



INTERNAL ASSESSMENT AND QUALITY ASSURANCE STRATEGY



Scope

At Blackburn Gould and Associate, we have a responsibility to ensure that the assessment process is robust and fair for all learners. This is why we ensure that assessment arrangements are appropriate and only provided to those learners who have an identified difficulty. This could be a physical difficulty (including medical or sensory difficulty), a behavioural or mental health difficulty, or a learning difficulty. This guidance helps us to ensure that we have a robust verification process in place for providing assessment arrangements for disabled learners or those with additional support needs.

Quality assurance is fundamental to all qualifications offered by Blackburn Gould and Associates Ltd. With a focus of delivering quality training to frontline staff who deliver services direct to service users, it is key that the learning experience inspires confidence in those who attend training with BGA Ltd. Quality assurance is embedded in all our processes, products, and services. It guarantees the integrity and value of our qualifications and/or assessments throughout their lifecycle. We ensure that quality is embedded in the design and delivery of our qualifications and programmes, and work with our learners and employers to ensure this.

There are tangible benefits for all from this approach including:

- improved learner experience
- raised learner achievement rates
- increased learner retention rates
- more cost-effective programmes
- regulatory requirements are met
- support for other planning and monitoring processes such as self-assessment

BLACKBURN GOULD AND ASSOCIATES LTD'S PURPOSE AND APPROACH

This Internal Quality Assurance Strategy ensures that quality assurance measures are built into all stages of the 'learner journey'.

This includes:

- The induction process
- Initial assessment
- Learning plans
- Teaching and delivery (to include facilitation of group learning)
- Assessment processes
- Facilitating learning
- Reviews of progress
- Learner achievement
- Progression planning

Our clearly defined quality assurance strategy will help ensure quality in all aspects of delivery and assessment, centre co-ordination, planning, internal quality assurance and record keeping. This internal Quality Assurance strategy will be reviewed and updated as necessary.

Internal Quality Assurers will give documented feedback to Trainer Assessors on assessments, portfolio sampling and observation of assessments.

In the event of internal challenges and disagreements with an IQA decision, the Trainer Assessor will give feedback to the IQA, what it is they disagree with. The IQA will then relay the feedback to the Lead IQAs, who will then quality assure the learners work and the final decision will be made. Any further disputes will be escalated through appeals procedure.



The Executive Director is responsible for leading on the Quality assurance of assessment processes and practice and will ensure that all Trainer Assessors and IQA'S (Internal Quality Assurers) are kept up to date with any changes to the National Occupational Standards (accordance with the Awarding Body timescales) as well as the Standards & Assessment plan through the Institute for Apprenticeships.

Regular Internal Standardisation Meetings will be held to share good practice throughout the company and discuss any changes to the procedures required, to improve the standard of programme delivery, as detailed in the Quality Assurance policy.

All external verification reports will be shared with the team and any actions and recommendations will be included in a delivery implementation plan. The reports will also be shared at Standardisation Meetings and good practice will be acknowledged and improvement areas will be discussed.

THE ROLE OF THE IQA

The Internal Quality Assurer (IQA) is a key driver of Quality Assurance in Delivery of Training and Qualifications. The role, in terms of managing assessment, is key in ensuring the validity and reliability of qualifications. Therefore, internal quality assurance is a key factor in managing 'risk' within Blackburn Gould and Associates, ensuring that when certificates are claimed for learners; the requirements of the national standards have been reliably met. Blackburn Gould and Associates has a sampling strategy and plan which must be implemented by all those undertaking the internal quality assurance role.

The internal quality assurance system contains documented evidence of:

- A set of written internal quality assurance procedures
- Sample planning based on the principles of 'CAMERA'
- Effective communication
- Interim sampling (see IQA procedure doc)
- Summative sampling
- Monitoring of facilitator practice (including observation)
- Internal standardisation activities (see IQA doc)

There are four main aspects to the Internal Quality Assurer (IQA) role:

- Plan, operate and evaluate internal assessment and quality assurance systems
- Support and develop tutors and/or facilitators
- Monitor and improve the quality of assessment practice
- Apply policies, procedures and legislation to meet external/regulatory requirements

The IQA process and procedure will be audited through the following internal and external activities:

- Internal
 - Self-Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan
- External
 - Awarding Body qualification standards
 - External verification by the Awarding Bodies
 - Inspection by Ofsted

The centre's assessment strategy will be:



- Trainer Assessors must hold a recognised assessor qualification or achieve this within 6 months of them commencing their role.
- Trainer Assessors must have the occupational expertise as specified in the assessment strategy of the qualification before commencing their role and maintain the currency of this expertise for the duration of their role through appropriate CPD activities.
- Assessment decisions of unqualified Trainer Assessors are checked, authenticated and countersigned by a qualified Trainer Assessor or IQA who is appropriately qualified and occupationally competent.
- Trainers Assessors knowledge, skills and experience are recorded on a Team Matrix and shared with internal and external bodies as required.

The requirements specific to our current qualifications and standards:

- All assessments are carried out in line with the Code of Practice (as per Awarding Body requirements), as well as the Standards & Assessment plan through the Institute for Apprenticeships.
- All Trainer Assessors must hold TAQA or Level 3 Award in Assessing Vocational Achievement. In addition, all Trainer Assessors must be occupationally competent in the field which they assess. This is established by holding a current CV and copies of relevant certificates. Upon commencing work with the company, the Quality Team will view all original certificates.
- All qualified Trainer Assessors joining the company will be observed within the first 3 months and then subsequently according to their development plan.
- There will be 100% sampling of all new Trainer Assessors' assessment decisions until they are deemed competent by the IQA.
- All Trainer Assessors will have occupational expertise and competence and CPD will be maintained and monitored through caseload reviews and 1:1s.

Assessment Strategy

- Trainer Assessors must clearly communicate the purpose, requirement and process of assessing occupational competence against the Frameworks and Standards to the learner
- Trainer Assessors must carry out Teaching and Learning as part of the Learner's Individual Plan.
- Teaching, Learning and Assessments should be planned in advance. However there may be an occasion where an opportunity for assessment arises which will progress the Learner in their learning and evidence can be assessed.
- Assessment methods could include Observations, Professional Discussion, Witness Testimonies, Employer Statements, Progress reviews, annotated workplace evidence, assignments and workbooks, E-Learning, recordings with recording times, reflective accounts, learner statements, recognised prior learning
- Evidence must be valid, current, reliable and sufficient (VACRS) and fair.
- Trainer Assessors must identify opportunities for holistic assessment.
- Provide feedback to Learners that affirms Learner's achievement and identifies any further implications for learning, assessment and progression,
- Follow learning and assessment decisions in line with policies and procedures including GDPR and confidentiality.
- Follow relevant policies, procedures and legislation for the assessment of occupational competence, including those for health, safety and welfare, Equality Law and Safeguarding.



INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURER

- Internal Quality Assurer must hold the D34, V1 qualification or the Level 4 Award in the Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice or achieve the Level 4 Award in the Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice, within 12 months of them commencing their role.
- IQA must have the occupational expertise as specified in the relevant assessment strategy before commencing their role and maintain the currency of this expertise for the duration of their role through appropriate CPD activities.
- IQA decisions of unqualified IQAs are checked, authenticated and countersigned by an IQA who is appropriately qualified and competent.
- All Lead IQAs, will hold the Level 4 Certificate in Leading the Quality Assurance of Assessment Process and Practice and maintain the currency of this expertise for the duration of their role through appropriate CPD activities.

The requirements specific to our current qualifications are

- IQA's who are working towards the Level 4 Award in Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice will have 100% of their decisions sampled to ensure consistency of approach and that Awarding Body requirements are being satisfied.
- All internal Quality assurance staff will have occupational expertise and competence and CPD will be maintained and monitored through 1:1s.
- Any Trainer Assessor wishing to undertake internal verification duties must be endorsed by the Director of Curriculum. The Trainer Assessor must be experienced and have assessed for the centre for at least one year, prior to embarking on the Level 4 Award in Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and assessment decisions must have been taken off 100% sample for at least 12 months to ensure that relevant expertise is founded.
- CV's and copies of all relevant certificates are held in the Quality shared folder.
- Trainer Assessors and Internal Quality Assurers will receive an induction into their role, which will include:
 - quality assurance processes,
 - compliance and funding,
 - management of caseload,
 - Functional Skills,
 - Trainer processes,
 - Delivery mechanisms.
 - And all other relevant policies.

Any training that has been identified because of this process will be organised and recorded on a development plan and reviewed accordingly.

The Executive Director will organise a broad range of shadowing activities to maximise opportunities to show the breadth of the role. They will also allocate an appropriate buddy to support the Trainer Assessor/IQA.

Standardisation activities are carried out on a quarterly basis as part of the IQA process. Minutes of these meetings are stored electronically.



Appropriate training and development opportunities are provided for Trainer Assessors and IQA's enabling them to meet their responsibilities, gain a common understanding of relevant standards and maintain appropriate CPD records.

Awarding Bodies will be informed of all changes affecting the Centre's ongoing ability to meet the centre approval criteria i.e. staff changes, staff qualification achievements, etc.

All IQA activities - portfolio sampling and Trainer Assessor observations, are planned and carried out to ensure that assessment decisions and practices are regularly sampled, and findings are acted upon to ensure consistency and fairness.

Sampling plans cover:

- The assessment decisions of all Trainer Assessors
- All units
- All assessment methods
- Learners at different stages of their qualifications
- All assessment records
- Formative / summative verification

The Centre will maintain documentation in a consistent method so that information for external verification and internal audits can be easily located.

Planning:

The IQA is responsible for creating sampling plans for the qualification, which should outline what will be monitored and how the sample will be selected. It is important that the plan must be a representative sample based on sound principles and take into consideration the risk factors in the centre or in the qualification team. Typical risk factors that would be taken into consideration when initially planning the sample would be areas such as:

- the number of learners in the cohort or qualification
- numbers of tutors and facilitators
- experience and confidence of tutors and facilitators
- changes to the qualifications
- known problem areas/units/learning outcomes

Blackburn Gould and Associates takes a risk management approach, and the sample is selected using the principles of 'CAMERA', this sample should be representative of the whole cohort. This gives an accurate picture of the delivery and assessment of the qualifications. Our risk assessment approach provides a rationale that allows the IQA to increase sampling activity based on the risk of assessment practice that is identified. This means that the sample plan must consider each of the following:

- Candidates/Learners
- Assessors
- Methods of assessment
- Evidence
- Records
- Assessment sites



The Lead IQA will monitor all aspects of IQA practice consistently, and over time, to ensure compliance with quality assurance and Ofsted requirements.

The Internal Quality Assurer will undertake internal verifier activity involving each facilitator and some of their learners monthly. These activities will include:

- Sampling the units as identified on the sampling plan to quality assure assessment practices in line with TAQA requirements
- Observing facilitator practice at least once per year, with the option to increase observations based on a rag rating risk assessment process
- Interviewing learners about their experience of assessment practice
- Monitor the continued professional development of all facilitators to ensure that facilitator decisions remain current and in line with legislative and regulatory requirements

Each internal verification sampling plan applies to all learners registered within an identified 3-month period. This plan remains active until the learner completes the apprenticeship or leaves learning. The focus of the Internal Quality Assurance sampling will be:

- Sampling 1 unit from each group
- Initial quality check at 6 weeks into programme, the ILP is correct with expected start dates and completion dates are agreed
- Interim sample formative samples at 12 weeks and every 12 weeks thereafter - check planning is taking place and is thorough and check reviews are taking place and the next one is scheduled
- Summative sample on completion of programme
- Agree readiness for EPA
- Sampling to include all assessment methods in line with CAMERA requirements
- Direct Observation
- Assignment Tasks
- Reflection
- Written/Oral Questions
- Professional discussion
- Expert Witness/Witness testimony



Appendix 1

RAG Rated Sampling

Different rates for sampling will be adopted dependent on the experience of the Facilitator delivering the qualification or unit they have been assigned to as follows:

Category	Required Activities
High Risk: - Newly qualified Facilitators or Facilitators new to the centre or those Facilitators who are continually falling short of the standard required	100% sampling rate
	Facilitator observation – 3 per year min
Medium Risk: - Facilitators who are in need of development but often meet the standard required	50% sampling rate
	Facilitator observation – 2 per year min
Low Risk: - Facilitators who are experienced with the qualification or unit they have been assigned to and continually meet the standard required	25% sampling rate
	Facilitator observation – 1 per year min

The rates above may be subject to change for instance:

Where a qualification is new to the centre the first 2 cohorts will be sampled at a 100% rate unless otherwise authorised by the Awarding Organisation

Where the sampling strategy of the Awarding Organisation overrides that of the centre due to the risk rating or actions resulting from monitoring activities

Where a contractual requirement requires additional sampling to take place (N.B. this will not override the requirements of the previous two instances where this sampling rate would require a lesser sampling rate to be adopted)



Appendix 2

Delivery Observation policy

Scope

This policy sets out the process for observing all training delivered by Blackburn Gould and Associate team members and associated partners. This document is complimentary to the Quality Framework. The observation process and management of the schedule will be the responsibility of the Lead IQA.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a formal framework for observations. Successful implementation of this policy ensures that:

- Quality of provision is monitored, and a consistent standard of delivery is maintained across the business.
- Outstanding practice is identified and shared.
- Weak practice is identified and addressed through the Quality Improvement Plan to ensure continuous improvement.

Frequency of Observations

Each staff member will be observed a minimum of thrice in a 12-month period. New members of staff will be observed within 3 months of their starting date. On completion of the observation, results including the date, grade and next planned observation must be entered on the Observation Schedule. The schedule will be monitored monthly by the Lead IQA to ensure that the observations are completed in a timely manner. Observations will be planned within an appropriate timeframe and indicated by a previous grade using the following rationale:

- Grade 1 or 2 (RAG rated low risk) awarded will require an observation every 12 months
- Grade 3 (RAG rated medium risk) awarded will require an observation every 6 months.
- Grade 4 (RAG rated high risk) will require the implementation of a staff performance management plan.

Preparation for Observation

The observer must give 48 hours' notice to the staff member and the appointment must be confirmed in an email. This is also the opportunity to request any documentation that must be presented on the day of the observation. Documentation may include, but is not limited to:

- Customer Initial Assessment
- Individual Learning Plans
- Action Plans
- Session Plans/ Scheme of Work
- Delivery materials
- Online access to Customer portfolio



If a staff member is absent on the scheduled day of observation a further 48 hours' notice is not required. An observation will be scheduled at the first available opportunity on their return to work.

The staff member must inform the learner/s that the session will be observed and inform of any adjustments that will be made to accommodate the observation. The observer may request some time to talk to the learner/s about their experience, time must be allowed for this to minimise disruption to the session.

Conducting the Observation

- The observer must discretely position themselves during the session and must not interrupt unless there is a specific safety or contractual concern. Where the lesson is delivered online the observer shall observe the same protocols online as when physically present. The observation will last 45 minutes to 1 hour. If at this stage the observer feels that they have not seen sufficient evidence, they may continue to observe up to a period of 90 minutes. During the observation detailed notes will be entered onto the observation document.
- The staff member must introduce the observer to the learner/s before starting the session.
- The staff member must complete a Lesson Reflection Form after the lesson, which will form part of the feedback following observation.
- The observer may want to clarify some areas with the staff member. If time allows, this will happen during or straight after the observation, otherwise the observer will arrange an appropriate time to have a discussion.

Feedback following the Observation

- The observer must provide verbal feedback at the earliest opportunity following the observation. If it is not possible to do so immediately, verbal feedback must be given within 48 hours.
- A written observation report must be provided within 5 working days. At this stage a formal grade must be awarded to support the evidence recorded on the report.
- Both the observer and the staff member will agree targets for ongoing development and sign and date the observation report. For tutors this may be trying out different materials or making adaptations to teaching methods. The staff member may decide to 'shadow' another tutor in their curriculum area or enrol for a teaching qualification. The observer will discuss the possibilities and agree the actions. Targets will be supported through ongoing staff reviews and observations.
- Based on the grade awarded, the appropriate timeframe for the next observation will be agreed with the staff member.
- If a staff member is awarded a grade 4, they will be withdrawn from delivering training whilst a Performance Improvement plan is discussed and new actions set out. The staff member would then prepare for a graded observation by continuing with agreed improvement activities. A graded observation will take place within 4 weeks of the Performance Improvement Plan being agreed.
- All documentation from observations will be sent to the Lead IQA and the observation schedule updated.



Appeals

- Staff members who wish to appeal an observation must do so initially with the observer. It is envisaged that immediate discussion will help to justify the review and therefore reach a resolution.
- Where a staff member is still not satisfied, a written appeal must be submitted to the Lead IQA. The written appeal must outline the rationale for appealing and include a copy of the review documentation and any recording of meeting if it was a virtual meeting. The correspondence must also include a copy of the feedback initially received from the reviewer.
- The reviewer will be moderated by the Lead IQA, and a response will be given in writing, within 1 month of the appeal submission.
- If the member of staff is still not satisfied, a further review will be conducted by an Executive Director of following the same process.

Moderation

- Following completion of observations, reports and related documentation will be sent to the Quality Assurance Officer. A sample of 10% of monthly observations will be moderated and feedback will be provided. Feedback will comment on the quality of documentation, evidence provided, and the overall grade given.

Feedback

- General feedback from staff members about their experience of the observation can help to improve and develop the process, as well as highlighting areas for further development of observers. A Feedback Form will be sent to all staff members who are observed, completion of the document is optional.