

LMETB Guidelines and Procedures for Covid-19 Contingency Planning of Internal Verification & External Authentication

Contents

Introduction	3
Establishing the population framework for authentication for Internal verification	4
Internal Verification Role Scenarios	5
Sampling Methodology: The percentage of modules/programmes to be selected for internal verification	6
Internal Verification Process	7
External Authentication Sample Population Framework	8
Sampling Strategy	8
Presentation of Assessment Evidence	10
Checks by Assessors prior to forwarding evidence to FET Centre Co-ordinators/Principals	11
Appendix I External Authentication Report	13
Appendix II Covid-19 Internal Verification Checklist	16

Introduction

Internal verification and external authentication comprise the two required elements of the LMETB quality assured authentication process. The role of the Internal Verifier is to systematically check that LMETB's assessment procedures have been applied consistently across assessment activities and to verify the arithmetic/administrative accuracy of assessment results.

The external authentication process involves the moderation of assessment evidence to confirm that the assessment evidence and its grading are consistent with national standards. The External Authenticator (EA) is required to complete an external authentication report which comments on the effectiveness of the assessment process and procedures and on the extent to which the assessment arrangements are consistent with the awards standards. (see appendix I) Where an EA identifies serious flaws or concerns, these must be highlighted in the external authentication report and referred to the Results Approval Panel for consideration and follow-up.

These LMETB Guidelines and Procedures for Covid-19 Contingency Planning has been devised in response to the emergency restrictions to assist and guide FET Centres and Colleges through the Internal verification and external authentication processes for the upcoming certification periods.

it is accepted in the current circumstances that the traditional internal verification and external authentication processes will not be practical for the upcoming certification periods for the following reasons:

- learners have been submitting their work in a wide variety of ways (Moodle, MS Teams, email, post, etc.);
- assessment evidence is deposited in various locations; and,
- allowing for the possibility that emergency restrictions could extend beyond the dates that centres have currently scheduled for internal verification and external authentication¹.

¹Learners' assessment evidence for the upcoming certification periods will be located in a variety of platforms and may currently be found in a number of different setting e.g. the centre/school, or the assessor's home. A number of FET Centres have been piloting full electronic submission of assessment evidence.

It also important to acknowledge that a range of approaches will be required to complete regarding internal verification and that the external authentication process will hinge on the availability of External Authenticators and their willingness to work remotely on-line in most cases. Ultimately, the degree to which normal authentication practise can be adhered to, is dependent on the lifting of the restrictions.

LMETB assessors are being requested to verify that all steps of the assessment process have been followed with integrity.² Some assessment practices have changed as a result of the crisis, and it is critical that LMETB can attest to the integrity and reliability of the assessment of candidates during this period. Since the lockdown evidence of all assessments which have since taken place should be available online.

Establishing the population framework for authentication for Internal verification

In order to inform decisions around the sample population and the sampling strategy, the FET Co-ordinator/Principals undertook with all tutor a systematic review of each module to establish:

- the extent to which physical portfolios have been returned to the FET Centre for authentication in circumstances where Assessors have completed the course of study with their learner group and all learner assessments have been completed
- where each part of the module's assessment evidence was being stored.
- what evidence is or can be made available on online vis à vis each assessment technique.
- what percentage of modules/programme have already been internally verified. i.e.

² The LMETB contingency arrangements required peer review of alternative assessment techniques as part of the QA approval process.

- the degree to which Assessors have accounted for all learner evidence (hardcopy, email, Moodle, MS Teams, etc.) in circumstances where Assessors have completed the course of study with their learners and all learner assessments have been completed but due to Covid-19 emergency restrictions, physical traditional learner portfolios do not exist as not all work has been printed and organised into folders.

It is acknowledged that a certain number of assessments across a limited number of modules may be required to be scanned in order to be made available digitally for IV and EA. This may be facilitated through the Assessor's own home scanning equipment or through the use of the App MS Office Lens.

Internal Verification Role Scenarios

Given the scale of disruption to teaching, learning and assessment during the pandemic, LMETB are recommending that a combination of internal verification methodologies will be required as verification is even more imperative at this time. This is especially true for alternative assessment arrangements.

1 Role of the Assessor as Internal Verifiers

Assessors will now internally verify their own portfolios using the following procedure:

Before internal verification can begin all learner evidence must be gathered and saved to one location per learner. Evidence may be a mixture of hard and softcopy. In this case all hardcopy (physical/paper based) evidence should be kept together and all softcopy (digital/electronic) should also be kept together. Once all portfolios have been marked and graded the assessor will now internally verify all results and evidence according to the adapted IV checklist (See Appendix I).

2 Teacher pairing/Peer IV

FET centre co-ordinators may also apply a peer-IV model of internal verification whereby assessors can be paired together to IV each other's assessment evidence. This may be used as an option by centres to add an externality to the IV process but must be initially approved by the provision co-ordinator.

- 3 Existing IV personnel carry out IV in-centre as 'essential workers' whilst adhering to social distancing guidelines (subject to SMT decision). The learner portfolios have already been returned to the FET Centre, therefore, internal verification has not yet been carried out. Possible that internal verification may be carried out as per normal IV procedures. IV personnel may carry out IV in-centre as 'essential workers' whilst adhering to social distancing guidelines.

Sampling Methodology: The percentage of modules/programmes to be selected for internal verification

The sample size chosen by the different FET Centres/Colleges for internal verification will vary and this will be dictated by the methodology selected.

- 1) Where centres intend primarily using option 1 (Role of the Assessor as internal verifiers) then the sample of programmes chosen may be as high as 90%). However, LMETB have an expectation that there will be a limited use of peer IV to complement self-verification and this will focus on (but not limited to) a selection of modules from programmes which are new, have new teachers and where alternative assessment techniques have been employed. A minimum random sample of 4 learners across the three aforementioned categories will be chosen by the FET Centre/College QA Co-ordinator. The learners sampled per category must be mutually exclusive, (i.e. the selection should not overlap).

- 2) Where centres intend using peer review then the baseline percentage will be 20% of programmes/modules under a pairing arrangement.
- 3) Where IV is undertaken under normal processes (i.e. using dedicated IV Staff) there will be a baseline of 20% of programmes/modules selected for internal verification.

Internal Verification Process

Internal verifiers will check a sample of learner evidence, to make sure that assessment evidence is available for all learners and that grades are assigned, and results recorded according to QQI requirements.

When completing the internal verification, the Internal Verifier must systematically check the documentary evidence to ensure that:

- 100% of all the learner's work is available (assessment evidence is available for ALL learners presented for an award (i.e. evidence for all minors is available for major awards).
- Marks have been totalled and transferred correctly (this is especially important in this procedure as the results and marks won't be independently checked unless sampled as part of the external authentication process).
- One checklist per module for each learner group must be completed. and completed checklists must be returned to the provision co-ordinator.
- Evidence is present for all learning outcomes.
- All digital evidence is accounted for.
- Where a learner is entered for certification, that portfolio(s) containing assessment evidence and marking sheet(s) are available and results are recorded and visible.

- Learning has been assessed using the techniques and instruments indicated in the validated programme (or Module Descriptor in the case of levels 4,5, & 6) or has been adapted in a way suitable to online learning but still covering the LOs.
- Evidence is presented as per the techniques specified in the Award Specification and using appropriate assessment instruments.
- Candidates for assessment have provided a cover sheet indicating that the work is their own work.
- Assessment results are available and recorded for each learner.
- Marks are totalled and percentage marks are calculated correctly and are transferred from learner evidence to marking sheets/provisional results sheets accurately.
- The percentage marks and grades awarded are consistent with QQI grading bands.
- Learners have submitted Assessment Cover Sheets for all evidence (N/A if submitted via VLE).
- LMETB Assessment Procedures have been followed.

External Authentication Sample Population Framework

In light of the current situation LMETB may not be able to access all of the EAs we might need. We will therefore prioritise the components and programmes that need to be externally authenticated in response to a reduced capacity, this will be carried out on a risk rated basis.

We will appoint External Authenticators on a programme basis rather than on a component-basis, i.e. individuals who have a comprehensive knowledge of the discipline and are in a position to judge the consistency of standards across a range of components rather than having very specific expertise in one sub-specialism.

As external authenticators may not be able to access centres/evidence in person we may have to plan for all external authentication to be carried out remotely until such time as normal practice can resume.

Sampling Strategy

The sample chosen must be of a sufficient size to enable the authenticator to make an informed judgement. The following sampling strategy will be adopted:

The sampling pool will be 25% of the total modules deemed eligible for EA {this will have excluded modules/programme that have been previously external authenticated within the past 2 years}. The EA will then randomly select a number of learner portfolios for verification (maximum of 4 per class group based on cut-offs or borderline grades (e.g. Unsuccessful/Pass, Pass/Merit, Merit/Distinction). To maintain the integrity of the sampling process the External Authenticators will select from the provisional results lists and the evidence to support these grades will be made available virtually to the Authenticator. If the External Authenticator requires more evidence than the original sample, every effort will be made to ensure this is available.

The following underlying principles/criteria will inform the sampling strategy:

- The volume of scanning of evidence by assessors should be kept to a minimum. Digital submissions on all programmes prior to COVID-19 were not in place and therefore it is possible that there is a large volume of material submitted in hard copy. It would not be feasible for teachers to commence the process of scanning all this evidence.
- In the case where EAs are not able to travel to the centre, the population from which the external authentication sample selected will be based on what is digitally available online.
- the choice of the sample can be drawn from the sample upon which the IV was based on. This IV sample will have comprehended new modules/teachers and alternative assessments.

- The Centre QA co-ordinator will have the authority to establish the EA sample framework due to the short turnaround time between finishing inputting results and EAs starting and the difficulty of getting work from the centre, if the EA were to select a different sample. (In cases where the portfolios are not already fully digital).
- Full awards that have been selected for EA in the preceding 2 years do not need to be put forward for external authentication. Previously externally authenticated awards and modules may be presumed to be of the standard and so a much smaller selection of awards will need to be selected.
- In reaching the 25% selection, preference will be given to EA new programmes modules or new teachers or modules with major changes in assessment criteria/methodologies.
- In selecting the awards to be sampled emphasis will be placed on those that have electronic portfolios.
- The sample will focus on borderline grades (e.g. Unsuccessful/Pass, Pass/Merit, Merit/Distinction).
- Review, where possible, evidence that has been assessed using alternative assessments.
- Review, where possible, awards with a small number of learners or a very uneven distribution of results.
- Review, where possible a different type of learner cohort undertaking the programme.
- Review, where possible, programmes that have had issues identified in previous (the last two years) external authentication reports.
- If there is no requirement for the programme to go forward for external authentication based on the above criteria, then the RAP will consider the previous year's external authenticator's report which will ensure the process of authentication.

- The sample must cover the full range of grades/marks achieved (e.g. Unsuccessful, Pass, Merit, Distinction).
- The strategy for sampling has been considered by the appropriate governance structures and approval documented.

Presentation of Assessment Evidence

Assessment evidence, in as far as is reasonably practicable, (i.e. it is recognised that some candidates may be submitting evidence of practical assessments) must be stored electronically, using the following convention:

- One folder per component, named by component and award code (i.e. as per QQI Award Specification – starting with 4N..... 5N.... or 6N....).
- Within the folder, a folder for each candidate, named for the candidate.
- Centres may be requested to upload material to a central online folder designated by the centre. Further instructions will issue.
- All digital records of assessments, should be correctly labelled and attributed to the correct learner, stored securely and backed-up.

Checks by Assessors prior to forwarding evidence to FET Centre Co-ordinators/Principals

Prior to presenting assessment evidence for Internal Verification and External Authentication, please ensure that the following are complete:

- All assessment evidence is included in the learner portfolio (care should be taken to ensure that any visual/audio quality of assessment recordings is sufficient to enable accurate review for IV and by an external authenticator).
- You have marked all assessment evidence submitted.
- All of your calculations are correct and accurate.

- Where Special Accommodations, Compassionate Considerations or Procedures regarding Assessment Malpractice have been applied, there is evidence that these have been implemented and resulting actions documented.
- All codes and titles used are correct.
- You (the Assessor) have signed the Results Sheet.
- The Results Sheet is completed in full and signed. You may be requested to complete a Results Sheet/ electronic and to submit it to the Programme Coordinator/School Principal/Deputy Principal.
- You have compiled a complete teacher/tutor assessment portfolio for each component, including the following documentation, and have arranged to store it safely with other assessment material relevant to the 2020 certification cycles.
- Component Specification/Module Descriptor.
- Details of feedback given to learners (where feedback has been given to learners electronically, for example using Word Review, this will suffice as evidence that feedback has been given).
- Assessment plan/schedule for the component/module, together with any adjustments to the plan made as a result of the crisis.
- Assessments (including alternative assessments).
- Outline Solutions.
- Marking Scheme.
- Copy of the learner submission cover sheet.
- Assessor Checklist for Internal Verification completed and submitted to the Centre Coordinator/School or College Principal.

Appendix I External Authentication Report

Registered Provider/Centre Name:	
Registered Number:	
Date of external authentication visit:	

Indicate sample basis and sample size:		<i>Total learners sampled on this authentication visit:</i>
Named award(s) and codes (Include Major and Minor awards) Named award(s) for which results are being internally verified (sampled)		

External authenticator details	External authenticator:	Date:
	Address/contact details:	

Report on External Authentication of Assessment Results

Please complete for each named award/group of assessment results being authenticated	Have the results been internally verified by the provider?		Was the evidence assessed in accordance with techniques outlined in the		Are the results presented consistent with national standards for the award?		Comments/Action Points (If 'No' identify issues/make recommendations).
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Named award title	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Comments
LEVEL 3							
LEVEL 4							
LEVEL 5							

Awards moderated:			
Number of grade changes recommended:			
Have recommendations in the previous EA Report been addressed?	Yes	No	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Comment:			

Recommendations			
Describe examples of good practice observed/identify concerns:			
Outline areas for improvement			

Signatures:	External authenticator:
	Date:
	Provider:
	Date:

This report will be made available to the QQI Monitor.

Appendix II – Covid-19 Internal Verification Checklist

Component /Module Name	Component/Module Code	Date	Assessor Name		Learner Group
For ALL learners presenting for certification			Y	N	N/A
					Comments /Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results are recorded for <u>ALL</u> learners 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence is available for <u>ALL</u> learner results recorded 					
Have marks been correctly totalled and grades awarded in line with QQI requirements?	Marking schemes are completed for each assignment, stating where and why marks are assigned or deducted.				
	Learner evidence is clearly corrected with general comments on performance for feedback to learners provided.				
	Marks have been totalled and transferred correctly from assessor marking sheets to the module results summary sheets.				
	Marks have been transferred correctly for all learners from the <i>Module Results Summary Sheet</i> to the QQI Business System (QBS).				
Was the learner evidence generated in accordance with the module	All Learning Outcomes have been assessed.				
	Assessment information was given to the learner; dates for submission of assessment evidence along with dates, times, locations and regulations for examinations and skills demonstrations.				

descriptor?	The assessment briefs have clear instructions for learners on the tasks to be completed and the evidence to be produced.				
	Were alternative assessments used in lieu of assessments as specified in the module descriptor? If yes, please specify in the comments section.				
Is sufficient and reliable assessment evidence available for all learners presented?	Assessment briefs assess a range of Learning Outcomes and are clear about the standard of work expected.				
	Each piece of evidence is clearly linked to an assessment brief and Learning Outcome.				
	Learner portfolios (both hard and soft copy) must contain assessment cover sheets, assessor marking scheme and learner evidence.				
Is the documentation available and completed correctly e.g. assessment briefs, marking schemes?	Assessors and learners have signed (digital signature or typed name) and dated all necessary documentation – portfolio submission checklist; assessment cover sheets; etc.				
	All accompanying audio-visual evidence in digital format is clearly labelled (so that it is saved alphabetically) and referenced.				
	Assessor folder contains all appropriate documentation. This will still be needed for External Authentication and may be presented electronically and must include the correct version of the module descriptor.				
	Learner portfolios (both hard and soft copy) are presented alphabetically in order of surname.				

Location of learner evidence	Comment where digital evidence is located.				
	Comment where physical evidence is located.				

	Yes	No	Comment
Portfolios fully comply with all LMETB Quality Assurance policies and procedures and may progress directly to External Authentication.			

Signature of Internal Verifier: _____ Date: _____

