

INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of monitoring centres is to make a judgement on each of the critical areas of the centre's operations. A key component of the External Quality Assurance of centres is sampling. This will be carried out by the IMI External Quality Assurer (EQA) during monitoring visits to centres and may also be carried out remotely where the EQA has access to electronic centre/candidate records using systems such as the IMI Centres Hub and IMI ePortfolio.

The range of the EQA's monitoring activities is described in detail in 'External Quality Assurance – Monitoring Visits'. These include sampling internal quality assurance processes and systems and sampling candidates' work/evidence which will be the focus of this section.

To assist the EQAs in their sampling activities, they will have access to information on the candidates registered by the centre and whether their learning is in progress or completed. This information will be extracted from the IMI registration and certification system in conjunction with the centre's own records.

SAMPLING PLANS

Prior to carrying out sampling at a centre, the EQA will develop a sampling plan which will take into account the specific circumstances of the centre being visited. Factors which will be considered when determining the scope of a sample will include:

- the number and nature of qualifications/IMI Accredited solutions offered by the centre
- the number of candidates registered
- the number of certificates claimed
- Assessor and Internal Quality Assurer qualifications and experience
- candidate/Assessor ratios
- candidate/trainer ratios
- Internal Quality Assurer/Assessor ratios
- the number of satellite centres and/or assessment sites and their geographical dispersion
- the centre's track record in complying with IMI and where appropriate, regulatory requirements and any action plans issued
- rate of staff turnover.

EQA SAMPLING

The EQA will ensure that their sampling involves not only the inspection of evidence, but also meetings with Internal Quality Assurers, Assessors and candidates. This will enable the EQA to establish whether the process of assessment, as well as the standards being used to judge candidate competence, are consistent and meet national standards.

The EQA will also ensure that the selection of candidates, Assessors and Internal Quality Assurers for sampling is not left to the discretion of the centre. In addition to the evidence requested as part

of the sampling plan, the EQA may also select candidates without prior notification to the centre, to minimise the risk of fraudulent claims for certification.

Where a centre has a number of assessment sites the sampling plan must enable the EQA to quality assure that assessment and internal quality assurance practices are maintained with equal rigour and consistency at all locations.

The EQA will send the sampling plan to the Centre Coordinator in advance of the visit and request the Centre Coordinator to include names of Assessors' and Internal Quality Assurer's on the plan, then return to the EQA prior to the visit taking place. At this point the centre must provide details of any staff that have undertaken IMI qualifications/IMI Accredited solutions and can be deemed as a conflict of interest. A conflict of interest can arise when a centre has a vested interest in the outcome and could compromise the decision.

If a centre fails to make available candidates selected for interview or fails to produce their evidence (e.g. portfolios), the Centre Coordinator will be asked to provide proof that these candidates and/or their evidence exists. If this cannot be clearly established, sanctions may be applied and an investigation into any potential malpractice/maladministration may be instigated.

Using the sampling plan created, the EQA will ensure that the final sample will be sufficient to:

- confirm the consistency and authenticity of assessment decisions
- confirm the validity of claims for certification and authenticity of candidates' evidence
- confirm that Key Stage 4 & 5 grading sheets have been completed and when required meaningful employer engagement documented (for further guidance see section 8.2 IMI Key Stage 4 & 5 Qualifications of IMI Operating Manual)
- confirm the evidence meets the level of achievement and will take into account admissible evidence to support assessment decisions
- provide evidence to support their conclusions
- confirm the validity of claims for certification and authenticity of candidates' evidence.

If the sample shows that the centre is not applying the required standards, the EQA will:

- identify and record the specific area of concern
- confirm if they had to reject assessments carried out by the centre
- feedback immediately to the Internal Quality Assurer and/or the centre representative and request a further sample to ascertain the extent of the non-compliance
- recommend sanctions, if appropriate
- set appropriate actions for the centre.

STIMULUS MATERIALS

The EQA will also periodically review the use of any stimulus materials provided by the IMI to support assessments, or which have been provided by the centre to ensure that they, and the language they use, are appropriate.

These are materials provided to the candidate before or at the time of the assessment which facilitate the candidate's demonstration of his or her knowledge, skills and understanding. Tasks in an assessment may relate directly to the materials and a candidate may make direct reference to the materials in completing the assessment. Such materials may include, for example, charts, diagrams, pictures, quotations or machinery. They are only appropriate if they:

- enable candidates to demonstrate their level of attainment
- require knowledge, skills and understanding which are required for the qualification
- are clear and unambiguous (unless ambiguity forms part of the assessment), and
- are not likely to cause unnecessary offence to candidates.

When considering whether the language and stimulus materials used for an assessment are appropriate, the EQA will take into account:

- the age of candidates who may reasonably be expected to take the qualification or accreditation
- the level of the qualification or accreditation
- the objective of the qualification or accreditation
- the knowledge, skills and understanding assessed for the qualification or accreditation
- if the language or content could lead a group of candidates who share a common attribute or circumstance to experience, because of that attribute or circumstance, an unreasonable disadvantage in the level of attainment that they are able to demonstrate in the assessment.

SAMPLING REPORTS

When sampling at a centre has been completed, the EQA will detail the outcome using the centre engagement form within Centres Hub. This will include full details of the sample and the rationale behind its selection, good practice observed, any areas of weakness and/or non-compliances identified and any actions.

The EQA will discuss his findings with the Centre Coordinator who will be invited to add his/her comments. A copy of the engagement form will be forwarded to the Centre Coordinator via Centres Hub and to other centre personnel as appropriate.

Where the EQA identifies any areas of weakness or non-compliance, an action will be issued which will specify the completion date.



Depending upon the severity of a non-compliance, the EQA will issue a sanction against the centre or against the delivery of a specific qualification and IMI Accredited solution in accordance with the tariff specified in section 1.11 Sanctions Policy.

The EQA will track the progress of any actions raised and sanctions imposed on the centre using Centres Hub. It is the Centre Coordinator's responsibility to ensure that all actions raised are completed and signed off by the EQA.

Note: Failure to complete actions by the date due may result in sanctions being raised against the centre.

If a centre is not happy with the EQA's decision(s), then the Centre Coordinator (or other authorised centre personnel) may appeal against these findings in accordance with section 1.8 Appeals Policy.

Issue Number	Effective Date	Amendments	Reason for Amendments
4	18 Feb 2021	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Rebranding of header and font.2. Replaced all reference of 'Quality Assured Programmes' or 'QAP' with 'IMI Accredited'.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Companywide rebranding on all IMI material.2. Realignment of IMI Products