

Approved Training Centre (ATC) Internal Standardisation Guidance

V19.1



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Introduction

This guidance document has been developed to provide Approved Training Centres (ATC) with guidance on effective internal standardisation. This guidance must be used in conjunction with Safety Training Awards ATC manual, qualification specifications and assessment strategies, these can be downloaded from the Safety Training Awards website.

We have provided some example documents within the appendices of this guidance that may be used during internal standardisation or ATCs may choose to use their own documentation.

Purpose of standardisation

The purpose of internal standardisation is to monitor the standards to make sure the assessment decisions across all ATC staff are consistent and reliable, this also confirms that all qualification assessment requirements have been met. Internal standardisation plays an important role to guarantee similar processes and assessment decisions are valid regardless of what location / site a learner has completed an STA qualification.

Internal standardisation is a process to check that the quality of assessment is:

- **Valid** – Assessor decisions and feedback are relevant to what has been assessed
- **Authentic** – The work has been produced by the learner
- **Current** – The learners work is relevant at the time of assessment for the assessors to be confident that the learner has the appropriate level of skills or knowledge
- **Sufficient** – The learners work meets the qualification assessment requirements
- **Reliable** – The assessment process is consistent across all learners over a period of time and meets the required level.

The three main stages of assessment where internal standardisation plays an important role are:

- Planning the assessment
- Producing the evidence and expectations
- Standardising ATC staff assessment decisions.

Internal standardisation should be an ongoing process and it should include the following stages:

- Reviewing ATC assessment paperwork
- Sampling assessment evidence
- Reviewing assessment practices
- Standardisation of assessment decisions.

Responsibilities

The ATC Co-ordinator is responsible for ensuring that assessment decisions are consistent across all sites and all assessors within the ATC. The External Quality Assurer (EQA) will want to see evidence of how this has been achieved in practice and they will sample assessment decisions to ensure consistency is maintained. EQAs will be able to provide advice and recommendations with planning and delivering standardisation activities.

For internal standardisation to be completed the ATC Co-ordinator must take responsibility for the process as listed below:

- Provide clarification on the assessment requirements, including feedback from previous assessments

- Provide support to the ATC staff who are involved in the assessment process
- Co-ordinate assessment practices
- Monitor the observations of assessment practice to ensure the assessment standards meet the qualification requirements
- Sample assessors judgements
- Check that all assessment decisions are valid, fair and reliable
- Ensure all assessors decisions meet the required standards
- Feedback to assessors and identify development needs, document the findings and keep records
- Recommend ways for assessments to be bought in line to meet the standards
- Ensure all units have been included within the internal standardisation activities
- Keep and maintain records of assessments
- Arrange regular standardisation meetings and activities for the assessors (see **appendix I** – meeting template)
- Act as the point of authority for any disagreements in assessment outcomes, including appeals
- Liaise with Safety Training Awards and the ATCs allocated EQA.

Process of Internal Standardisation

The Setting of Assessments

Safety Training Awards provides a qualification specification and assessment strategy for all regulated qualifications, they must be used for the delivery and assessment of all STA courses. The most recent documents are available to download from the Safety Training Awards website and must be used by ATC staff to assess learners in line with the required standards.

On occasions when a learner needs a reasonable adjustment or special consideration the ATC Co-ordinator must follow the procedures within the Safety Training Awards Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy, this is available to download from the website. Any requests must be submitted by using the reasonable adjustments and special considerations form, this can be found on the Synergy homepage when you log in. Approval must be granted by Safety Training Awards before any adjustments are made by the ATC, this will ensure the assessment process is fit for purpose and fair for all learners.

The reasonable adjustment and special consideration process allows all learners to meet the requirements of the qualification specification and / or the unit being covered by the assessment.

When a reasonable adjustment or special consideration has been requested and approved via the ATCs Synergy account, a full audit trail for monitoring and quality assurance purposes will be provided and can be used for internal standardisation activities.

Standardising the delivery of Assessment

Prior to the delivery of assessment, it is essential that all ATC assessment staff have a common understanding of the qualification and / or unit specifications and assessment requirements. This should reduce the risk of there being different interpretations of the assessment requirements between ATC staff. It is important to agree what type of evidence is expected to make sure the assessment requirements are met. Witness statements may be used as types of evidence; however it is best practice to agree what level of detail is expected within them, will there be a question and answer section and will the statement be linked to the assessment requirements. This should reduce the risk of there being discrepancies in evidence provided by different assessors.

We would recommend that ATCs arrange a meeting for all tutors and assessors after a number of assessments have been completed within an ATC, this will allow the tutors and assessors to reach a common understanding of how the learners evidence is assessed. This should reduce any variances in interpretation. It is essential that the ATC Co-ordinator keeps a record of any standardisation activities, for example minutes of the meetings.

A suitable method used in internal standardisation is to review samples of learner evidence and ask each assessor to independently assess it. This should be followed by a discussion around the grading and feedback that is agreed by each assessor and any queries are discussed and considered in detail. This method would also allow assessors to explore specific units that may be more complex or a particular assessment method used in the units. The methods above should be completed on a regular basis and not just as a one-off activity. The ATC Co-ordinator must keep records of all standardisation activities that are completed, please see appendix I for examples.

Assessment Decisions and Sampling Assessments

It is essential that all ATC assessment staff meet on a regular basis to internally standardise the assessment of regulated qualifications. These meetings must be arranged by the ATC Co-ordinator but may be led by an approved Internal Quality Assurer (IQA) or a suitably qualified member of ATC staff. Whoever is tasked to lead the meetings may entirely depend upon the knowledge and experience of that person as they will be expected to provide guidance to other ATC staff.

This process should allow all ATC staff to reach the same assessment decision and mark all assessment materials to the same standard. When the ATC Co-ordinator is confident that this is the case, they will agree that whichever tutor / assessor has been involved in the assessment process, there is a consistent standard regardless of who has marked the assessment materials.

If an ATC only has one member of staff delivering STA regulated qualifications we would recommend that the ATC Co-ordinator identifies another member of ATC staff who has experience delivering a similar regulated qualification or has relevant subject knowledge. They may arrange a meeting to discuss the expectations and methods of assessment and the activities noted above may be used but on a smaller scale. The ATC Co-ordinator must keep records of all standardisation activities that are completed, please see **appendix I** for examples.

Standardisation Activities

Qualification specifications and assessment strategies issued by Safety Training Awards must be used as a starting point.

Records must be kept of all activities and / or meetings that are used for standardisation purposes. In general standardisation there is an opportunity for assessors and internal quality assurers to:

- Share ideas
- View each other's practice, compare work and completed documentation
- Reach a common understanding about the centre requirements
- Consider approaches to delivery and assessment
- Consider and compare others judgement decisions.

Below are some examples of standardisation activities that could be used:

| Standardisation activity | What is involved |
|---|--|
| Discussing requirements and agreeing on expected outcomes | ATC Co-ordinator, IQA's, assessors and tutors discuss the contents of a unit to identify what and how they need to be delivered, what are learners asked to do to meet their learning outcomes and assessment outcomes and what results are expected. |
| Assessing other learners | ATC Co-ordinator provides the ATC staff with assessments from a unit from one learner to discuss the outcome. |
| Observation of a recorded activity to provide feedback | ATC Co-ordinator / IQA records an activity being assessed by an assessor and provides other assessors with the recording to assess the activity and complete the relevant documentation. Assessors can compare their judgements and feedback that would be delivered to the learners. This needs to be conducted in line with centre procedures in relation to use of recording equipment and all participants need to give their consent. |
| Observation of a recorded training session to provide feedback | ATC Co-ordinator / IQA records a training session, ATC staff observe the recording, complete an observation checklist and give feedback to the tutors / assessors. This needs to be conducted in line with ATC procedures in relation to the use of recording equipment. All participants need to give their consent. |
| Assessors judging evidence together | Assessors to examine and discuss evidence, agree on the assessment decisions and produce feedback for the learner. |
| Observations | ATC staff can observe others planning with learners, making assessment decisions and providing feedback to learners. The observer may complete an IQA observation form and use this to provide feedback that can be discussed and agreed upon. |

Sampling Strategy

Please refer to the Internal Quality Assurance guidance document for more information on sampling strategies, the guidance document is available to download from the Safety Training Awards website or contact the Centre Management Team to request a copy.

The sampling strategy within each ATC will vary depending on the assessors experience and the level of risk. The key principle should consider if the sample provides a realistic overview of the assessment activities within the ATC, and if there is confidence that the assessment decisions that have not been sampled meet the required standard.

The samples should reflect the following:

- Ranges of assessment decisions, for example, a variety of overall marks and quality of the evidence
- The experience of the assessor should be taken into account for the sample plan; for example, if the assessor is new to the ATC, the qualification being delivered or assessed, we would recommend that a larger amount of evidence is sampled compared to an experienced assessor
- If the assessment for a particular qualification is new to the ATC, we would recommend that larger amounts of evidence are sampled
- The amount of work sampled should be relative to the number of registrations being made for the qualification for that cohort
- All assessment methods for the qualification should be included within the sampling
- All learner cohorts, including from different sites should be included within the sampling.

So the above points are met we would recommend that ATCs create a standardisation sample plan prior to the assessment taking place, please see **appendix II** for an example plan.

When the assessment evidence is sampled it is recommended to cross reference learner evidence against the assessment criteria. A judgement can be made on whether the evidence has been accurately assessed and is in line with the assessment requirements.

Records of Internal Standardisation

All sampling activity must be documented and records should be kept, please see **appendix III** for an example record.

During standardisation activities if there is an inconsistency in the standards, the assessors judgements, expectations and / or marking then remedial action must be taken. Any evidence affected by inconsistencies must be re-assessed to ensure the standards are in line with the assessment requirements set out within the Safety Training Awards assessment strategy.

In addition to re-assessing work any inconsistencies should be fed back and discussed with the assessor, this will ensure the standards are reinforced which should eliminate any future incidents occurring. We would recommend that further monitoring of the assessor in question takes place until the ATC Co-ordinator is satisfied there are no further risks to the assessment process.

As part of the internal standardisation activities there should be a discussion surrounding the feedback from previous assessments to make sure there is clarity of expectations and address any issues encountered before.

We recommend that all internal standardisation evidence is uploaded to the documents section of the ATCs Synergy record.

Safety Training Awards Role

Awarding Organisations are required to carry out moderation and verification activities for all ATCs. There is an expectation that there is consistency in the assessments that are completed by an ATC, if the ATCs internal standardisation process is effective then this should be the case. If internal standardisation is not taking place this could lead to assessment decisions having an adverse effect on the learners outcome and could lead to the assessment materials being re-marked by the ATC and learners results being adjusted across an entire cohort. This would also have an effect on the ATCs overall risk rating.

There are common factors that may lead to issues around an ATCs approach to internal standardisation, they are as follows: (this list is not exhaustive)

- No sampling plan or strategy in place
- No planned internal standardisation activities
- Fixed date sampling that does not take in to account the whole assessment process
- A sampling rate that does not alter or adapt according to circumstances within the ATC and does not take into account things, for example, assessor experience, training needs, number of registrations in the cohort
- Record keeping is not at a satisfactory level and / or insufficient reports / records
- Lack of feedback / discussions with assessors.

For any further information regarding roles, responsibilities and operations within the ATC please refer to the ATC manual, this is available to download from the Safety Training Awards website.

Appendix I - Example standardisation meeting template

| | | | |
|----------------------------|--|----------------------------|--|
| Qualification title | | | |
| Level | | Unit | |
| Date of meeting | | Location of meeting | |

Standard agenda items

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|--|------------------|--|
| 1. Welcome | | | |
| 2. Qualification update | | | |
| 3. Feedback from EQA | | | |
| 5. Sampling update | | | |
| 4. Identified issues | | | |
| 6. Units to be standardised | | | |
| 7. Good assessment practice | | | |
| 8. AOB | | | |
| In attendance | | Apologies | |
| | | | |
| Minutes of meeting | | | |
| | | | |
| Actions | | | |

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Appendix II - Example sample plan

| | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Qualification title | | | | | | | | |
| Level | | Unit | | | | | | |
| ATC Co-ordinator name | | | | | | | | |
| Assessor name | | | | | | | | |
| IQA name | | | | | | | | |
| Date | | | | | | | | |
| Learner name | Unit details | Unit details | Unit details | Unit details | Unit details | Unit details | Unit details | Unit details |
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Appendix III - Example internal standardisation feedback record

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|--|--------------|-----------------------------|--|
| Qualification title | | | |
| Level | | Unit | |
| ATC Co-ordinator name | | | |
| Assessor name | | | |
| IQA name | | | |
| Date | | | |
| Learner name | Grade | Feedback to assessor | |
| | | | |
| Learner name | Grade | Feedback to assessor | |
| | | | |
| Learner name | Grade | Feedback to assessor | |
| | | | |
| Actions | | Action deadline date | |
| | | | |
| Assessor signature | | Date | |
| | | | |
| IQA signature | | Date | |
| | | | |
| IQA signature (confirming actions are complete) | | Date | |
| | | | |