

QA 6.15 EXTERNAL AUTHENTICATION PROCEDURE



Purpose of Procedure

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 of the award (Quality Assuring Assessment – Guidelines for Providers, Version 2 Revised, QQI 2018)

The purpose of this policy is to outline the procedure surrounding external authentication in Cork ETB and the role of the Cork ETB Quality Assurance Office, individual centres and External Authenticators in the authentication process

Scope of Procedure

This procedure applies to all further education and training provision provided by Cork ETB colleges and centres or by organisations funded by Cork ETB to provide further education and training, whether accredited or unaccredited.

6.14.1 Responsibilities

Cork ETB Quality Assurance Office will:

- Collate details of the Major Award/Component Awards and the approximate number of portfolios as provided by the centre, via the Estimates Form.
- Collate contact details for the staff coordinating the external authentication process in each Centre and the dates and times the Centre can facilitate the external authentication.
- Select External Authenticators from one of the approved panels.
- Ensure the same External Authenticator is appointed to authenticate a Cork ETB centre for no more than 3 consecutive years.
- Agree times and dates between the External Authenticator and the FE centre. Issue a Letter of Engagement to the External Authenticators appointed for all FE Centres. In the case of the Training Centre, the Training Centre is responsible for engaging the appointed External

Authenticator, agreeing dates and times for external authentication and issuing letters of engagement to that External Authenticator.

- Ensure that the External Authenticator is set up on the Cork ETB payroll system and provide the External Authenticator with the standard HR set up forms if this is not the case.
- Check the details on the external authentication claim form and complete a QQI EA Submission form to the Payroll Department.
- Receive a copy of all external authentication reports and file for storage.
- Review the external authentication reports for issues arising and follow up with the centre to ensure that Continuous Improvement Plans are completed, and corrective action is taken.

The centre will:

- Provide details of the Major Award/Component Awards and the approximate number of portfolios to the Cork ETB Quality Assurance Office as soon as numbers on a course are finalised, i.e. when estimate forms are issued by the QA unit.
- Ensure that each component in the Centre is authenticated at a minimum every two years by indicating in the estimates form which components were authenticated in the previous assessment period.
- Provide contact details of the staff who coordinate the external authentication process to the Cork ETB Quality Assurance Office and dates and times when the centre can facilitate external authentication.

On the day of external authentication, the centre will provide the following

- Appropriate staff who are available to be contacted on the day of the visit.
- The centre will clearly outline to the External Authenticator exactly where relevant information is to be found, i.e. on Moodle, SharePoint, OneDrive, Google Drive, in hard copy or in other formats.
- The centre will make the following available to the External Authenticator either in electronic or in paper format:

- The appropriate up to date Cork ETB descriptors for the major, special purpose, supplemental or minor award for which results are to be authenticated.
- The list of learner group(s) from which the sample is to be selected.
- The assessment plan for the Learner group.
- A copy of assessment instruments, i.e. briefs/examination papers for each of the component awards.
- Marking schemes for specific assessment activities and outline solutions where appropriate.
- Submission sheets/ attendance sheets for each assessment
- The internal verification report(s).
- The portfolios of learner assessment and relevant marking sheets
- If the External Authenticator is authenticating learner evidence from more than one centre, the centre will provide details on how and where learner evidence is to be made available.
- The Centre will provide the appropriate equipment to moderate assessment evidence produced in a multi-media format as required.
- The Centre will ensure that a representative remains in the centre until the external authentication has completed their duties.
- The Centre will sign and stamp the external authenticators claim form.

The External Authenticator will:

- Sign the appropriate page of the Letter of Engagement and return it to the Cork ETB Quality Assurance Office prior to the authentication process.
- Attend the briefing session organised by Cork ETB prior to commencing work as an external authenticator.
- Check and sign the internal verification report(s) and authenticate the findings/outcomes.

- Review the previous external authentication report if necessary and discuss with Principal/Centre Manager as regards what progress they have made to resolve issues that had arisen in that report.
- Sample a range of learner evidence using the Cork ETB's sampling strategy.
- Moderate assessment results in accordance with standards outlined in the Cork ETB programme descriptor/Cork ETB component specification
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- Sign all Authentication Report by Learner Group by Minor Award Results sheets relating to the components moderated by that external authenticator.
- Provide constructive verbal and written feedback to relevant staff as appropriate.
- Produce a word-processed external authentication report using the Cork ETB external authentication template.
- In writing the report, ensure that all areas for improvement, whether component specific or general, are highlighted in the section "Outline areas for improvement".
- In writing the report, maintain standards of strictest confidentiality. No learner or assessor names or initials to appear on the external authentication report. Class groups can be identified only by the class code which appears on QBS or RCCRS.
- Bring any significant irregularity or serious issue identified to the attention of the Principal/Director/Centre Manager
- Once the work is complete the External Authenticator will complete the claim form and the authentication report and return via email to Cork ETB Quality Assurance Office and the Centre within three working days.
- On occasion the External Authenticator may be requested to participate in the Results Approval Panel.
- If the External Authenticator identifies an issue that significantly undermines the integrity of the assessment process, s/he should not recommend results for approval. In this instance the External Authenticator should notify the centre and contact Cork ETB Quality Assurance Office.

- When the External Authenticator has serious concerns regarding the integrity of the Cork ETB assessment process, this should be brought to the attention of QQI **after** it has been brought to the attention of both the Centre and the Cork ETB Quality Assurance Office.

Conflict of Interest:

The External Authenticator is assigned by the provider and must be independent of the centre to which they are assigned. The External Authenticator has a responsibility to inform the provider on initial contact if there is any conflict of interest which may arise or may bring into question the integrity of the process. Conflict of interest may include but is not limited to:

- Family relationship
- Personal relationship
- Grievance/similar issues
- Other issues

6.15.2 Procedure Details

6.15.2.a Assignment and selection of an External Authenticator:

External Authenticators are assigned to each centre by the Cork ETB Quality Assurance Office from a panel of External Authenticators.

6.15.2.b Criteria for selection of External Authenticator:

The following criteria will be used by Cork ETB when selecting an External Authenticator from the panel. The External Authenticator should:

- Have technical/subject matter expertise within appropriate award area/field of learning.
- Have experience of delivery, programme assessment or work in the industry/field.
- Agree to undertake appropriate training and attend appropriate briefing.
- Have qualities needed to interact with learners, assessors and senior staff members, e.g. communication skills.

- Have administrative, and IT skills, e.g. report writing, time management skills.
- Undertake to operate within the code of practice and guidelines issued by QQI (see appendix A).
- Be available to the provider at the appropriate times.
- Be independent of the centre to which they are assigned.
- Be a member of an approved panel of External Authenticators.

6.15.2.c Frequency:

External authentication will occur as frequently as required by Centres.

6.15.2.d Methodology for moderation of assessment results

The External Authenticator will select learner portfolios from each component on the list using the Cork ETB sampling strategy.

If there are 12 or less assessment portfolios a minimum of 6 portfolios will be externally authenticated, to allow for the cut-off points between the grades to be established.

If there are more than 12 assessment portfolios for a Minor Award, the sample will normally be 15% and will not be less than 6 assessment portfolios for External Authentication, as per the following table:

Number of assessment portfolios for a Minor Award	Number of assessment portfolios to be included
0 → 12	Minimum 6
13 → 50	15% with not less than 6
51 → 100	15% of Total
101 → 200	15% of Total
201 → 300	15% of Total
301 → 400	15% of Total

It should be indicated by the External Authenticator as to which assessment portfolios were selected as part of the sample.

The external authentication should take a sample from across the four grading categories, i.e. Distinction, Merit, Pass and Unsuccessful (where appropriate). The External Authenticator should pay special attention to any borderline grades.

If the External Authenticator does not have the subject matter expertise to authenticate the result, they are expected to moderate the results and indicate this in their report and flag to the Cork ETB Quality Assurance Office.

6.15.3 Process of External Authentication:

The External Authenticator must complete an external authentication report (QA 6.15.a). Reports should be done by course when possible. When this is not possible (evening provision/BTEI etc), the component name and level should be indicated. Reports should be emailed to qa@corketb.ie within three working days of completion of authentication process and before the centre Results Approval Panel meeting takes place. Reports should be saved and emailed to the Cork ETB Quality Assurance Office using the following convention: External Authenticator name, Centre Name, Award, Group, Year; for example, Mary Murphy, College X, 5M2009, Childcare1, 2019.

When authenticating a component, the External Authenticator will check that:

- There is evidence for each learner entered on QBS/RCCRS.
- The assessment material has been marked and graded by the assessor.
- There is a marking sheet for each piece of evidence in the folder.
- The marks have been totalled correctly and entered correctly on QBS/RCCRS.
- The assessment briefs are clear, concise and correctly mapped to the learning outcomes as per the component descriptor.
- The examination paper is clear, concise and correctly mapped to the learning outcomes as per the component descriptor and outline solutions are available (when relevant to the component).
- The evidence has been marked in accordance with national standards

- Provider policies and procedures have been correctly applied, e.g. in relation to plagiarism, late submission.
- Feedback on assessment has been given to the learners.
- If a grade is judged to be awarded incorrectly the External Authenticator will moderate and change the result by annotating the Learner Marking sheet and change to the next grade band. This will also be noted on the Authentication Report by Learner Group by Minor Award Results Sheet(s).
- If the External Authenticator makes a grade change, they will then extend the sample to review the portfolio of evidence for the learner with the next closest total marks until the External Authenticator satisfied that the grade cut off is satisfactory.
- Sign the learner marking sheet for each learner who has been authenticated.
- Note areas of component specific good practice.
- Make recommendations of component specific areas for improvement.

Evidence may be available to the External Authenticator electronically or in hard copy

Document Details

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