

QA Framework and Standards Policy

Policy review

Developed by: Donna Potts
Approval date: 10th October 2023
Signature: _____
Next review date: 10th October 2024
Version: 6

Aims

TradeTechs Northern aims to ensure that every learner that they work with enjoys a safe, enjoyable quality learning experience during their programme and achieves their full potential.

To support a positive learner experience, it is vital that the company is able to offer accredited qualifications that both learners and employers can trust. Learners and employers need to be assured that the recognition of individuals' skills and knowledge can be regarded as valid, authentic, current and are based on reliable and sufficient evidence of competence: the company's training and assessment and Quality assurance policy details how TradeTechs Northern provides such assurance.

Rationale

The company's primary goal is to provide employers and learners with training that meets their needs. An outcome of successful training and development interventions can be the awarding of accredited qualifications.

To be in a position to award such qualifications, the company has to work with awarding organisations (AOs) and demonstrate that it can meet their assessment and quality assurance requirements.

To acquire approval with any awarding organisation, a prerequisite is that the company has a documented quality training, assessment and quality assurance policy. This policy is regularly reviewed and is a cornerstone of the company's activities.

Principles

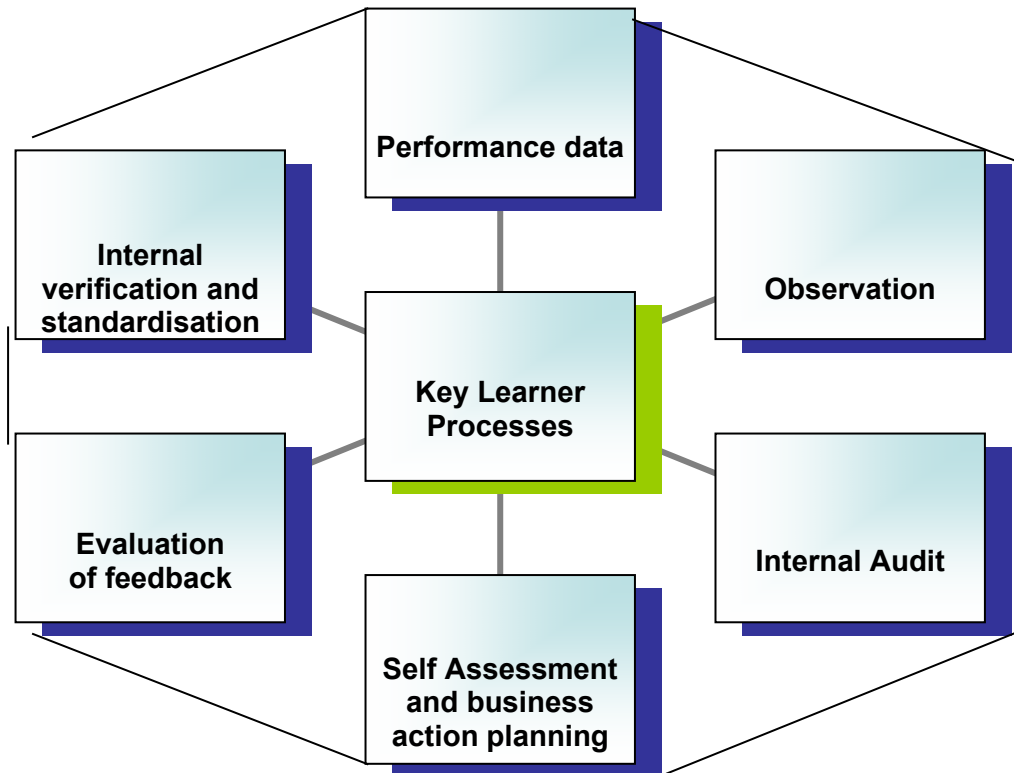
Quality Assurance covers all aspects of the learning experience and the procedures should be an effective blend of development, support and compliance checks. TradeTechs Northern wants every learner to have a meaningful and valid learning experience and this means that the qualifications standards in terms of delivery, assessment, quality assurance and moderation must be met at all times with every learner. Quality assurance is about developing excellence in provision and improving the delivery of all personnel involved in programme delivery.

Quality assurance looks to share best practice; offer recommendations for improvement and monitor performance to ensure that staff are supported to deliver a service that is attuned to the needs of their learners and employers that they work with. Quality assurance has to identify and act on performance that requires development and ensure that at all times the integrity of any qualification delivery is maintained.

Quality assurance activities protect the company's reputation as a consistent, reliable provider and to this end; quality assurance will evaluate the company's performance against every aspect of the learner journey/experience.

TradeTechs Northern recognises the cornerstone of a quality organisation is a commitment to ensuring that internal quality assurance is executed, valid, reliable, robust and fit for purpose.

The diagram below shows the interdependent elements of the internal quality assurance (IQA) framework.



1. Key Learner Processes (KLPs)

Processes include:

- Selection and recruitment of employers/learners
- Initial assessment & induction
- Planning learning
- Training (classroom-based)
- Training (work-based)
- Review & assessment planning
- Verification
- Completions

All staff will be trained as appropriate and key learner processes will be reviewed as required

Management information/Operations data

- Management information is generated by the Learning and Skills Manager.
- Learner progress on all programmes is monitored via Progress Reviews

- Learner feedback questionnaires are collected on course completion and will be analysed for trends and impact reporting

2. The aim of our quality system is to ensure that:

- We comply with legal and statutory requirements
- We routinely assess the needs of interested parties in our business, i.e. all stakeholders including staff, learners, employers, funders, Ofsted and awarding organisations
- We meet our contractual requirements with funding bodies and prime contractors
- We meet our regulatory requirements with qualification awarding organisations
- We identify and deliver a quality service to maintain excellent relationships with our customers: our learners and employers
- All work is carried out consistently to a defined standard that is measured through our quality objectives
- We have the skills and resources to fulfil our customer requirements
- All activities support the strategic plans of the business
- We strive to continuously improve our systems and procedures
- Any complaints are dealt with efficiently and within an acceptable time period

Key learning processes will be internally quality assured by observation, feedback, verification, documentation completion, performance data. TradeTechs Northern will retain documented information to have confidence that the quality system is effective.

KPI s

Quality objectives are based on the main risks to the business including measure and set a baseline for stakeholder satisfaction of 95%. TradeTechs Northern will take rigorous action to improve through a commitment to quality improvement cycle.

A Quality Calendar is in place to monitor the implementation of the quality system.

Our commitment to ensuring the best outcomes for our learners as well as Trade Techs Northern's commitment to continuous improvement starts with our robust Safer Recruitment practice and our well-planned staff induction to ensure that we recruit the appropriate qualified and experienced members of the team.

Also the delivery of a well-planned induction for both staff and learners ensures that all are aware of expectations and meet the criteria of the staff vacancy / learner qualification.

3. The Observation of Teaching, Learning and Assessment

It is TradeTechs Northern's objective to obtain an accurate judgment on the quality of training and assessment delivered to learners.

Each member of staff who has responsibility for delivering or supporting lessons must be observed at least once a year by the Quality Lead or Lead IQA. This outlines both key strengths and areas for supported development. If there are areas for development identified an action plan for each member of staff will be agreed setting targets for improvement. All information recorded is used to inform CPD needs.

The information from the OTLA forms is submitted to the Quality Lead for central analysis and standardisation.

If there are concerns with the quality of the observation and findings then the observer should complete the action plan and agree a re-observation of the member of staff.

Procedure

Employees will be informed prior to the observation by email. This can be as little as 24 hours in advance. This notification will inform them of the window of observation and guide them towards appropriate documentation to support their preparations. The observer will require diary information in order to plan effectively.

The schedule of observations will be included in the quality calendar

The Observation

Observers will respect the professionalism of employee and resulting feedback will be handled in a way which maintains confidentiality between the Observer, Employee and their Manager.

- Probationary employees will receive an ungraded developmental observation within the first eight weeks
- Observers will be asked to hold pre-observation meetings with employees if required
- If there are areas for development identified during the observation an action plan for each member of staff will be agreed setting targets for improvement. The member of staff will be required to complete training as outlined on the observation improvement action plan and will be re-observed following this support
- The training assessment session will be observed for a period of at least 45 minutes and no more than one hour
- The observer will use the standard documentation as agreed and indicate strengths and areas for development according to Ofsted standards, ensuring tutors and assessors consistently achieve at least 'Good'
- The observer will, if possible, give verbal feedback immediately after the observation.

To allow for quality procedures, written feedback will be provided within 7 working days of the observation. Employees who would require an individual meeting for the purposes of more detailed feedback can contact their observer to arrange this. The observer and employee will agree on the focus of identified CPD

- Recommended training via the observation improvement action plan will be organised by the Quality Lead

Appeals – Grounds for appeals may be (i) conduct of the observation or (ii) dispute over identified areas for development.

In either case, the employee should appeal in writing to the Quality Lead within 5 working days of receiving written feedback from the observation. If the appeal is upheld in the case of a dispute over a decision, a re-observation can be arranged through the Learning and Skills Manager. Please see Complaints policy for further details.

Quality Assurance of the process

Moderation will be planned to ensure that all observers are moderated each year. This will be completed in two ways and this process will be added to the quality calendar.

1. Buddy observations will be carried out by TradeTechs Northern and the prime contractor. Or by two members of the quality team within TradeTechs Northern if there is no prime contractor.
2. The Quality Lead will conduct a moderation of a sample of lesson observation reports once a year. Written feedback will be provided to observers.

The Trade Techs Learning and Skills Manager will receive a summary report of the observation and feedback.

4. Learning Walks (for classroom-based activity)

The Quality Lead and IQAs will conduct learning walks in order to monitor the quality of delivery at that particular time. However that is not an indication that the Tutor/ Assessor is effective all of the time, just a snapshot of the quality of teaching and learning. Learning Walks can be themed and matched to staff meetings / staff training identified that may have taken place. Findings are recorded and again, used to develop practice and our commitment to continuous quality improvement.

5. Moderation of IQA's Sampling of Learners' Work (for classroom-based activity)

The Quality Lead and IQA's will moderate learners work which has been quality assured or sampled to ensure that the qualification criteria and standards have been met and the qualification achieved. The selection should represent a range of abilities and all subjects delivered. These findings will highlight good practice and inform any training needs.

6. Self-Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan

The Learning and Skills Manager will demonstrate full commitment through annual self-assessment and will support the use of the key learning processes and ensure the quality system is accessible to all staff and achieves the intended results of the business.

On an annual basis, all staff will be involved in the completion of a Self-Assessment Report (SAR) based on the above evidence and any external evidence sources. The SAR is crucial in identifying strengths and areas of development which should be backed-up with clear and explicit evidence. This should be reviewed regularly to inform progress and impact of each education contract. These areas of development then inform the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) which is completed annually and also reviewed regularly. The SAR and QIP review should be discussed at each Team meeting and after annual completion should be sent to the Learning and Skills Manager.

7. Staff CPD (see Personal Development Policy for further detail)

TradeTechs Northern believes that staff development and learning should be an integral part of the organisation's strategic planning so that staff can perform their individual jobs effectively and, in doing so, ensure that the organisation achieves its objectives.

The central aim is therefore to provide an environment where continuous development can take place and where staff are supported and enabled to meet the changing demands and priorities of TradeTechs and learners.

To achieve this aim, learning and development needs will be regularly reviewed and staff will be encouraged to play an active part in identifying their own learning needs, selecting appropriate learning methods and in assessing the outcomes and effectiveness of their learning.

Options for learning and development may include

- On the job learning/learning from others in the organisation
- Internal workshops/learning for groups or teams
- Self-paced learning / open learning books, videos
- Off-job courses run by TradeTechs Northern or other providers
- Visits to other organisations
- Mentoring including support from a suitably qualified external Consultant

All staff from all services within the organisation will attend **mandatory** staff training which will include updated training of Safeguarding, Prevent, E-learning, Equality and Diversity, British Values and Health and Safety. All staff will also be involved whenever a policy and procedure is renewed, to support the review and implementation under our continuous improvement cycle.

Our annual staff away day will also be used to upskill and develop staff and share good practice. There will also be an opportunity for the SAR and QIP to be reviewed and actioned so that all staff are aware of our key priorities for improvement and play their part in achieving these.

Learning & Development Process & Induction

An induction programme helps new staff to familiarise themselves with the organisation, get to know others and to become more quickly at ease in a new work environment.

All new staff will take part in an induction programme including an introduction to TradeTechs Northern.

Coaching in immediate work processes and tasks and for inducting new staff into the organisation will be the responsibility of the Learning and Skills Manager or/and Quality Lead.

Please see Personal Development Policy for further details of our commitment to CPD.

Identifying & Assessing Learning Needs

TradeTechs Northern believes that this should be an ongoing process for all staff. Individual staff learning needs will be formally identified during the annual staff appraisal and staff review process. Other individual or collective learning needs may be identified within staff groups or at team meetings and discussed.

The Quality Lead will ensure that the learning needs of the staff are reviewed annually.

Learning Review & Reports

The Quality Lead and Learning and Skills Manager will have responsibility for analysing the effectiveness of TradeTechs Northern's staff development programmes.

Annual Learning Plan & Budget

The development of an annual learning plan will include areas of learning development specified in TradeTechs Northern. Time off for learning, reimbursement of travel costs and payment of membership fees will be at the discretion of the Learning and Skills Manager. A final programme of learning will be agreed at the beginning of the financial year, when funding has been secured and learning budgets can be realistically assessed. The programme may be amended or added to during the year, to take account of new priorities, or in response to newly identified learning needs.

Learning Requests

All learning requests will be considered sympathetically. However, the availability of learning resources will depend on factors such as budgetary constraints, work commitments and learning priorities necessary to fulfil the organisation's objectives. In practice, there may be occasions when a learning request is postponed or refused due to other priorities. A further budgetary consideration will be the extent to which skills acquired through learning can be applied within the organisation, within a reasonable time period. Individual staff members may be interested in obtaining accreditation or a nationally recognised qualification. TradeTechs Northern will be sympathetic to requests of this sort, where the learning has a demonstrable relevance to TradeTechs Northern's objectives, and in co-operation with the staff member will seek to provide appropriate support and assistance.

8. Learner Recruitment

This process should include initial Information Advice and Guidance which should enable potential learners to make an initial decision as to the suitability of a programme. The aim of recruitment is to enable TradeTechs Northern to make an initial decision as to the suitability of the potential learner to undertake an appropriate education programme.

This process has two elements: Information gathering and Initial interview

A range of information will be gathered to enable the Learning Administrator to manage the initial interview effectively. The purpose of the initial interview is to:

Provide the learner with information to enable them to make an informed judgement about the suitability of a course.

To ensure the learner is being placed on the correct course at the correct level

To analyse previous qualifications achieved, levels and timelines

To analyse previous work experience, occupational area and timelines

To identify the level of learner support required - personal / looking for work

Identify whether a potential learner has sufficient interest and motivation to complete the programme.

Arrangements for Learners with Special Assessment Requirements

The assessment must be available to all those who have the potential to achieve the standards required for a qualification. However, some learners may need access to alternative means of providing evidence and/or additional support. Care needs to be taken that any proposed assessment methods are of equal quality and rigour to standard assessments to demonstrate that the learner has achieved the required standard. The assessment must be inclusive and must meet the needs of all learners as outlined by the Equality Act (2010).

Learners may need appropriate support in their development to help them meet the required standards, such as:

- Adapted equipment and/or physical environment
- Extra time allowance to complete tasks

Learner initial assessment and induction

TradeTechs Northern ensures that the learning programmes offered to learners, are appropriate to their needs and their capability to meet the requirements of the programmes in question.

To ensure that TradeTechs Northern are placing the right learners on the right programmes, i.e. ones that meet the learners' needs, add value to their personal life, job search opportunities, destination opportunities or organisations they work for, it is vital that each element of the process is carried out effectively:

The Quality Lead is responsible for ensuring that staff understand their responsibilities, in relation to recruitment, selection, initial assessment and induction.

TradeTechs Northern believes that all learners should benefit from an induction that:

- Enables them to confirm that their chosen learning is appropriate for their needs
- Signposts or refers them to other opportunities where appropriate
- Prepares them to gain maximum benefit from their chosen learning
- Sets out what they can expect from their course and from TradeTechs Northern
- Provides them with information relevant to their course, their support needs and possible progression opportunities

The induction process should take place on the first day of learning

The purpose of the induction is to ensure that learners have all necessary information to enable them to complete their programmes safely and successfully. The content of inductions may vary depending on the structure and content of programmes. The induction process must include as a minimum:

- Programme content, delivery and assessment arrangements
- Equality and Diversity
- Health and Safety including Safeguarding and Prevent
- Commitment to British Values
- Appeals process

These activities will be integrated with recruitment and induction activities. The purpose of these activities is to determine what learning support needs learners may have, and to tailor training programmes to learners' needs. In some instances, this may determine that a level of a programme is inappropriate for them.

Depending on the programme learners are to undertake, they will participate in one or more of the following:

- Initial assessments
- Learner training needs analysis to identify any existing knowledge, skills and behaviours relevant to the programme they are to follow
- Learning style identification

Curriculum design

Tutors and Assessors will:

- Understand the requirements of the course or NVQ being delivered.
- Be fully cognisant of the requirements of the assessment plan.
- Ensure that learners develop and exemplify the required behaviours.
- Be subject experts.
- Have high levels of technical expertise.
- Be able to distinguish between levels of performance.
- Give and record detailed feedback to show progress over time.

Curriculum design should bear in mind the current or potential employers' requirements to ensure that not only is the qualification achieved, but also that the learning journey reflects the job description, knowledge and required. The delivery should also take into account the skills and behaviours identified during the learner interview, training needs analysis and skill scan.

10. Internal Verification and Sampling

The IQA system seeks to ensure all assessment is fair, consistent and meets TradeTechs Northern and Awarding Organisation requirements.

This policy has been designed to promote quality, consistency and fairness throughout the assessment and internal verification activities. It aims to ensure that standards of assessment are maintained over time.

This document is applicable to everybody involved in assessment administration, management, verification and moderation of any TradeTechs Northern qualifications.

The IQA will be responsible for establishing the Verification/Sampling strategy sampling plan and subsequent implementation. As a standard, the range of workbooks or portfolios to be sampled will be 100% in the first 3 months of delivery and then consistent with the recommendation of the awarding bodies thereafter.

If any quality issues are raised, the 100% sample will be extended and the frequency of IQA visits will be increased. This will be agreed by the Quality Lead and IQA. An appropriate development plan will be agreed between the Tutor/ Assessor and the IQA.

Internal Quality Assurance Aim:

Is to ensure effective management of assessment and verification processes, effective support for assessment and verification personnel, and to quality assure the outcomes of assessment in-line with TradeTechs Northern and Awarding Organisation requirements

Internal Quality Assurance Objectives:

- Operate from established verification policy and procedures that are reviewed where required in-line with the centres' quality control arrangements
- Ensure that the assessment and verification teams understand and follow all the centre policies and procedures
- Ensure that equality and diversity is embedded throughout the verification and assessment activities
- Ensure quality via accurate and effective assessment of all learners
- Monitor and ensure consistency of assessment outcomes via appropriate interpretation of awarding organisation criteria
- Review and evaluate the quality and consistency of assessment at different stages of the assessment process
- Maintain accurate and current records of verification and moderation
- Standardise all components of the assessment where appropriate
- Carry out continuous improvement activities to ensure all corrective actions best practice guidelines requested by the external verifier/ TradeTechs Northern IQA/ Learning and Skills Manager.

When Sampling, factors to be considered include:

- Tutors / Assessors; Assessment and delivery experience, competence, current and working towards qualifications, current workload and occupational experience and competence
- Methods of assessment; Questioning, observation, witness testimony, product evidence, assignments, projects and tests, professional discussion and portfolios
- Records; Reports from Tutors/ Assessors, correct assessment practices, IQA records, learner portfolios, meeting notes and EQA reports/actions
- Internal Quality Assurance Planning
- Standardised assessment practice
- Health and safety practice, safeguarding, equality & diversity and prevent strategy
- Additional support of new employed and associate qualified and trainee Tutor/ Assessors
- Standardisation activities across all Tutor/ Assessors and IQA's within each qualification
- Each IQA must use TradeTechs Northern's IQA procedures and associated recording systems
- This plan is developed and monitored by the Quality Lead and the IQA team to ensure that the verification process is standardised throughout the company:

- Each IQA creates their own sampling plan and is responsible for working to the agreed sampling plan
- The IQA is reminded the activities must be carried out throughout the period of assessment. Under no circumstances can sampling only take place towards, or at the end of learner assessment. It is expected that first sampling is planned within the 1st 3 months of learning. Findings will be included in the process for risk banding and grading
- For a full qualification, a single unit or units will be identified by the IQA to sample across all Tutor/ Assessors. This will form part of the internal verification process.
- For trainee Tutor/ Assessors or qualified Tutor/ Assessors that are new to TradeTechs Northern, 100% of work will be sampled across all units at different points in each learners' period of assessment. The IQA must identify on their sampling plan how many units per qualification they are sampling for each Tutor/ Assessor

The IQA will also need to focus on all additional areas of IQA responsibility.

This includes:

- Monitoring all practice
- Monitor all teaching and learning by observation
- Monitoring learner evidence

Based on the findings of the above the IQA may amend the sampling proportion. Where it is necessary to vary from the sampling plan, the reasons should be recorded and the variations clearly added to the sampling plan.

Newly employed personnel

- Each unit assessed by trainee Tutor/ Assessor is overseen and countersigned by a qualified Tutor/ Assessor, including feedback to trainee Tutor/ Assessor
- The qualified Tutor/ Assessor supporting the trainee Tutor/ Assessor judgements, must confirm and agree all the relevant units

The IQA must complete all relevant IQA records timely and in line with TradeTechs Northern's procedures throughout the assessment process for all their Tutors / Assessors.

Internal Quality Assurers Competencies

All those who quality assure qualifications internally must have up-to-date working knowledge and experience of best practice in assessment and quality assurance and show current evidence of continuing professional development in assessment and quality assurance in the relevant areas

IQA Induction

The Quality Lead will ensure that IQA's have access to all relevant information and resources and understands the processes & procedures and recording requirements.

12. Standardisation

It is important to standardise Tutor / Assessor judgements in order to ensure that each Tutor / Assessor consistently makes valid decisions and that all learners are assessed fairly. Standardisation sessions will be carried out at least once per quarter unless there are significant changes within the sector or following significant feedback from EQA visits.

The Quality Lead will be responsible for planning standardisation meetings and will follow a standard agenda. Tutors/ Assessors are expected to participate. Topics regularly covered in this session include:

- Improvement Plan relevant action
- Qualification achievement rates
- Results and analysis of observations of assessment, reviews and teaching and learning
- Strategic and sector developments
- Discussion of new qualifications and evidence requirements
- Problem units – where it has been identified that a number of candidates are having problems understanding the criteria or gaining advice
- Tutors / Assessors may be asked to share experiences of dealing with alternative forms of evidence or candidates with special needs
- Discussion on hot topics and embedding
- Internal quality assurers discuss sampling requirements and problems encountered with monitoring observation
- EQA visits and feedback from awarding bodies

The effective implementation of this strategy will be monitored on an ongoing basis through the IQA standardisation meetings.

13. Evaluation

- A 'learner voice' approach is implemented to obtain feedback from learners at observation and through feedback forms (paper-based or electronically)
- An 'employer voice' (where appropriate) approach is implemented to obtain feedback from employers at observation and feedback forms (paper-based or electronically)
- Staff and stakeholder surveys will be taken formally and informally, including at staff away day, team meetings and self-assessment.

Feedback results will be analysed by the Quality Lead. The results will be shared and actions agreed at team meetings and standardisation meetings attended by IQAs and other staff. All feedback will be analysed and the results fed into the business action plan and self-assessment report. Complaints will be dealt with promptly and logged. The complaints and appeals process will be followed.

14. Managing Quality

The Quality Lead with the support of the IQA's will ensure that assessment / training resources are effectively managed and planned. They provide a link between the awarding body, QCA and other regulatory bodies, and provide an overarching quality assurance role for the company.

15. Malpractice

If Malpractice is identified at any stage the person identifying this must report their findings to the Quality Lead who will investigate and record their findings. If required they will then inform the appropriate Awarding Organisation.

17. Related Policies and processes

Performance Management Policy, Personal Development Policy.