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NQual is committed to promoting consistency, high standards and public confidence in the qualifications that we deliver.

The purpose of this strategy is to maintain a high level of delivery, assessment, and quality assurance for NQual’s regulated qualifications and to comply with Ofqual’s Conditions of Recognition and CASS requirements. This strategy will cover all of NQual’s qualifications approved by Ofqual.

Centre Approval

Due to the level of risk involved in allowing centres to deliver qualifications, the NQual centre approval process incorporates a risk-based approach. All centres must agree to due diligence checks before they become approved, this will provide NQual with information about a centre’s reliability and business values.

There are several checks that NQual will carry out prior to a centre being approved to deliver and assess qualifications. This is to ensure NQual are satisfied that centres have the capacity, systems and resources in place to operate effectively as an NQual approved centre. The checks include the following:

- Ensure and verify that all centre staff have appropriate qualifications and competencies to deliver qualifications.
- Ensure the centre has the appropriate policies and agreements in place to protect learners and are aware of all regulatory requirements for delivering, assessing, marking assessments, and conducting quality assurance activities
- Request evidence that the centre has the appropriate Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) procedures in place to verify the assessment decisions made by the centre’s staff

NQual will also conduct a Pre-approval Visit, which can be conducted face-to-face or remotely, with all new centres to discuss the requirements surrounding becoming an Approved Centre and how to maintain compliance with the requirements set by NQual and the regulators.

It also allows NQual to discuss the qualification requirements and assessment criteria in more detail, ensuring the Approved Centre Contact is fully aware of the responsibilities and has the appropriate workforce in place. At this point, NQual may set actions for the potential centre to address to raise the standards.

NQual will monitor all centres by conducting annual external quality assurance monitoring activities. NQual will randomly sample centres for annual moderations to be completed, this allows NQual to verify the assessment decisions and marking decisions are valid, accurate, sufficient, current, and reliable.

If there is evidence to suggest an increased risk to the assessment process and/or the marking of an assessment, NQual will conclude if changes need to be made to a centre’s RAG ratings.

It is the centre’s responsibility to inform NQual of any changes to the Centre Contact or IQA roles.

Centre Monitoring

Upon approval, all centres will be given access to our IT administrative system to store qualification data, centre performance and quality assurance activities. This system includes a risk-based model allowing NQual to monitor the centre's performance based on its current risk rating. If evidence suggests there are areas for concern, the Quality Assurance team will review and monitor the centre's performance and increase the risk rating accordingly taking any necessary actions.

Once the approval process is complete, within 6 months of gaining NQual Approval Status, centres will be involved in an initial EQA Monitoring Visit. This visit will ensure risks are low and support is high for all centres. This is an opportunity to meet the associated EQA and gain support with delivery if needed. After the initial EQA Monitoring Visit, the EQA will provide feedback detailing areas of good practice and where necessary areas of improvement.

Before the initial EQA Monitoring Visit, newly Approved Centres will take part in a 100% sample of each award, which is typically completed remotely.

Following the initial EQA Monitoring Visit, NQual will continue to monitor a centre's performance by completing monitoring activities based on a risk-based approach.

The approach will consider the following areas:

- Centre performance
- Qualification risk
- Number of learners completing their qualifications
- Range of assessments
- Number of assessors and assessor experience
- Internal Quality Assurance experience

Where evidence suggests that there are areas for concern and an increased risk to the assessment process, the centre will be subject to increased quality assurance and moderation until NQUAL is satisfied that the risk has been mitigated. This will be determined by the level of risk and circumstance and may include additional moderations, additional desk-based sampling, additional EQA meetings and/or remote EQA meetings and unannounced EQA visits.

Qualification Risk

When determining the qualification risk category, NQual considers factors such as the qualification type, assessment methods and current verification measures to determine if the qualification is low (Green), medium (Amber) or high risk (Red).

EQA Monitoring

NQual is supportive to centres, whilst also ensuring compliance with our regulators, and the standards and mitigating risk within our qualifications. As such, we allocate an External Quality Assurer (EQA) to support and monitor each centre.

All EQA Monitoring Visits will be communicated with the Approved Centre Contact, giving at least 30 days' notice of planned activities. This will provide centres with the appropriate time needed to plan and prepare for the EQA visit.

Within the written notice, the EQA may request specific information or learner’s work, based on data from NQual’s IT Administrative system.

During EQA monitoring visits the EQA may carry out several activities including, but limited to:

- Observation of Assessments
- Face-to-face EQA observation of the centre staff marking assessments
- Observation
- Interviewing of centre staff
- Sampling
- Feedback meeting
- Remote desk-based sampling
- Remote EQA meeting

Sampling is planned and designed to ensure consistency and standardisation across qualifications. Sampling is designed to support centres and identify any risks and provide support and training to increase quality improvement.

NQual will monitor Centre Quality Assurance arrangements to ensure that internal assessment is:

- Valid
- Authentic
- Reliable
- Current
- Sufficient

Two forms of sampling will be carried out to ensure that robust Centre Quality Assurance is maintained:

Formative Sampling

- This is ongoing sampling during the learner programme to monitor progress and support improvements.

Summative Sampling

- This is the final sample and is designed to evaluate quality when the tutor and learner are confident that all learning has been completed and assessed.

Based on sampling, NQual reserves the right to change or alter the centre’s risk rating if necessary.

Feedback

Following all EQA activities, centres will receive detailed feedback.

When conducting EQA monitoring visits, NQual will complete a feedback meeting with the Approved Centre Contact. During the feedback meeting, the EQA will discuss the ‘EQA Report’, which details feedback from EQA activities completed and general centre feedback. The EQA Report will also include the centre’s previous and current RAG rating and where necessary, SMART targets along with improvement feedback. An EQA may also provide any recommendations to enhance existing practice.

Quality Assurance Risk Assessment

NQual will follow an ongoing risk-based approach when conducting External Quality Assurance activities, involving centres. This rating will determine how often a centre is monitored.

Qualification-based RAG Rating:

Red	Amber	Green
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New qualifications • Centre staff who lack experience delivering a qualification or with unqualified tutors • Centre Quality Assurance process in need of improvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centres that have not delivered a qualification for more than 6 months • Concerns or further development required within the qualification • Centre Quality Assurance processes in need of little to no improvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centre staff with experience and qualifications • No concerns or problems with work or practice • Centre Quality Assurance processes with no need for improvement

Centre-based RAG Rating:

Red	Amber	Green
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newly approved centres • Serious concerns including malpractice and administration and more than 4 outstanding action points* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centres with 3 action points* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centres without action points or a minor action*

*Actions points include high-risk areas in which centres have been asked to address and improve before the next EQA monitoring visit. These are areas in which EQAs have produced SMART targets and improvement feedback. Action point areas can include, but are not limited to:

- Malpractice or maladministration cases
- Misconduct
- Cases of improper IQA sampling
- Action resulting from a complaint or appeal

EQAs will operate and monitor centres on a risk-based approach and visits may be annual or bi-annual depending on the level of risk a centre poses. The following table illustrates NQual’s approach to RAG-rating centres:

Red	Amber	Green
<p>Centres rated red risk will require</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% of all learners sampled. • Will be monitored every 6 months • Will receive oral and written Feedback on work submitted, including developmental points if necessary. 	<p>Centres rated amber risk will require</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30% sampling of all learners • Will be monitored annually. • Will receive oral and written Feedback on work submitted, including developmental points if necessary. 	<p>Centres rated green will require</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10% sampling of work submitted. • Will be monitored annually. • Will receive oral and written Feedback on work submitted, including developmental points if necessary.

Any centre that remains high risk and fails to make improvements may be subject to enhanced scrutiny and unannounced visits. If further improvement is not seen, then centre approval may be withdrawn to protect NQual’s qualifications and reputation.

EQA Monitoring and Support

The Centre will be allocated an EQA to support them with meeting the requirements of our qualifications and regulators. The EQA will maintain regular contact with the centre and is the main point of contact and support in relation to NQUAL qualifications, operations and policies. EQAs will share best practice suggestions and offer advice for quality improvements in relation to regulated qualifications and meeting the requirements of NQual. This enables a consistent level of support to be offered across all centres.

In addition, all centres will receive training on systems upon approval and further support if/when required.

NQual policies, processes and guidance will be provided to centres and will be continually updated to reflect the qualifications current assessment methods, quality improvement and changes in legislation.

NQual will provide centres with robust qualification specifications for each qualification. Qualification Specifications will outline the requirements for each qualification.

At any time, approved centres can request a support session with NQual’s EQAs which will allow centres to gain support on the delivery and assessment of NQual qualifications. Once requested, NQual will ensure the support session is scheduled within 30 days.

Malpractice and Maladministration

Centres are requested to take appropriate steps to reduce malpractice and maladministration. Any cases of malpractice or maladministration are treated seriously by NQual, and any such case will be investigated. In all cases of malpractice or maladministration, NQual will follow its Malpractice and Maladministration policy.

Standardisation

To ensure a standardised and consistent approach, NQual encourages all centres to undertake regular standardisation and training activities. This will ensure all centre staff are meeting the requirements of NQual and the standards within the qualifications. This will be monitored as part of ongoing and regular EQA monitoring activity.

NQual will conduct online subject-based 'Standardisation' Webinars, this will be an opportunity for centres to attend and discuss changes to qualifications and discuss problematic areas. The Standardisation Webinars are recorded and stored for further use.

Invigilation

When invigilating NQual's approved examination assessments, all invigilators must comply with and agree to the 'Invigilator Declaration'. This document will outline the roles and responsibilities of an Invigilator, who is conducting invigilation for NQual's qualifications. It will also outline how to report instances of misconduct. An EQA can ask to see any Invigilator Declaration at any given time.

Intelligence of Malpractice and Maladministration

At times, NQual may receive intelligence of malpractice and maladministration from other awarding organisations. If NQual becomes aware of malpractice and/or maladministration from another awarding organisation, NQual will conduct an additional monitoring visit and change the risk rating of the centre to Red. After further investigation, if Centres demonstrated malpractice and/or maladministration, centre approval would be revoked.

Governors

Governors will review the CASS policy to independently check and challenge NQual's quality standards.

All policies relate to qualifications and assessments provided by NQual Ltd.

This policy will be reviewed annually as a minimum.