

External Authentication - Guidelines for Contractors¹

1 Introduction

The Qualification and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Bill 2011 has resulted in the establishment of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance Authority of Ireland (QQI), the Education Training Boards (ETB) and SOLAS.

The External Authentication process emerges from the QQI Assessment Quality Assurance Policy and Guidelines and subsequent QA agreements. The agreements require that the External Authenticator process is independent and external to programme delivery, assessment development and internal quality assurance.

2 The Interim External Authentication Process for Contractors

1. All ETB Training Centre programmes, delivered to learners by Contractors and whose results are being submitted for QQI certification, will be subject to External Authentication.
2. The ETB Training Centre Training Standards Officer (TSO) will allocate an External Authenticator.
3. The Contractor is responsible for making the arrangements and facilitating the site visit with the nominated External Authenticator. In the event that the any changes are required, the Contractor should notify the relevant TSO.
4. The Contractor will provide the External Authenticator with the F12s (minus PPSNs) for each programme being authenticated in advance of the site visit to allow the pre-selection of learners (see Section 5: Site Visits).
5. The External Authenticator will visit the location on the agreed date(s).
6. The Contractor will organise a secure room and make the assessment records and evidence available for all of the learners in the sample requested by the authenticator. The material to be authenticated must be organised by programme, by learner name and in alphabetical order.
7. Where QQI majors are dependent on City and Guilds or other Non-QQI components (minors) evidence is required from the relevant awarding body that authentication has taken place for the Non-QQI components. Evidence may include an external verifiers report or copies of the certificates requested and awarded. In this context, the External Authenticator will examine the QQI component(s) and the evidence from the Non- QQI awarding body, to ensure the award determination for the QQI major.

¹ The term 'Contractor' refers to both Second Provider (CTC, STP, LTI and DoJW) and Contracted Trainer. It excludes Approved Training Organisations (ATO).

8. The External Authenticator will sign the F12 for the programme authenticated.
9. The EA will complete an External Authentication report. The report will (a) confirm good practice (b) recommend areas for improvement and (c) identify issues which may threaten the integrity of the assessment or certification process.
10. The External Authenticator will forward the report to the Contractor, the relevant TSO and other persons, as required, within five working days of the visit.
11. External Authenticator reports may contain a summarised technical narrative on assessment for the programme group and may include trend data and show variation of results across locations compared against national norms.

3 Sampling

External Authentication is carried out on a sample basis in line with QQI requirements² and the ETB Training Centre sampling strategy.

3.1 Contractor Sampling

External Authentication will be completed on each submission of results for certification by the Contractor for all the ETB Training Centre programmes.

3.2 EA Sampling

The EA sample will be determined by the authenticator. The EA will select a sample in advance of the site visit and will then authenticate the pre-selected sample on the day of the site visit. The authenticator will ensure that the sample:

1. Represents major awards, a range of learners and a cross section of assessment techniques.
2. Covers the full range of attainment across grades achieved.
3. Is sufficient in size to enable sound judgements to be made about the fairness and consistency of assessment decisions.
4. Applies a minimum sample size per class group sampled. A sample of:
 - i. 3 learners for a class group of ≤ 10 learners
 - ii. 5 learners for a class group of 11 - 25 learners
 - iii. 6 learners for a class group of > 25 learners.
5. 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 authenticator to increase the sample.

²QQI Quality Assurance in Further Education and Training - Policy and Guidelines for Providers V1.3 (Section B6.7.2)

QQI Quality Assuring Assessment - Guidelines for Providers May 2007 (Section 4.3 & 4.4)

QQI Quality Assuring Assessment - Guidelines for External Authenticators V1.0 (Section. 4.3 & 4.4).

4 Selection of EAs

The TSO will allocate the External Authenticator. The selection will be done taking into account the following:

- Subject matter expertise of the EA.
- Repeat visits.

ETBI will maintain a list of External Authenticators, drawn from the QQI List of Authenticators, briefed in ETB Training Centres assessment processes and procedures and allocated, in line with their subject matter expertise, to awards that they can authenticate. External Authenticators for programmes leading to awards at Level 5 and 6 will have broad expertise in the field of learning as required by QQI. 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.

All ETB Training Centres and associated Providers may use External Authenticators from the SOLAS list of External Authenticators or make alternative arrangements as designated by the ETB.

External Authenticators work for and on behalf of the ETB Training Centre. Contractors can **only** use External Authenticators allocated to them by the TSO.

External Authenticators may not be used as subject matter experts for purposes other than external authentication. Engagement of External Authenticators to implement corrective/preventative actions, re-correct or design assessments constitutes an improper use of the service.

4.1 Repeat Visits

The same External Authenticator (EA) may visit a Contractor twice in succession. For a third visit a different EA must be used. Exceptions are permitted where there is only one EA with the subject matter expertise required to authenticate a particular award (e.g. farriery).

If an EA is unable to complete a site visit due to issues with the training contractor, the same EA must be rescheduled to complete the site visit, to ensure continuity of authentication.

4.2 Payment

Payment rates and travel and subsistence for External Authenticators are outlined in the EA Terms of Reference. On completion of their report, the EA will submit their invoice directly to the Contractor for payment. They will use a standard invoice template. The Contractor is obliged to pay the EA within three weeks of receipt of an invoice.

4.3 Rates of Pay

Daily Rate:	€250 per day	
Travel	(ETB Training Centre Consultant Rate)	
	Public transport or €0.2443 per Km	
Subsistence	(ETB Training Centre Consultant Rate)	
	Overnights @ €53.85	
	Day allowance:	10 hours or more €16.81
	Day allowance:	5 to 10 hours €6.86

5 Site Visits

5.1 Sample Selection (Pre-Site Visit)

1. The contact details of External Authenticators will be provided to the Contractor by the ETB Training Centre.
2. The Contractor is responsible for making the arrangements and facilitating the site visit with the nominated External Authenticator.
3. Learner names and results for each programme to be authenticated will be sent to the relevant External Authenticator (e.g. F12 minus PPSN) to allow for sample selection.

5.2 Documentation (Site Visit)

The EA will select a sample to be externally authenticated and inform the Contractor who will organise the following:

1. Assessment evidence for each learner in the sample selected (e.g. scripts/coursework/workbooks, QQI certificates and non-QQI certificates).
2. It is possible that learners being put forward for major awards may have been previously certified for some of the component minors. In such instances **only a copy of the component certificate(s)** for these certified components should be presented for external authentication. Learner evidence such as scripts should not be submitted to the external authenticator once the certificates have been requested/issued. This applies to both QQI and non-QQI awards (e.g. ICDL, City and Guilds, MOS etc.).
3. Major Awards which contain non-QQ/ component minors must present a copy of the **certificates** for these components in order to achieve the major (e.g. ICDL, City & Guilds, MOS etc). Learner evidence should not be submitted for external authentication.
4. If an awarding body has external verified/authenticated and results and certificates are pending, the verification/authentication report may be presented to the authenticator.

5. In instances such as Beauty programmes where official results are issued by the awarding body in advance of certification, the official results sheets may be submitted instead of the certificate.
6. In the event that QQI component certificates are pending (e.g. certificates have been requested but not yet issued), a printout from the FBS showing their status may be presented as evidence.
7. Assessment Sheets and Summary Assessment Sheets for the sample.
8. RCCRS generated F12 for the sample, including all required signatures, learner results, PPSN, Rules Statements and Grading statements.
9. If a rule statement is not included in the RCCRS generated F12 (CTC, LTI, DoJW, STP) then it should be printed and attached to the F12.
10. Assessment Report (Form 5).
11. Internal Verification reports for sample. Reports may include the following:
 - Internal Verification Report on the Conduct of the Assessment Process (Form 9) which is done on a sample basis.
 - Peer Review of Assessment Results (Checklist and Comment Form) (Form 10) which is done on a sample basis.
 - Internal Verification of Results (Results Approval Checklist) (TForm 8) completed for **all** programmes.
12. Previous External Authentication Reports.
13. Any other relevant assessment/certification information
14. Access to Assessment Instrument Specifications (AIS) that may be requested by the EA.

5.3 Room (Site Visit)

1. Access to a PC to check soft copy evidence where relevant.
2. The room must be secure and laid out in an orderly manner.
3. The material to be authenticated must be organised by programme, by learner name and in alphabetical order.
4. Sufficient space must be given to allow the authenticator to spread out the assessment material.

5.4 Availability of Staff

1. In the event that the EA wishes to speak to the internal verifier and/or assessor please ensure that their contact information is available. This will occur where a change in grade or a marking query occurs.
2. All relevant staff should be aware of the EA visit.

5.5 Closing Meeting and Follow Up

1. The EA will give direct feedback to the Contractor's staff during the final hour of their site visit. This should be formally arranged with the EA at the beginning of the site visit.
2. Any follow up in relation to the EA Report should be done directly with the EA.