

2.4 INTERNAL VERIFICATION SYSTEMS

Introduction

A fully operational internal verification system is paramount in any IMI Awards approved centre. It is often said that if the internal verification system is good then the centre is good.

Throughout this manual the term 'internal verification' is used as this is commonly understood throughout the centre network. Elsewhere you may see references to 'internal moderation' or 'internal quality assurance', but to all intents and purposes, the process is the same whichever terminology is used.

The role of the internal verifier is defined in section 2.2 of this manual. This section aims to outline the main requirements of a good internal verification system, highlight good practice and to provide some documentation that can be used within the centre.

Note: This section is not meant to be an instruction manual for internal verifiers. Before they are appointed to the role, they must be competent in verification and quality assurance activities.

Centres must review the effectiveness of their internal verification system on a regular basis. It must be developed in line with the requirements of new qualifications, individual circumstances and their own internal and customer needs.

The Internal Verification (IV) Strategy

The cornerstone of a good internal verification system is the IV strategy. This strategy defines the activities that must take place within the centre to monitor the quality of qualifications offered.

The IV strategy must ensure that internal verification focuses on the safety, fairness, validity and reliability of assessment decisions. It should also include monitoring across the range of assessment methods and locations/ environments used by each assessor.

There are many forms that an IV strategy can take and they will vary according to the needs of the centre and the qualifications being offered. However, it essential that the strategy includes plans for the following key areas:

- risk assessment of assessors
- sampling assessments
- monitoring assessment practices
- standardising assessment judgements.

Risk Assessment of Assessors

When implementing an IV strategy, it is important to know the 'risks' associated with each assessor in relation to the qualifications they are approved to assess.

This will influence the amount of time the IV should spend monitoring and supporting the assessor (e.g. a 'low' risk assessor will require less attention than a 'high' risk assessor).

Note: Risk ratings are dependant on the qualifications being assessed. An assessor could be a low risk for the majority of qualifications but a high risk with regard to a qualification he/she has just started assessing.

Each internal verifier should complete a risk assessment for each assessor he/she is responsible for, using 'risk categories' based upon:

- assessor's experience
- assessor's qualifications
- the number of candidates the assessor is responsible for (workload)
- the location/area covered by the assessor.

The outcome of each risk assessment should be agreed with the assessor and centre co-ordinator.

Risk assessments of assessors can be recorded in many different ways. To help centres, IMI Awards has developed a template for internal verifiers to use. This is the 'Risk Assessment of Assessors' (Form 24).

Note: Your external verifier will be happy to explain the purpose of this template and demonstrate how it should be completed.

Sampling Assessments

As with most centre activities, success in this area is based upon having a sound strategy and careful planning.

When developing the IV strategy for sampling, the points to consider are:

- the spread of centre activities and the different qualifications offered
- the size of sample needed to ensure the reliability of the process
- the number, experience, location and workload of the assessors
- the different types of candidate (e.g. full time or part time)
- the different stages candidates have reached in the assessment programme
- any specialist assessment requirements
- any pre-existing problems that have been identified.

To help monitor the IV strategy, it is recommended that each internal verifier maintains an overall sampling plan. The plan should be put in place before the candidates' start their learning and assessments. It should take all aspects of the candidates programme into account, including the scheme of work, spread of learning activities etc.

Although the external verifier will approve the centre's own sampling plan and recording system (provided it meets IMI Awards' requirements), IMI Awards has developed a template for centres to use. This is the 'Internal Verification Sampling Plan' (Form 25).

This template enables the internal verifier to plan when sampling is to be carried out with each assessor whose assessment decisions he/she is responsible for. Space is provided to plan the sampling of different parts of the qualification (e.g. units) and the different assessment methods used over a period of time. Once each sample has been completed, this can be confirmed by entering the actual date the sampling took place.

Note: Your external verifier will be happy to explain the purpose of this template and demonstrate how it should be completed.

When compiling and following the IV sampling plan, the internal verifier must ensure that:

- all assessors are sampled at least twice within a twelve month period and more often where the assessor is inexperienced or problems had been identified during previous verification/moderation
- all the methods of assessment normally carried out by the assessor are sampled over a twelve month period or the duration of the qualification
- all the qualifications and different components of the qualification (e.g. units) that the candidates are working towards are sampled over a twelve month period or the duration of the qualification
- each candidate's work is sampled at least once as they work towards completing their qualification.

Note: It is essential that the size and the nature of the sample is determined by the factors listed above and not by any pre-determined formula such as 10% or a square route (a common misconception).

The internal verifier must be satisfied that the sample presents a sufficiently accurate picture of the quality of assessment in the centre. He/she must be confident that those assessments not sampled also meet the requirements of the qualification.

Monitoring Assessment Practice

Monitoring of assessment practice should be carried out throughout the assessment programme and not left until the end when the candidate is deemed to have completed his/her qualification.

The internal verifier should monitor each assessor in line with the plan developed using the criteria specified above. He/she should observe and sample all assessor activities including how they:

- plan and conduct assessments
- make judgement on candidates' performance
- interact with candidates (including questioning)
- give feedback to candidates
- record assessment decisions
- ensure the quality of the assessment.

As part of the sampling process, the internal verifier should also be satisfied that the assessor:

- meets the national standards for assessment and IMI Awards' requirements for each qualification consistently
- maintains his/her occupational competence for the qualifications being assessed.

Note: Assessors assessing VCQs and/or N/SVQs must hold the appropriate assessor qualification. The assessment strategies for some qualifications (e.g. VCQs) also specify the CPD requirements for assessors which must be maintained.

It is essential that the assessor is given constructive and positive feedback following his/her monitoring. This should be a private discussion, held away from candidates and other assessors.

Any weaknesses in the assessment process or the assessors capability should be identified and addressed with any assessor training and development needs discussed and agreed – assessor support is a crucial activity.

Note: The function of the internal verifier is not to reassess the candidates' work but to ensure that the assessor has assessed the candidate to the standard required.

The internal verifier is responsible for keeping records of monitoring assessment practices. Such records can be in any format provided that they have been approved by the external verifier as meeting IMI Awards' requirements.

To help centres, IMI Awards has produced three templates for internal verifiers to record their sampling of assessment decisions and their observations of assessors. These templates comprise:

- 'Sampling Report on Assessment Decisions' (Form 26)
- 'Report on Assessor Observation' (Form 27)

Both these activities have been combined onto a single template (Form 28).

Note: Using these templates is self explanatory, but your EV will be happy to explain their purpose and help with their completion.

Standardising Assessment Judgements

Standardisation is a key function of the internal verifier. He/she must ensure that:

- all candidates are assessed fairly
- each assessor makes valid decisions consistently
- all assessors will make the same decision on the same assessment.

It is essential that standardisation takes place on a regular basis. Obviously the internal verifier's observation of each assessor in action assessing the same qualification will help him/her establish that there is a consistency of approach across the assessors.

Other means of standardisation include 'cross-assessment' where assessors reassess each other's decisions, or where a copy of a candidate's work (e.g. evidence) is given to each assessor to decide whether or not the standard has been met.

Whenever the internal verifier carries out standardisation exercises, the outcomes must be recorded and any shortfalls (e.g. inconsistencies between assessors) must be addressed.

The value of team meetings cannot be over emphasised. They are essential for good communication – the key to success in any centre. A major part of the internal verifier's role is to disseminate information and these meetings are an ideal platform for discussion. Items for the agenda could include:

- assessment planning
- the outcome of recent internal verification/moderation (e.g. action plans)
- the effectiveness of qualification delivery in the centre
- ways to improve assessment practice, consistency, quality assurance etc.
- interpreting qualification requirements
- the external verifier's report (action plan)
- updates on IMI Awards' procedures
- continuing professional development (CPD) for the team
- specific issues raised by assessors.

Records of meetings should be kept. These generally take the form of minutes and should include clearly defined action points with target dates and the person(s) responsible for carrying them out clearly identified. It is also important to ensure that any decisions which affect the assessment or internal verification process are noted accurately.

Standardising Internal Verification

Where a centre utilises two or more internal verifiers, it is essential that standardisation amongst the IV team takes place. Such standardisation will be the responsibility of the centre co-ordinator or 'lead IV' and should be based on the principles outlined above for assessor standardisation.

Internal Verification Records

Internal verifiers must keep accurate records of all their internal verification activities. They are also responsible for ensuring the validity of a range of assessment and quality assurance records.

Throughout this section references have been made to the various types of internal verification records needed (e.g. sampling plans, assessor monitoring reports, meeting notes etc.). Assessment records are described in section 2.5.

Note: Internal verifiers must ensure that they complete the appropriate candidate records (e.g. candidate assessment summary) if the candidate's work forms part of their sample.

When reviewing assessment documents or completing internal verification records the following information is critical:

- qualification number and title
- candidate name and IMI Awards candidate registration number
- assessor and internal verifier names and PINs
- dates of activities recorded
- signatures as appropriate.

This information helps create an audit trail for both centre and IMI Awards' use. If any of these details are omitted claims for candidate certificates, for example, may be delayed or rejected.

Assessment and internal verification records should be kept by the centre for a minimum period of five years. They must be:

- stored securely so that only those who have a right to see the information may do so
- easily accessible to the people who need to use them and keep them up to date
- made available to the external verifier during monitoring visits and upon request to other members of the IMI Awards quality assurance team.

Note: Internal verifiers must ensure that sufficient records of assessment, internal verification and candidate achievement are retained at the centre and not kept with the candidate's work (e.g. in their portfolio) only to disappear when the candidate completes and leaves.

Failure to comply with all aspects of internal verification could result in:

- candidate certificate claims being delayed or rejected
- sanctions being place on the centre
- internal verifiers' approval being withdrawn.

Internal Verification of Accreditations and Quality Assured Awards

Throughout this section, internal verification has been described in terms of qualifications offered. However, internal verification applies equally to the accreditation schemes offered by IMI Awards (e.g. ATA and irtec) and Quality Assured Awards (QAA).

The internal verification systems and processes described throughout this section of the Operating Manual must be applied to all accreditations and Quality Assured Awards offered at the centre.

Note: The templates provided by IMI Awards for internal verifiers to use (specified above) can easily be customised to suit the different accreditations and QAA.

Internal Verifier Qualifications

It is a mandatory requirement for internal verifiers to hold LLUK qualifications or equivalent (e.g. V2 or D34) to internally verify certain types of qualification such as VCQs and N/SVQs.

Traditionally, internal verifiers could only obtain qualifications (V2 & D34) if they internally verified N/SVQs. Now, the following LLUK qualifications can be achieved using evidence of internally verifying other types of qualification such as VRQs:

- Level 4 Award in understanding the principles and practices of internally assuring the quality of assessment
- Level 4 Award in the internal quality assurance of assessment processes and practice
- Level 4 Certificate in leading the internal quality assurance of assessment processes and practice.

IMI Awards also runs Assessor and Verifier Update Workshops leading to a Quality Assured Award (QAA) certificate for successful candidates. Full details appear on the IMI Awards website (www.imiawards.org.uk)