



openawards

Open Awards Standardisation Policy and Procedure

Standardisation Policy and Procedure

Definition

‘Standardisation is a process to ensure that the assessment criteria for a qualification, unit or component are applied consistently by assessors, moderators and verifiers’¹

Regulatory bodies require that ‘the awarding body must have procedures in place to ensure its own staff and/or associates are competent in and/or have access to appropriate training and guidance on:

.....the systems used to ensure consistency of standards across options, centres and time.’

¹ The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2004)

Introduction

Confirmation of the consistent application of assessment to ensure learner achievement is a key priority for all awarding organisations and approved centres. Development of a robust standardisation process, which can be applied both within centres and nationally, will provide the evidence of consistent practice. The process will ensure that standards are comparable both across centres and over time.

Policy

Open Awards will through its Centre Recognition Process, and ongoing Centre Recognition Compliance Monitoring of all its centres ensure that all its units and qualifications are subject to a robust centre standardisation and that all recognised centres contribute to the national standardisation of its qualifications.

Open Awards will ensure standards are consistent across all centres by:

- ensuring that standardisation occurs **within centres** as part of a rigorous internal quality assurance process through the centre recognition process, and ongoing Centre Recognition Compliance monitoring.
- planning and delivering a **comprehensive annual programme of national standardisation events** that enable Internal and External Quality Assurers to compare outcomes of assessment.

The standardisation events will allow Open Awards to:

- Provide an opportunity to ensure the consistency of the award of credit to learners across different verifiers / assessors / different types of providing organizations and agree the standards to be achieved.
- Compare the different **assessment strategies** used across a unit(s) and **to ensure that:**
 - the assessment strategy including any benchmarked tasks allow for the generation of evidence to be produced which is:
 - Sufficient: there is enough evidence to demonstrate achievement against unit
 - Appropriate: for the level and type and complexity of the learning
 - Authentic: the evidence is attributable to the learner
 - the assessment strategy and the assignment task(s) does not prevent any unintended barriers to achievement for a particular learner and pay due respect to any issues of equality and diversity.
- Ensure that the assessment tasks are written in language that is appropriate to the level and is free from bias.
- Ensure **consistency in the assessment judgements** that are being made based on the available evidence.
- Ensure the **adequacy of the feedback provided to learners.**
- Ensure the adequacy **of the feedback provided to assessors** and the **robustness of the internal quality assurance** of the assessment judgements.
- Review the **appropriateness and currency of the units** and their fitness for purpose in the current context and make any necessary recommendations/reviews.
- Identify and share best practice.

The outcomes of the standardisation process will be used to:

- Improve the assessment practice of tutor assessors within provider organisations and bring about consistency of assessment decisions to safeguard the integrity of the award of credit and qualifications. Open Awards will publish the outcomes of standardisation events through reports, exemplars and identification of best practice.
- Improve consistency in the judgements of verifiers. Open Awards will publish the outcomes of standardisation events through reports, exemplars and identification of best practice.
- Monitor and evaluate equality and diversity issues in the design of units, qualifications, and assessment strategies and use these to inform unit and qualification review.
- At a National level, influence and continuously improve unit and qualification design and any prescribed assessment tasks within the qualification.

Levels of standardisation

Centre standardisation

In any provider organisation where there is more than one tutor / assessor delivering the same course or similar courses and making assessment decisions and recommendations for the award of credit to learners it is essential that the internal verification process includes an opportunity for the standardisation of their practice. The internal verifier for the course(s) has the responsibility for arranging and facilitating standardisation events. Open Awards will provide guidance and report forms to support planning, implementation and reporting the outcomes of these events. Open Awards will provide any necessary training and the Open

Awards Lead Quality Reviewers will offer support to their centres if required.

National Standardisation

Open Awards will organise national standardisation events. Normally these events will be the responsibility of a Lead Quality Reviewer. All sectors/qualifications will be covered on a three year cycle. Providers will be informed of the dates for standardisation for the year at the beginning of each academic year. Providers will be asked to participate in these events in one of two ways:

- to contribute sample materials to the event, and
- to participate in the event by attending and contributing samples.

It will be the responsibility of a centre's Lead Quality Reviewers to request and collect samples. This will normally happen during a quality review or verification visit but Lead Quality Reviewers may request samples by telephone or email.

It is particularly important that Approved Internal Verifiers (AIVs) participate in standardisation events. Continuation of Approved Internal Verifier status will be dependent on the Approved Verifier attending at least one standardisation event every academic year.

Schedule of Open Awards National Events and criteria for the selection of units/qualifications to be standardised

The Standardisation calendar will be produced annually. The programme will be developed to respond to:

- the need to ensure the comparability of standards of common units across a range of qualifications
- the requirements of Open Awards qualifications
- the volume of uptake of particular sectors/levels
- units where issues have been raised by IQAs and EQAs, Assessors, Regulators, Sector Skills Councils, (SSCs) etc., including those units where queries have been raised about the unit content
- units at different levels
- the need to standardise across centres, nationally and between Lead Quality Reviewers and External Quality Assurers
- the need to ensure standardisation of quality across sectors e.g. FE/Schools/Independent Training Providers
- Open Awards will ensure that all units and qualifications for its suite of qualifications are standardised within the three year cycle

Sample Retention and Sampling Strategy

The Open Awards Lead Quality Reviewers will be responsible for collecting samples from centres normally during their quality review/verification visits.

Occasionally they may request samples by email or by telephone. Samples will be taken from current learner evidence, logged and stored at Open Awards electronically. This is to allow Open Awards to build up a sample in order to compare standards over time.

Samples will be retained by Open Awards for the lifetime of the qualification to ensure samples are available to allow a comparison of standards over time.

Centres will be required to retain samples of learners work for a three year period.

Centres will also be required to retain the following **records** for a three year period from the end of the year to which they relate:

- Names of learners, dates of birth and contact address
- Title and accreditation number of each qualification and unit studied
- Name(s) of Assessor(s)
- Assessment records, including assessment decisions and reasons for the decision
- Names of Internal Quality Assurer(s)
- Full records of the internal quality assurance process i.e.:
 - The internal verification plan;
 - Minutes of internal verification meetings;
 - The sample taken by the internal verifier, normally in the form of a matrix;
 - Any resulting action points and details of how and when these have been or will be addressed.

Centres will be required to release samples of learners work upon the request of Open Awards Lead Quality Reviewers at verification or other quality monitoring visits.

In many cases the sample will be acceptable in the form of photocopies of the original or may be in electronic format. It will be acceptable to anonymise the sample.

Open Awards will then make electronic copies of the evidence for retention.

For effective standardisation events to be conducted it is important that the sample provided should be as complete as possible to ensure that informed judgements can be made about all of the evidence to support the purpose of the standardisation process as specified above.

Centres, Lead Quality Reviewers and External Quality Assurers will be provided with the following guidance for preparing their samples:

The sample should support the evidence of achievement for a whole unit of assessment and should include:

- A copy of the unit descriptor including unit code.
- Whole assessment strategy for the unit being standardised including tasks/assignment briefs/benchmarks. These should be mapped to the assessment criteria for the unit.
- All of the evidence generated by a learner(s) against all of the assessment criteria for the unit(s).
- Clear record of the assessment decision including feedback to the learner in relation to the achievement / non achievement of the assessment criteria.
- Internal quality assurance records including feedback to the Assessor and the Internal Quality Assurer's judgments on the security of the award of credit.
- Evidence where possible of subsequent monitoring of any actions identified by the internal quality assurance process.
- Copy of completed RA1 if a Reasonable Adjustment has been made at the discretion of the centre for any learner.
- Copies of RA2 or SC1 if the centre has requested reasonable adjustments at Open Awards' discretion, of Open Awards, or requested any special consideration for a learner.

Conduct of a Standardisation Event

Standardisation events will be conducted to a standard format following a standard agenda. The outcomes of all events will be reported using standard report formats.

Other documents relevant to the process will include:

- Open Awards Access to Fair Assessment Policy
- Level Descriptors
- Qualification Guide
- Access to HE Unit
- Access to HE Grading Scheme Handbook

Training will be provided in the conduct and reporting of standardisation events for all Facilitators, Lead Quality Reviewers or other officers. Training will also be provided for IQAs within centres with responsibility for organising internal standardisation events. These will form a part of the Open Awards' CPD offer for its centres.

Dissemination of information

The standard reports recording the outcomes of the meeting will be disseminated to all attendees at the events for confirmation. This will be distributed at the end of each academic year.

Open Awards will then collate all of the outcomes from the meeting. This will include:

- An internal report to inform unit and qualification review
- An external report for all centres
- Exemplars
- Identification of best practice

The Open Awards Board will monitor the effectiveness and outcomes of standardisation activity as part of the self-evaluation process.

Standardisation of shared units/similar qualifications across other Awarding Organisations

Open Awards is committed to monitoring assessment and achievement standards of units common across level, sector and subject areas.