



Guidance on the conduct of External Verification of the Award of Credit and/or Qualifications.

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1 The role of the External Verifier

OCNNWR employs external verifiers to:

- provide externality to the providing organisation in confirming that the award of credit and or qualifications being recommended, is secure;
- confirm that the delivery and assessment of the course is appropriate, and that the assessment strategy employed is appropriate and conforms to NOCN specification as set out in the Qualification Guide;
- confirm that all recommendations for the award of credit have been subjected to a rigorous internal verification process that meets the minimum published requirements of the awarding body; See Centre Handbook www.nocn.org.uk for guidance
- make recommendations for improvement and to support an ethos of continuous quality improvement;
- report all findings to the OCN using the appropriate report format as a word – processed document, and in language that is appropriate to its audience, i.e. Heads of Organisations, Quality Managers, and The Inspectorate;
- lead on regional standardisation events for the qualification, produce reports and select appropriate samples for retention;
- contribute to national standardisation events as required.

It is essential that there is externality in the verification process and verifiers should declare any conflict of interest that may arise between this role and any other interests with the providing organisation.

2 Planning and conducting verification visits

The contract issued by the OCN should clearly indicate the number of visits and reports that are required.

- The verifier should make contact with the appropriate named person in the organisation (usually the nominated Internal verifier) to arrange a mutually convenient time and venue for the verification visit/s.
- Prior to the visit it is useful to discuss with the provider the nature and scope of the visit, and agree whether arrangements are to be made to meet learners.
- The verifier should pre-plan the visit and where possible agree with the provider the people / documents that need to be made available including where possible the nature and size of the sample of learners work to be seen (see later guidance.)

3 Principles of credit-based learning

Verifiers should be aware of all of the following OCN principles.

All OCN courses are credit based.

Credit is awarded for the achievement of **all of the learning outcomes of a Unit of Assessment at a standard described by the assessment criteria.**

All Units of Assessment are written to a standard format and have:

- a credit value
- a specified level
- learning outcomes
- assessment criteria

All of these are fixed at unit approval and cannot be changed at verification

Credit Value

This is determined by the **notional learning hours** (this can be made up of delivery hours and other learning activities) involved, i.e. it reflects the **volume** of learning that has taken place.. At entry level it would be expected that there would be a higher proportion of contact hours than would be expected at level three.

One credit is awarded for the successful completion of ten notional learning hours

Credit Level

This is determined by the **complexity of the** learning and is in line with the level descriptors used in the National Qualification Framework, (**NQF**) and the Qualifications and credit Framework (**QCF**). **OCN normally accredit learning at Entry Level, Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3** (see table on next page.)

Learning Outcomes

These describe what the learner will know understand or be able to do on completion of the unit.

Assessment criteria

Assessment criteria are the standards by which a judgement can be made as to whether a learning outcome has been achieved. It is important to recognise that a learner must demonstrate evidence of meeting all of the assessment criteria attached to a unit before they can be awarded credit.

Level	Intellectual Skills and Attributes	Processes	Accountability
Entry	<p>Employ recall and demonstrate elementary comprehension in a narrow range of areas with dependency on ideas of others</p> <p>Exercise basic skills</p> <p>Receive and pass on information</p>	<p>Operate mainly in closely defined and highly structured contexts</p> <p>Carry out processes that are repetitive and predictable</p> <p>Undertake performance of clearly defined tasks</p> <p>Assume a limited range of roles</p>	<p>Carry out directed activity under close supervision</p> <p>Rely entirely on external monitoring of output and quality</p>
1	<p>Employ a narrow range of applied knowledge and basic comprehension</p> <p>Demonstrate a narrow range of skills</p> <p>Apply known solutions to familiar problems</p> <p>Present and record information from readily available sources</p>	<p>Show basic competence in a limited range of predictable and structured contexts</p> <p>Utilise a clear choice of routine responses</p> <p>Co-operate with others</p>	<p>Exercise a very limited degree of discretion and judgement about possible actions</p> <p>Carry out responsibility for quality and quantity of output</p> <p>Operate under direct supervision and quality control</p>
2	<p>Apply knowledge with underpinning comprehension in a number of areas</p> <p>Make comparisons</p> <p>Interpret available information</p> <p>Demonstrate a range of skills</p>	<p>Choose from a range of procedures performed in a number of contexts, some of which may be non-routine</p> <p>Co-ordinate with others</p>	<p>Undertake directed activity with a degree of autonomy</p> <p>Achieve outcomes within time constraints</p> <p>Accept increased responsibility for quantity and quality of output subject to external quality checking</p>
3	<p>Apply knowledge and skills in a range of complex activities, demonstrating comprehension of relevant theories</p> <p>Access and evaluate information independently</p> <p>Analyse information and make reasoned judgements</p> <p>Employ a range of responses to well defined but often unfamiliar or unpredictable problems</p>	<p>Operate in a variety of familiar and unfamiliar contexts using a range of technical or learning skills</p> <p>Select from a considerable choice of procedures</p> <p>Give presentations to an audience</p>	<p>Engage in self directed activity with guidance / evaluation</p> <p>Accept responsibility for quality and quantity of output</p> <p>Accept limited responsibility for the quantity and quality of output from others</p>

4 Verification Activities

The verifier must be in possession of the Unit of Assessment for any unit to be verified. If these are not available verification cannot proceed.

Stage one – Verification of the assessment strategy (planning and design)

The verifier should familiarise themselves with the **assessment strategy** for the course.

For Locally devised Programmes

The assessment strategy for locally devised programmes will be produced internally by the centre. The Centre must ensure that:

- the assessment activities are appropriate to the level See Assessment Activities Document for guidance as to what is required at a specified level on OCNnwr website www.ocnnwr.org.uk/downloads ;
- the assessment activities have been mapped against all the assessment criteria for the unit to ensure that learners are able to generate evidence for the achievement of the whole unit. Documentation to support this process is available on the OCNnwr website www.ocnnwr.org.uk/downloads ;
- the assessment strategy is inclusive and follows the principles of fair design. i.e. the assessment activities should be:
 - reliable,
 - valid,
 - fit for purpose,
 - transparent,
 - recognise and respect equality and diversity,
 - written in appropriate and accessible language that is free from bias.

See Access to Fair Assessment Guidelines on OCNnwr website www.ocnnwr.org.uk/downloads

For NOCN Qualifications including Progression Qualifications

NOCN qualifications are achieved through the accumulation of credits to meet the validated rules of combination for the award of a qualification certificate.

Learners who achieve credit but do not meet the rules of combination will be awarded a credit transcript identifying which units have been achieved.

It is essential that verifiers are in possession of the qualification guide and also all the documents relating to NOCN qualification policies and procedures.

The assessment strategy for the qualification is **prescribed** in the qualification guide and verifiers should ensure that they are **totally familiar** with all of the assessment requirements of the particular qualification, as these may vary from qualification to qualification.

Qualification guides and policy and procedure documents can be downloaded from the NOCN website www.nocn.org.uk

Verifiers are asked to confirm the award of credit. The OCN database will confirm the award of the qualification once all rules of combination have been met.

Stage 2 – Verification of the Award of Credit

Having scrutinised the assessment strategy that has been employed against the principles detailed above and against any specific requirements of the qualification, verifiers should undertake a sampling process of the assessment evidence that learners have produced.

Sample Selection

The OCN does not recommend a specific sample size, as this will vary from course to course. Verifiers should take a risk assessment approach to sampling. They should consider whether there are any factors which may contribute to a higher risk to the security of the award of credit, e.g. new provider, new course, new assessors/s, outcomes of previous verification visits, etc. Identification of any such factors should be used to determine the focus and size of the sampling process.

Verifiers will need to decide on what is a **representative** sample for the course which will give them confidence that the award of credit and / or qualification is secure. **It is important that the verifier has control over the sample selection.**

The sample should include:

- All units in the course
- All assessors - the assessment decisions of any assessors new to the course should be particularly scrutinised.
- Credits awarded at different levels
- Evidence considered by the assessors to be strong at its level
- Evidence that is considered by the assessors to be borderline for the award of credit.
- Evidence that has been a part of the internal verification sample
- Evidence that has not formed a part of the internal verification sample
- Have a random element to it. (this relates to the verifier choosing the sample, all be it that there may be some dependence on the assessor to identify some of the above.)

Within these parameters verifiers will need to choose their sample size as to be manageable but meaningful.

In all cases where there is any doubt about the security of the award of credit the sample size may need to increase.

Verification of the evidence of achievement

Having selected the sample the next stage is to examine the evidence of achievement within it.

Evidence is the tangible product of a learner's assessment activity, e.g. worksheets, notes, essays, recordings, performance artefacts, etc. which can demonstrate how a learner has met the Assessment Criteria for a Unit of Assessment

This must be evidence of achievement not simply evidence of learning.

Evidence must be:

- **Authentic** – is it really the work of the individual learner? Could **plagiarism** have occurred? Is there a need for an element of **time-constrained assessment** in the assessment strategy?
- **Current** – is it **up-to-date**? Does the evidence show awareness of recent developments in the area of knowledge?
- **Appropriate** – is the evidence detailed and complex enough to justify the award of credit **at the designated level**?
- **Sufficient** – is there enough evidence of achievement to give the assessor confidence that **all assessment criteria have been met** and learning outcomes achieved?

Evidence of Learning is often a large collection of material of various types that is accumulated by the learner over the delivery of a programme of study. This tends to be collected together by the learner in a large file.

Evidence of Achievement is the part of this evidence that specifically shows how learning outcomes have been achieved by meeting the relevant assessment criteria. This will usually be a selection of the evidence of learning, gathered together into a portfolio and made available for internal and external moderators to sample into.

Evidence may be presented in a variety of ways and take a variety of forms, for example:

- Notes
- Worksheets
- Essays
- Drawings/ Diagrams
- Workshop diaries
- Test papers
- Video/ audio recordings
- Practical reports
- Role play records
- Project reports
- Artefacts
- Reflective log (this list is not exhaustive)

Sufficiency of evidence

In order to facilitate a robust internal and external verification process it is essential that the tutor / assessor responsible for the recommendation of the award of credit, has clearly **signposted** where the evidence of achievement lies. There will need to be **clear cross referencing** of both the assessment activities and the assessment evidence to the assessment criteria.

The verifier is not a second or third assessor. Verifiers should be clearly directed to where the evidence of achievement lies. Centres should have well developed and transparent systems to facilitate this.

5 Role of the Internal Verifier, and the articulation of the internal and external verification process

Centres are required to have a robust internal moderation model in place which meets the requirements as set out in the OCN Centre Handbook.

Please refer to the OCN or the Centre handbook for a detailed description of these requirements on the OCN website www.ocnnwr.org.uk/downloads

The internal verifier has a key role in ensuring that there is on going monitoring of the assessment process and that there is validity and sufficiency in the evidence of achievement. Any issues identified through the internal verification process should be recorded on an action plan and monitored through to completion. The internal verifier is responsible for supporting tutor assessors in all aspects of the assessment process.

Internal verification **should not be a one off end of course activity**. It is important that it has both formative and summative elements. Its role is to identify any issues which may arise early in the course run so that there is an opportunity for these to be addressed at an early stage and before the award of credit is jeopardised.

The internal verifier is responsible for keeping full and accurate records of the internal verification process, including:

- Induction of new staff
- Minutes of team meetings
- Verification of the assessment strategy
- Sampling and verification of assessment decisions
- Feedback to assessors
- Internal standardisation
- Action planning for improvement in the assessment process
- Monitoring the implementation of the action plan
- Liaising with external verifier and the awarding body.

The external verifier should examine records of the internal verification process to ensure that it is timely and robust as part of their verification activities.

6 Troubleshooting

Procedures to be followed where verifiers have doubts about the authenticity or adequacy of evidence presented for external moderation

The evidence available is considered to be adequate and valid if:

- A it is **sufficient**; i.e. there is enough evidence to demonstrate achievement against all the assessment criteria for the unit;
- B it is **appropriate** for the type, and complexity of the learning;
- C it demonstrates **authenticity** i.e. the evidence must be attributable to the learner.

Scenario	Identified through	Action to be taken	Complete verification when	Refer to OCNNWR	Action to be taken by OCNNWR
<p>Sufficiency</p> <p>Internally set assessments activities do not allow for the generation of evidence against all of the assessment criteria for the unit.</p> <p>Benchmarked Tasks do not allow for the generation of evidence against all of the assessment criteria for the unit.</p>	<p>Examination of the assessment strategy.</p> <p>Examination of the assessment strategy and or assessment evidence.</p>	<p>Request that IM reviews the assessment strategy and that additional evidence be produced by an agreed deadline.</p> <p>Request that additional activities are introduced for next run to address gaps in evidence.</p>	<p>Sample as requested is produced. Sign RACs.</p> <p>Sample as requested not produced. RACs not signed.</p> <p>Immediately, (until modified benchmarks are available from the awarding body.)</p>	<p>Report to OCNNWR in verification report.</p> <p>Alert OCNNWR Quality Reviewer .</p> <p>Report to OCNNWR in verification report.</p>	<p>Quality Reviewer to follow up with Centre Quality Manager. Award of credit suspended.</p> <p>OCN to report findings in annual qualification exception reports to NOCN.</p>

Scenario	Identified through	Action to be taken	Complete verification when	Refer to OCNNWR	Action to be taken by OCNNWR
<p>Appropriateness</p> <p>A. The assessment strategy or the assessment evidence presented is not appropriate to the level.</p> <p>B. The assessment strategy used does not comply with the requirements specified in the qualification guide.</p>	<p>Examination of the assessment strategy and or assessment evidence.</p> <p>Examination of the assessment strategy and or assessment evidence against the qualification guide.</p>	<p>Request a review of the assessment strategy and that more appropriate evidence is produced to an agreed deadline. Refer to assessment definitions document.</p> <p>Request that further assessment takes place to meet the requirements as specified in the qualification guide.</p>	<p>Appropriate evidence becomes available Sign RACs.</p> <p>If no more appropriate evidence becomes available RACs not signed.</p> <p>Appropriate evidence becomes available Sign RACs.</p> <p>If no evidence that complies with the assessment strategy in the qualification guide becomes available RACs not signed.</p>	<p>Report to OCNNWR in verification report.</p> <p>Alert OCNNWR Quality Reviewer.</p> <p>Report to OCNNWR in verification report.</p> <p>Alert OCNNWR Quality Reviewer.</p>	<p>Quality Reviewer to follow up with Centre Quality Manager. Award of credit suspended.</p> <p>Quality Reviewer to follow up with Centre Quality Manager. Award of credit suspended.</p>

Scenario	Identified through	Action to be taken	Complete verification when	Refer to OCNNWR	Action to be taken by OCNNWR
<p>Authenticity</p> <p>All the evidence presented does not demonstrate authenticity of the learning.</p> <p>Or</p> <p>Evidence for some learners cannot be considered to be authentic e.g. as in cases of obvious plagiarism or collusion.</p>	<p>Scrutiny of the assessment strategy.</p> <p>Identified through providers own assessment or Internal verification process, and internal procedures followed.</p> <p>Assessment evidence sampling by external verifier reveals plagiarism.</p>	<p>Request review of the assessment strategy. Request further authentic evidence be made available to specified deadline.</p> <p>EV to confirm that internal procedures have been followed and fully documented.</p> <p>Invoke providers own procedures to deal with plagiarism.</p>	<p>When further authentic evidence becomes available. Sign RACs .</p> <p>If authentic evidence is not forthcoming. RACs not signed.</p> <p>Outcome of internal process recommends award of credit. Sign RACs</p> <p>If no recommendation for award of credit . RACs not signed for identified learners.</p> <p>As above</p>	<p>Report to OCNNWR in verification report.</p> <p>Alert OCNNWR Quality Reviewer.</p> <p>Report to OCNNWR in verification report. Alert QR and OCN Quality manager</p> <p>Report to OCNNWR in verification report. Alert QR and OCN quality Manager</p> <p>As above</p>	<p>Recommend Assessment Training.</p> <p>Quality Reviewer to follow up with Centre Quality Manager. Award of credit suspended</p> <p>QM to alert NOCN Director of Quality</p> <p>QM to alert NOCN Director of Quality</p> <p>QM to alert NOCN Director of Quality</p>

N.B. All providers are required to have their own internal policy and procedures for dealing with plagiarism. Any use of the procedures should be fully documented.

All cases of suspected plagiarism should have been brought to the attention of the IV and OCN Verifier.

Learners should have been given a further opportunity to demonstrate the authenticity of their learning.

Evidence of this should be made available in any IV sample. Verifiers should convince themselves of the authenticity of the resubmitted evidence