavour for the Tutor who marked the examination script to be available to discuss it and the result with the learner in question. However, SQT reserves the right to arrange for an alternative Tutor or the Programme Director to provide the feedback.

4. The primary method for feedback at this stage is verbal feedback between the Tutor and learner and / or through email.

   The aim of such feedback is to:

   - Provide formative feedback to learners, especially to those who need to repeat.

- Explain the basis of the learner's grade/mark against the assessment criteria, especially where the learner believes that the assessor may have made an error in grading the work.

Such feedback is distinct from a formal re-check or review of the results.

5. Discussion arrangements are generally organised by telephone or by email but will not include sharing of the actual assessment material.

6. In certain cases, it may be necessary for learners to review assessment material through a pre-arranged consultation with relevant staff. This review is carried out at SQT. Learners may not be accompanied except in the case of those learners who have been identified as requiring additional support to assist with communication e.g. sign language interpreter. Learners may not annotate, take an image of, or remove any assessment material. Learners are not permitted to take notes or to record the meeting in any format. If written clarification of the feedback provided is required, this should be requested from the Tutor.

10.8 Grade Recheck, Review and Appeals

SQT is committed to implementing appropriate procedures which facilitate learners to seek a recheck, review or appeal of an assessment decision. This policy is limited to appeals against the final result of an assessment of a learner's academic work i.e. appeals can only be made against results issued from an Examination Boards or Results Approval panel, both of which take place after External Examination. The outcome of a recheck, review or appeal can result in an upgrade or a downgrade of the original marks received.

The following definitions are outlined in QQI Assessments and Standards, Revised 2013 – section 4.10.

- **Recheck:** 'the administrative operation of checking (again) the recording and combination of component scores for a module or stage.' Note a recheck is not considered a formal appeal.
- **Review:** 'the re-consideration of the assessment decision, either by the original assessor or by other competent persons. Learners are required to state the grounds for the requested review. The grounds for review will normally be that the learner suspects that the assessment was erroneous in some respect.'
- **Appeal:** An appeal is a 'request to a higher authority for the alteration of the decision or judgement of a lower one'. In the context of SQT, the lower authority refers to the Examination Board, and the higher authority refers to the Appeals Board (which is a sub-committee of the Academic Council).

10.8.1 Procedure for a Grade Recheck

The grounds for a recheck are as follows:

- The learner believes there was a computational error in the calculation of their result.

1. A request for a recheck must be received by the Accreditation Manager within 5 working days of authenticated results being issued to learners. (Note a recheck can only be requested on results which have been authenticated by an External Examiner). SQT is not obliged to

undertake a recheck for any application received outside of this timeframe. Where a recheck request has been accepted, SQT will endeavour to undertake all rechecks and communicate the outcome to the learner within 10 working days.

2. Requests for rechecks must be made on the Assessment Review / Recheck / Appeals Form (F25) which must be signed by the learner. A recheck fee of €25 should be received when the request is lodged to SQT. In the event of a successful recheck, the fee will be refunded.

3. The recheck is undertaken by the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs and/or a nominated member of the administration staff. The original marking schemes are utilised and the recheck involves a check of all assessment elements for the programme.

4. Where a recheck results in a change of mark (upgraded or downgraded), the Accreditation Manager is responsible for updating the Broadsheet of results and issuing a revised statement of results to the learner.

5. Where a recheck does not result in a change of mark - the Accreditation Manager informs the learner of the outcome of the recheck via email.

10.8.2   Procedure for a Grade Review

The grounds for a review are as follows:

- The academic regulations of the SQT were not implemented correctly
- The regulations do not adequately relate to the learner in question
- Compassionate circumstances exist which may not have been known or considered by SQT. Compassionate circumstances must be notified in writing to the Accreditation Manager when they occur. Where the learner delays notifying SQT of any compassionate circumstances, SQT is not obliged to take these into consideration. In the case of compassionate circumstances relating to assessment performance, it is expected that evidence of compassionate circumstances is dated prior to, or on the date of, the assessment under consideration. Medical certification dated after the fact indicating the possibility of compassionate circumstances at an earlier date will not normally be accepted.

1. A request for a review must be received by the Accreditation Manager within 10 working days of approved results issued to learners. (Note a review can only be requested on results which have been authenticated by an External Examiner). SQT is not obliged to undertake a review for any application received outside of this timeframe. Where a review request has been accepted, SQT will endeavour to process all reviews and communicate the outcome to the learner within 10 working days.

2. Requests for reviews must be made on the Assessment Review / Recheck / Appeals Form (F25) which must be signed by the learner. A review fee of €50 should be received when the request is lodged to SQT. In the event of a successful review, the fee will be refunded.

3. If a review is accepted, the assessment is remarked by a new Tutor who was not involved in marking the original assessment.

4. The decision of the new Examiner will supersede the decision of the original Tutor.

5. Where a review results in a change of mark (upgraded or a downgraded), the Accreditation Manager is responsible for updating the Broadsheet of results and issuing a revised statement of results to the learner.

6. Where a review does not result in a change of mark - the Accreditation Manager informs the learner of the outcome of the recheck via email.

10.8.3 Procedure for Grade Appeals

Refer to **QAP7-6 Academic Appeals**.

10.9 Withdrawal from a Programme of Study

Learners who fail to submit their work by the agreed deadline and have not sought or been granted an extension through the SQT's Extenuating Circumstances policy are considered withdrawn from the programme.

10.10 Deferrals (HET Programmes Only)

Given the short duration of SQT's FET programmes, a formal deferral policy does not apply. In the case of QQI (FET programmes), learners are permitted to request an extension to an assessment if extenuating circumstances apply. Refer to **QAP7-3: Personal Mitigating Circumstances**.

In this context, if a learner transfers from one programme cohort to another due to date clashes etc. all training days must be completed within 9 months from the original programme commencement date (applies to level 6 and 7 programmes).

In the case of Level 8 programmes, all training must be completed within 18 months. Failure to meet this regulation may result in having to attend additional training at an added cost. In the event that SQT are unable to offer a learner dates to complete their training within this period, the learner will be awarded a timeline extension to the next available course sitting.

10.11 Group Based Assessment

This section outlines key considerations for learner group work and group assessments. It serves as a guide for the programme development team involved in the development, delivery and assessment of group-based assessment. The policy encourages the thoughtful integration of group work into the Programme Assessment Strategies, aligned with the Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs).

Group-based assessment refers to a form of evaluation where learners work collaboratively as a group to complete a task or project, with the assessment focusing on both the group process and the final product. It aims to develop key skills such as teamwork, communication, and problem-solving, while also assessing individual contributions within the group. According to Oakley et al. (2004)[8], group-based assessment encourages collaborative learning and enhances the development of soft skills, which are essential for employability.

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[8] Oakley, B., Felder, R.M., Brent, R., & Elhajj, I. (2004). Turning student groups into effective teams. *Journal of Student Centered Learning*, 2(1), 9-34.

Group work provides learners with valuable opportunities to develop soft skills and a wide range of transferable skills essential for employability, including:

- Communication
- Observation
- Leadership
- Problem-solving
- Morale-building
- Self-awareness and self-evaluation
- Time management

10.11.1 General Principles for Group Based Assessment

When designing and implementing group work, programme teams should adhere to the following principles:

- **Assessment Alignment:** Group work assessments must align with the Approved Programme Schedule, Module Descriptor, and Programme Assessment Strategy.
- **Variety of Assessment:** There should be an appropriate mix of assessment instruments across the programme to ensure diverse and comprehensive evaluation.
- **Clear Assessment Design:** The assessment brief should clearly outline:
  o Group size
  o Weighting breakdown, including individual contribution (typically 10-30%)
  o Whether the assessment focuses on the group process, output, or both
  o The method of group formation (assigned or voluntary)
- **Guidance for Learners:** Learners should receive clear instructions on collaboration, expected outcomes, and presentation of final reports, especially regarding ownership.
- **Group Size:** A group is defined as a minimum of two learners. Group sizes should be designed to optimize the achievement of learning outcomes, though specific group sizes are not mandated by policy and should be carefully considered in the context of assessment design.
- **Individual Assessment:** Typically, an individual mark should be awarded for group assessments, with individual contribution often representing 10-30% of the overall assessment. This proportion should be determined during assessment design.

10.12 Moodle Based MCQ Assessments

This section provides guidelines in the use of Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs) in assessments delivered through Moodle to ensure that the assessment adheres to the highest standards of academic integrity.

10.12.1   General Principles

When designing and implementing Moodle Based MCQ Assessment, programme teams and administration staff should adhere to the following principles:

MCQ Assessment Design – Best Practice

- MCQs should be designed to promote higher-order thinking by including questions that require application, analysis, and evaluation rather than solely recalling facts.
- Randomisation of question order and answer choices should be employed where possible to reduce opportunities for collusion between learners.
- A pool of questions should be created for each assessment to ensure that each learner receives a unique set of questions.

Moodle Settings

- **Timed assessments:** MCQ examination on Moodle should have strict time limits to discourage external assistance or cheating.
- **Secure exam mode:** Enable features such as browser lockdown or secure examination environments, where possible, to prevent unauthorised resources from being used during the examination.
- **One-question-per-page format:** Displaying one question at a time prevents learners from easily sharing answers with others and encourages focus on the task.
- **Question navigation:** Disable backward navigation to prevent learners from revisiting questions and collaborating with others during the test.

Clear Communication to Learners

- All learners must be made aware of the academic integrity policies in place for MCQ assessments, including the expectations for independent work, the consequences of cheating, and how Moodle settings (e.g., time limits, randomised questions) support a fair testing environment.

APPENDIX 1 - SAMPLING POLICY

Sampling is the process of selecting a portion of learner results and learner evidence for the purposes of completing Internal Verification and external examination of assessment, within each programme. The sampling strategy for SQT will be applied by the Internal Verifier and the External Examiner.

Assessment material for all programmes (minor awards and special purpose awards) will be internally verified for each certification period.

The following criteria should be applied to all samples:

- Represents a range of learners and a cross section of assessment techniques.

- All Tutors must be included in the sample.

- Covers the full range of attainment across grades achieved.

- Is sufficient in size to enable sound judgements to be made about the fairness and consistency of assessment decisions.

- Applies a minimum sample size per class group sampled. A sample of:

  - 3 learners for a class group of ≤ 10 learners

  - 5 learners for a class group of 11 - 25 learners

  - 6 learners for a class group of > 25 learners

- Consists of a random selection of evidence for each grade/band including borderline results (where available).

Note: This guideline is based on the minimum sample required. However, it is at the discretion of the Internal Verifier and External Examiner to increase the sample to ensure that the above criteria is met. Learners included in the sample are marked on the Learner Result report.

11. POLICY MONITORING

Responsibility	Frequency	Methods
Director of Quality and Academic Affairs – Document Update	Per QA audit schedule	- Review of documentation as set out in QAP2-1: Ongoing Review and Update of QA Documents.

Programme Board	Each meeting	- Feedback from annual graduate survey (once per year where relevant)
		- External Examiner Reports
		- Examination report summary which includes:
		    o Examination Summary Report
		    o Average Result
		    o No. Certified
		    o Benchmarking statistics
		    o Completion Rate (%)
		- Additional KPI's used for monitoring include review of No. Reviews, Rechecks and Appeals and No. Extension Requests / Deferrals

External Examiner	In advance of each moderation	- Internal verification reports
		- External moderation of assessment
		- Moderation of application forms for those who accessed the programmes via APEL (HET programmes)
		- Feedback from learners via telephone call (HET)
		- APEL Statistics report which includes:
		    o % Learners admitted on basis of APEL
		    o Comparison of assessment results for those admitted on basis of APEL vs Educational History

Academic Council	Bi-Annual	- Examination report summary for all awarding bodies. - Feedback / updates from awarding bodies

12. DOCUMENT CONTROL

Version No	Approval Date	Description of Revision	Originator	Approved By
2.0	1/3/19	Complete revision to include QQI (FET and HET programmes) and new document format.	Director of Quality and Academic Affairs	Academic Council
3.0	26/11/20	Update to procedure for investigating assessment malpractice (10.10.3)	Director of Quality and Academic Affairs	Academic Council
3.1	NA	Change of title from Accreditation and Systems Manager to Accreditation Manager	Director of Quality and Academic Affairs	NA
3.2	24/11/23	- Academic Misconduct removed and added to new policy QAP6-2: Academic Integrity - Capped pass policy removed (10.6)	Director of Quality and Academic Affairs	Academic Council
4.0	15/11/24	- Amendment to sections 8.8 and 8.9 to include virtual meetings - Inclusion of Section 10.11 Group Based Assessment - Inclusion of Section 10.12	Director of Quality and Academic Affairs	Academic Council