

Terms of Reference for External Authenticators for ETB Training Centres Interim Arrangements for External Authentication

1 Background

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

1. All ETB Training Centre programmes which have been delivered to learners, 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 a named External Authenticator. 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.
3. The TSO/Contractor¹ will contact the External Authenticator to agree a date to visit and to pre-select a sample in line with the ETB Training Centre sampling strategy and guidelines.
4. The External Authenticator will visit the location on the agreed date(s).
5. The TSO or 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.
6. 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) for CSCS/QSCS.



7. The External Authenticator 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 integrity² of the assessment or certification process.
8. The External Authenticator will submit the report to the Contractor, the relevant TSO and other persons as required, within five working days of the visit.
9. 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 Roles and Responsibilities

The role of the External Authenticator is to:

1. Complete a site visit on an agreed date to authenticate the assessment evidence.
2. Pre-select the sample in line with the ETB Training Centre sampling strategy and guidelines.
3. Check that records and assessment evidence is available and is appropriate.
4. Review the grade(s) awarded to the learner.
5. Review the assessment instruments against award standards, as required.
6. Check that requests for Major awards are justified based on the award determination (rule statement).
7. Review of internal verification reports and follow up of previous External Authentication reports if appropriate.
8. Conduct a closing meeting with the relevant staff.
9. Complete EA Report and submit to the relevant persons within five working days.

3.1 Confidentiality

All information, documentation, report(s) and discussions are to be treated as confidential and for ETB Training Centre information only.

² Examples of threats to assessment or certification integrity are attached in Appendix 1.

3.2 Conflict of Interest

The External Authenticator assigned by the ETB Training Centre must be independent of the centre to which they are assigned. The authenticator has a responsibility to inform the ETB Training Centre and the Contractor if there is any conflict of interest which may arise or may bring into question the integrity of the process.

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.

3.3 Tax Clearance Certificate

External Authenticators should be in possession of a valid tax clearance certificate and provide evidence of same to the ETB Training Centre.

3.4 QQI Panel of External Authenticators

External Authenticators work for and on behalf of the ETB Training Centre. All authenticators engaged by the ETB Training Centre are selected from the published QQI List of External Authenticators. Each authenticator is responsible for ensuring that they meet the conditions required to retain their membership of this panel. In the event that membership lapses the authenticator must inform the ETB Training Centre immediately.

3.5 Data Protection

Authenticators shall ensure that any personal data supplied by the ETB Training Centre shall be used only for the purpose of providing the agreed external authentication services and shall not be transmitted or transferred to any third parties. Authenticators shall ensure that all such personal data shall at all times be maintained in a secure environment and that access shall be limited to those directly involved in the provision of the service. The authenticator shall ensure that all such personal data is either destroyed or returned to the ETB Training Centre on completion/delivery of the services.

3.6 Assessment Material

All Assessment Instrument Specifications (AIS) and any other assessment documentation are the property of the ETB Training Centre and may not be removed from the site by the authenticator. In the event that the authenticator inadvertently removes the assessment documentation, they should contact the Contractor/TSO immediately and arrange for its return. No copies of the assessment documentation should be made or retained by the authenticator as this puts the integrity of the ETB Training Centre assessment system at risk.

3.7 Additional requirements

External Authenticators must:

- Be available for site visits.
- Be available for briefings and/or training as and when.
- Have experience in Quality Assurance standards and systems in Education and Training and the ETB Training Centre assessment process and external authentication of assessment results.

4 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

Tax will be in line with ETB requirements.

Appendix 1: Examples of threats to assessment or certification integrity

1. Serious breaches of assessment procedure or regulations which may effect final results.
2. A high prevalence or pattern of scripts not marked according to instructions in the ETB Training Centre assessment document.
3. Significant lack of authentic, sufficient and relevant evidence to show that the learner has achieved the assessment criteria.
4. Serious marking errors affecting final result. Marks not totalled correctly or transferred correctly between individual tests and the summary assessment sheet, incorrect grades awarded to learners.
5. QQI award standard assessment specification and rule statement not being applied correctly.
6. Use of assessments which are unapproved, or are not in accordance with the relevant QQI award standard specification.
7. Significant evidence of collusion e.g. falsification of results, plagiarism, suspicious scripts, unexplained identical answers or prior access to assessment papers.
8. Any other matter which in the judgement of the External Authenticator, and following consultation with the ETB Training Centre, is considered serious and would threaten the integrity of the ETB Training Centre assessment process and request for certification.

Note:

In all matters of professional judgement during the external authentication process the benefit of doubt will be given to the learner where possible if doing so does not compromise the integrity and credibility of the ETB Training Centre assessment processes.