1.3.11 External Authentication

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Policy area:	1.3 Assessment of Learners
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Purpose

The purpose of the External Authentication process is to ensure that standards are met equally across all delivery ensuring consistency, validity and reliability have been applied, and that national standards have been reached across six certification periods. KWETB is committed to ensuring that the external perspective on assessment is maintained and that the appointed EA is fully aware of KWETB EA processes and procedures.

Scope

This procedure applies to all FET Provision and FET Provision-Second Providers. There is an integrated single policy, with integrated procedures for FET Provision-Second Providers denoted in sections;

- Assignment of External Authenticators:
- Preparing for External Authentication
- Documentation to be made available to External Authenticators
- Process for Online External Authentication
- Process for Onsite External Authentication
- Carrying out External Authentication
- Moderation of Results and Report Writing
- Payment of External Authenticators

The Role of the External Authenticator: (EA)

The EA provides independent confirmation of fair and consistent assessment of learners in accordance with QQI requirements and reports on consistency of assessment results with national standards.

External Authenticators:

- Confirm fair and consistent assessment of learners consistent with the KWETB's procedures and with QQI policy on quality assuring assessment.
- Review Internal Verification report(s) and authenticate findings/outcomes.
- Apply a sampling strategy to moderate assessment results consistent with QQI requirements.
- Moderate assessment results in accordance with standards outlined in the Award Specification.
- Have the technological skills to carry out online External Authentication.
- Communicate with appropriate staff.
- If required, participate in the Results Approval process as per KWETB's agreed procedures.
- Identify any issues/irregularities in relation to the assessment procedures.
- Recommend results for approval.
- Produce an External Authentication report.

External Authentication Code of Practice

The role of the EA is to provide independent authentication of fair and consistent assessment of learners in line with QQI requirements and national standards. This code of practice identifies the key areas of the role and the standards of professionalism which EA are expected to maintain. EAs must undertake to work within this code of practice.

The External Authenticator will undertake to:

- Exercise their role with utmost integrity and professionalism when undertaking External Authentication.
- Comply with QQI policies and procedures specifically in relation to awards and assessment.
- Fully comply with KWETB's policies and procedures.
- Inform KWETB of any potential conflict of interest which may compromise their role.
- Inform KWETB of their availability in a timely manner.
- Communicate appropriately with all relevant KWETB staff.
- Provide constructive feedback in a timely manner.
- Compile an External Authentication report on time and based on an independent evaluation of the processes and procedures.

Procedure – 1.3.11 External Authentication

Assignment of External Authenticators:	
1	The designated person with responsibility for QA authentication / TSO should ensure that EA's are registered on the National EA Directory or have gone through the KWETB EA recruitment process.
2	The Director of FET should request access in writing to ETBI for relevant QA staff to be given access to the National Directory al EA.
3	The designated person with responsibility for QA authentication / TSO should engage with EA's in relation to HR proceedings for new EA to carry out EA assignment for KWETB.
Criteria for selection of External Authenticator	
4	The External Authentication should: • Have technical/subject matter expertise within the appropriate award area/field of learning. • Have experience of programme delivery and/or assessment and/or work in industry area/field of learning. • Agree to undertake appropriate training and attend appropriate briefings. • Have the communication qualities necessary to interact with KWETB stakeholders. • Have administrative skills and relevant technological/IT skills. • Undertake to operate within the code of practice and guidelines issued by QQI. • Be available to KWETB at appropriate times. • Be independent of the centre to which they are assigned. • Not to be appointed to the same centre for the same award for more than three consecutive assessment periods.

Preparing for External Authentication	
1	For FET Provision, the designated person with responsibility for QA authentication should email centres in a timely manner requesting estimates for the upcoming certification period.
2	For FET Provision, the Co-ordinator should submit estimates in accordance with the deadline set out in Certification Schedule defining the number of portfolios being put forward for certification.

	The Co-ordinator should ensure that it is a true figure representing all portfolios being presented. EAs are based on these figures. For FET Provision-Second Providers, each submission of results must be authenticated.
3	The designated person with responsibility for QA authentication / TSO should assign EAs based on: • New programmes/components being delivered for first time. • Where a Learning Practitioner is new to the programme. • Where issues have been identified in previous certification period. • Where programmes have not been authenticated in previous two years. • At the request of Coordinator/Principal/Centre Manager.
4	The designated person with responsibility for QA authentication / TSO should assign EAs from the KWETB EA panel. For FET Provision-Second Providers, the TSO should assign the EA from KWETB EA panel. For QQI awards delivered under FET Provision-Second Providers, the QA person responsible for authentication should assign the EA.
5	For FET Provision-Second Providers, the TSO should contact the EA to agree a date to visit and to provide assessment documentation and learner assessment evidence in the selected sample. For FET Provision, the designated person with responsibility for QA authentication should contact the EA to check their availability to carry out online/onsite External Authentication. For FET Provision, the designated person with responsibility for QA authentication should advise in advance if the EA assignment is to be carried out online or onsite. The designated person with responsibility for QA authentication should give instructions to the EA on how to access online OneDrive/eportfolio platforms. (If the EA does not have the technological skills/relevant technology/equipment to access online documentation, then the EA should decline the assignment).
6	For FET Provision, the designated person with responsibility for QA authentication should ensure the following documentation is emailed to the EA; • Spreadsheet detailing major award, minor award, portfolio numbers, contact details for centre/school. • KWETB EA Instructions for EA process • KWETB EA Report template • ePortfolio Project Guide • EA salary/travel claim form.

	For FET Provision-Second Providers, the TSO should email the F12 to EA. The EA should select the sample and should notify the TSO.

Documentation to be made available to External Authenticators	
1	The designated person with responsibility for QA authentication / TSO should ensure that the following documentation is made available to the EA. • Relevant award specifications, validated programmes and programme modules. • All relevant assessment instruments and appropriate supporting documentation i.e., briefs, examination papers, outline solutions, marking schemes. • The assessment plan(s) • Feedback • All learner assessment evidence • All learner assessment results recorded on the QBS/F12 result sheet • List of Learning Practitioners per programme module and/or class group • Internal Verification Report(s) • KWETB sampling strategy

Process for Online External Authentication The approved platform used for Online External Authentication is OneDrive. EA documentation can be uploaded through eportfolio platform or directly into the OneDrive folder.	
	FET Provision
1	The designated person with responsibility for QA authentication should share a OneDrive folder with centres to upload: • eportfolio (through OneDrive platform). Or • Folders in OneDrive set up for: • Learner(s) assessment evidence • Learning Practitioner Folder • Coordinator folder • EA folder (IV Report, QBS Result Sheet)
2	The designated person with responsibility for QA authentication should contact ICT Support to set up with temporary KWETB accounts with access to OneDrive system for the EA's.
3	The designated person with responsibility for QA authentication should share the One-Drive folder with the Co-ordinator given editing rights.

4	The EA should familiarise themselves with the Certificate and Award specifications. A copy should be uploaded in the shared OneDrive online folder.
5	The EA should contact the Coordinator/Principal to arrange an opening meeting prior to commencement of External Authentication and a closing meeting at the completion of External Authentication. If there are issues accessing online content in folders during the EA process, the EA should contact the Co-ordinator. All meetings should take place through teams or telephone call.
6	External Authentication takes place (see Process Carrying out External Authentication).
7	The EA should ensure that each participating centre is provided with a specific External Authentication report within the appointed timeframe.
8	The EA should email a copy of the report to the designated person with responsibility for QA authentication.
9	The designated person with responsibility for QA authentication should contact ICT Support when the EA period is complete and request them to deactivate the temporary accounts.

Process for Onsite External Authentication
The approved platform used for FET Provision for External Authentication is through the online External Authentication OneDrive platform. EA documentation for onsite EA should be uploaded through eportfolio platform or directly into the OneDrive folder. For FET Provision, the location of onsite EA will be at the discretion of the QA office. The presentation of assessment in boxes for EA can be used for extenuating circumstances and should be agreed by the QA office in advance of EA. For FET Provision, Centre visits is arranged at the discretion of the QA office. For FET Provision-Second Providers, all External Authentication takes place onsite.

1	The designated person with responsibility for QA authentication should notify EAs of their assignment, and contact centres/schools where the authentication is taking place to arrange the date and time for their visit within the determined timeframe.
2	The EA should familiarise themselves with the Certificate and Award specifications. For FET Provision, a copy will be uploaded in the shared OneDrive online folder.

3	The designated liaison person (usually the Programme Co-ordinator) should meet the EA on arrival at the centre and act as liaison person throughout the external authentication visit.
4	The EA should sign in giving all contact details.
5	The Programme Co-ordinator should ensure that the EA has IT access where evidence is presented online ensuring that all auditory or video recordings can be clearly viewed/heard. The Programme Co-ordinator should ensure that the EA has access to all practical assessment pieces and artefacts.
6	External Authentication takes place.
7	The EA should provide each participating centre with a specific External Authentication report within the appointed timeframe.

Carrying out External Authentication	
1	The EA should read the Internal Verification report. The EA should sign the Internal Verification report to indicate that it has been read.
2	The EA should check that they have been presented with the accurate number of portfolios i.e., the number stated on the QBS / F12 Result Sheet (by learner group).
3	If necessary, during the process, the EA can make a request to the Programme Co-ordinator to telephone or meet with a Learning Practitioner. (EAs are not obliged to meet with teachers outside of this element of the process).

Sampling Strategy
EAs should authenticate a sample of components across centres.
The EA should start with cut-off points either side of grading bands (levels 4-6) up to 6 in total.
For Level 1,2,3 awards – the EA should take a random selection – including a range of portfolios.
The designated person with responsibility for QA authentication should notify the EA if specific samples are required.
Sampling ranges
>12- Authenticate all portfolios presented

12-144 - Authenticate 12 minimum
144-168- Authenticate 13 minimum
If an issue is discovered in terms of the standards, the EA should investigate in more depth by considering a higher number of portfolios.

When recommending a change in grade, the EA should discuss this with the Co-ordinator at the closing meeting.
The EA should inform the Co-ordinator/ TSO should in relation to the recommendation and reasoning.
The Co-ordinator/TSO should bring any grade changes that are recommended by the EA to the RAP where these should be discussed, and accepted or not, by members of the RAP Panel.
For FET Provision-Second Providers, the EA should inform the TSO of the outcome and sign off F12.

Moderation of Results and Report Writing
Moderation of Results
To moderate the assessment results, the EA should: • Review the award standards in the specific award specification • Confirm assessment techniques and instruments are consistent with award requirements • Judge the marked evidence presented according to the award standard and grading criteria • Determine cut-off points, as appropriate.
Report Writing *The EA is advised to draft the report while conducting the authentication:*

1	The EA should check that the standards are consistent in accordance with the levels for CAS/AIS.
2	The EA should give as much detail as possible when completing the EA report.
3	The EA should ensure that all commentary in the EA report is meaningful.
4	The EA should ensure that commentary relating to the individual modules are relevant to the module and reflective of specific findings of the EA for that module.
5	The EA should refer to individual examples of good practice.

6	The EA should note evidence of fairness and consistency and of standards being met, particularly where the EA is authenticating across a number of centres/schools.
7	The EA should comment on the assessment technique and processes applied.

8	The EA should note that there are two sections in the EA report
	    1. EA Recommendations
	    2. Areas for Improvement/Examples of good practice.
	
	The EA should be clear in their report if they are making a recommendation or stating areas for improvement.
	<u>EA Recommendation</u> – the EA should complete where they are suggesting or expressing an opinion.
	<u>Areas for Improvement</u> – the EA should complete where the EA is instructing KWETB on areas of improvement i.e., assessment practice both at centre level and/or by specific Learning Practitioners. This section will have significant impact on QA processes as it will form the basis for reporting to Quality Subgroups and Quality Council.

9	The EA should ensure that language, grammar and spelling are correct on the EA report.
10	The EA should complete the EA report and email to the designated person with responsibility for QA authentication / TSO and provide the relevant centre/school with a signed copy of the EA report.
11	The EA should **never** remove assessment material when carrying out onsite or online External Authentication.
12	If the EA should contact the designated person with responsibility for QA authentication / TSO if they require more than the allocated time for authentication due to the emergence of a significant issue. The QA person responsible for authentication/TSO should refer to the AEO responsible for Quality Assurance for confirmation.
13	The designated person with responsibility for QA authentication / TSO should advise EAs that they may be invited to attend Results Approval meetings if necessary.

Payment of External Authenticators
Renumeration (and travel and subsistence) will be paid in accordance with the Department of Education's recommended rates.

For FET Provision, all EAs are registered as employees on KWETB payroll system for payment purposes. The QA person responsible for authentication should ensure that all new EA's complete a Commencement Form (Personal details and Paypath details).

The designated person with responsibility for QA authentication should ensure that EA's complete part-time payment claim form, travel and subsistence claim forms correctly. The EA should email all payment documentation and claims to the designated person with responsibility for QA authentication.

The designated person with responsibility for QA authentication should sign off and forward to KWETB's payroll department for processing.
Payments will be made via the next pay-run.

For FET Provision-Second Providers, the EA should submit an invoice for work carried out against a previously raised PO number.

Link to other Policies/Procedures

1.3.7	Security of Assessment Materials
1.3.10	Internal Verification
1.3.11	Results Approval
2.2.4	Academic Integrity and Assessment
2.2.5	Reasonable Accommodation
2.2.6	Compassionate Consideration

Resources

Resources	- EA KWETB Instructions for External Authenticators - EA QAA5 KWETB External Authentication Report Template v2EA