

# Internal Quality Assurance Guidance for Approved Training Centres



## What is Internal Quality Assurance?

Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) quite simply put is a system in place to monitor and evaluate a **product** and **service**.

For your individual Approved Training Centre (ATC) delivering Safety Training Award's suite of qualifications this means:

- The **product** is the qualification the learner is working towards, for example the STA Level 2 Award in Safety Award for Teachers
- The **service** is everything which underpins the product and supports the learner i.e. the whole learning journey from booking through to issue of certificate.

IQA should identify and recommend measures to help improve the delivery and assessment of the qualification and the service you offer as an ATC.

IQA should ensure everything is working well and should help your ATC to become better.

The IQA process is not there to look for problems but simply to avoid potential problems and ensure each course is run to the same standard and then improved so your ATC can be the best it can be.

Internal Quality Assurance will monitor all parts of your learner's journey and everyone involved within their experience. It will monitor all your tutors and your assessors.

The ATC Centre Co-ordinator will appoint the Internal Quality Assurer (IQA) for each course and it may well be you have one IQA who oversees all the courses at your ATC or you may have several. IQA's are often Tutors and / or Assessors themselves. This is fine as long as they do not IQA their own assessment decisions. Therefore, the IQA must not be the Tutor or Assessor on the course they are reporting on.

The IQA must at a minimum have attended an STA IQA CPD or hold a Level 4 Award in Internal Quality Assurance and they must be suitably experienced in the qualification they are reporting on, therefore, they should either hold the qualification themselves or demonstrate experience of the qualification.

The ATC Centre Co-ordinator along with an IQA must produce a number of documents for the ATC which need to be uploaded to Synergy and updated regularly.

These are:

1. The IQA Policy
2. The IQA Strategy
3. The IQA Risk Rating and Sampling Plan

This guidance document will help you to understand what these three documents are and how they are produced.

## The IQA Policy

The IQA Policy lays out the personnel and procedures for your Approved Training Centre (ATC).

The policy must include a number of key decisions you have made in your ATC and be uploaded to Synergy and made available to the STA and / or your EQA on request.

It should be sent to all Tutors, Assessors and IQAs working within your ATC and there should be a signed declaration by each member that this has been read and understood.

The IQA Policy will be written by the ATC Centre Co-ordinator and will cover the following:

1. Who is the named person with the overall responsibility for the ATC's internal quality assurance:
  - ATC Centre Co-ordinator.
2. The roles and responsibilities of the team members:
  - ATC Centre Co-ordinator
  - IQA
  - Tutor
  - Assessor.
3. A stated commitment to recruit a qualified team, to include how you will support your team and aid their development:
  - Recruiting IQA's, Tutors and Assessors by checking CVs
  - Qualifications are collected and checked, including a valid safeguarding certificate (where applicable)
  - An interview takes place and competency checked
  - References are contacted
  - IQA's, Tutors and Assessors commit to continuing professional development and provide evidence
  - An appropriate Tutor / Assessor or IQA Agreement is signed
  - All of the above is uploaded to Synergy.
4. Details of the occupational competence, experience and qualifications Tutors and Assessors must hold for each of the Safety Training Awards qualifications you offer:
  - For each qualification the Tutor must hold the relevant qualification - **Level 3 Award in Education and Training and STA Tutor status in the correct discipline.** (Pool Plant Tutors are not required to hold the Level 3 Award in Education and Training)
  - For each qualification the Assessor must hold one of the following relevant qualifications:
    - **Level 3 Award in Understanding the Principles and Practices of Assessment**
    - **Level 3 Award in Assessing Competence in the Work Environment**
    - **Level 3 Certificate in Assessing Vocational Achievement and STA Tutor status in the correct discipline**
  - For each IQA the IQA must hold the relevant qualification - **Level 4 Award in Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice or the STA IQA CPD**
  - All of the above is uploaded to Synergy.

5. A list of the other supporting policies the ATC must have in place are:
  - Complaints Policy
  - Appeals Policy
  - Equality and Diversity Policy
  - Safeguarding Policy (where applicable)
  - Health and Safety Policy
  - Malpractice and Maladministration Policy
  - Conflict of Interest Policy (this is not a mandatory policy but a recommended one. If a centre does not produce their own, they must follow Safety Training Awards Conflict of Interest Policy)
  - All of the above are to be uploaded to Synergy.
6. How Tutors and Assessors will be risk assessed:
  - See the heading 'Risk Rating'
  - This is uploaded to Synergy.
7. A sample assessment strategy:
  - See next section 'The IQA Strategy'
  - This is uploaded to Synergy.
8. Details of how standardisation will take place in your ATC and when:
  - See the heading 'Standardisation'
  - All standardisation evidence is uploaded to Synergy.

The IQA Policy for your ATC must be uploaded to Synergy – 'documents' then 'add document' and use the version numbers to keep track of the most current. It should also be made available to STA and EQA on request.

## The IQA Strategy

The IQA Strategy is your starting point for planning all IQA activity. It will lay out how you are going to follow the learner's journey from start to finish and ensure monitoring takes place.

Developing an IQA Strategy will help you plan, whilst taking into account any risk factors.

The ATC Centre Co-ordinator is responsible for creating the IQA Strategy and could do this in conjunction with an IQA.

In order for you to write this strategy the following needs to be considered:

- What will be monitored, by whom and when
- Which Tutors and Assessors will be observed
- How you will sample paperwork and portfolios
- When you will interview learners
- How you will give feedback to Tutors and Assessors
- When and how standardisation meetings will take place
- How you will support your Tutors and Assessors.

The ATC Centre Co-ordinator will do this by looking at the planned courses for the year, the number of different Tutors, the number of different Assessors and the number of different sites (venues) and ensuring monitoring is scheduled. As the year progresses more courses may be planned and therefore the ATC Centre Co-ordinator will make adjustments to the IQA Strategy to take into account the added courses, new Tutors, Assessors and sites.

STA expect all ATC IQAs to carry out the following minimum face to face observations:

1. One Tutor observation per Tutor, per year
2. One Assessor observation per Assessor, per year
3. New Tutors are observed delivering their first course
4. New Assessors are observed on their first assessment.

Any of the above can be doubled up – i.e. the Tutor and Assessor could be observed on the same course on the same day. This would mean just booking the IQA for one visit (this would apply to tutor / assessed courses).

Generally the face-to-face observation does not need to take place on the first day of the course. The exception to this is the STA Level 3 Award in First Aid at Work Qualification and the Level 3 Award in Emergency First Aid at Work where a face to face observation must take place during the first day.

Thereafter, the minimum IQA activity expected is:

1. The courses detailed on your IQA sampling plan using a range of methods:
  - Learner interviews
  - Paperwork checks
  - Portfolio checks.
2. If an ATC delivers only 2 courses a year:
  - Both courses must have face to face observations.

New Tutors, following their initial face to face IQA observation, should be monitored on their next two courses using a range of methods:

- Learner interviews
- Paperwork checks
- Portfolio checks

The inexperience or experience of the Tutor / Assessor, plus other factors will also deem how much IQA activity takes place. This is worked out using your Risk Rating.

## **Cirrus**

If an ATC chooses to use the online system 'Cirrus' to complete the learners assessments this must be included within the ATCs IQA strategy and IQA sampling plan. The IQA must determine how many assessments will be sampled via the online system and add this to the ongoing planning.

Once the IQA has sampled the assessments all evidence must be documented via the electronic Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) Performance Report in Synergy, including any supporting evidence that may be downloaded from Cirrus.

More information on IQA sampling can be found below in the section 'IQA Sampling'.

## **IQA Risk Rating**

For your Tutors and Assessors you need to perform a risk assessment on them to determine their risk rating. This will take into account various factors.

To risk rate your team you need to take into account the following and work out if they are high, medium or low risk. This risk assessment is dynamic and will determine at any given time what and how you will perform IQA activities.

It is the ATC's job to decide on risk rating and this can be done by the ATC Centre Co-ordinator with the help of an IQA. There are various factors which decide risk rating and this can depend from qualification to qualification but laid out below is a guide to start you:

**High Risk** – A high risk Tutor or Assessor could be one or more of the following:

- A probationary Tutor or Assessor
- Newly qualified to deliver Safety Training Awards qualifications
- A Tutor or Assessor who is newly appointed to operate within your ATC
- An experienced Tutor or Assessor who is operating across more than two other ATCs
- A Tutor or Assessor who has been sanctioned by Safety Training Awards or another Awarding Organisation (AO)
- Major action points been given during recent IQA activity
- A qualification has been re-written and therefore it is new to the Tutor or Assessor.

It is recommended a high risk Tutor has a 100% of all course paperwork internally quality assured and face to face observations are increased.

**Medium Risk** – A medium risk Tutor or Assessor could be one or more of the following:

- A Tutor or Assessor who has delivered less than 10 courses
- They may have moved down from 'high risk' due to recent successful IQA activity
- An experienced Tutor or Assessor who operates for 2 or less other ATCs
- They have no sanctions applied by Safety Training Awards or another AO
- Minor action points given during recent IQA activity.

It is recommended a medium risk Tutor has 50% of all course paperwork internally quality assured.

**Low Risk** – A low risk Tutor or Assessor could be one or more of the following:

- An experienced Tutor or Assessor who has delivered over 10 courses
- They may have moved down from 'medium risk' due to successful recent IQA activity
- A Tutor or Assessor who only operates for your ATC
- They have no sanctions by Safety Training Awards or another AO
- There are no actions points from recent IQA activity.

It is recommended a low risk Tutor has 25% of all course paperwork IQA.

Team members can move up and down risk rating depending on the outcome of recent IQA reports. It is a dynamic process. The ATC Centre Co-ordinator and IQA should work with the Tutors and Assessors to give feedback on action points or other areas and plan how to support the team members moving down the categories towards 'low'.

Information on risk rating and regular updates on the outcome of risk ratings must be uploaded to Synergy – 'documents' then 'add document' and use the version numbers to keep track of the most current. It should also be made available to STA and EQA on request.

## **IQA Sampling**

Once you have taken all the above into account the ATC Centre Co-ordinator can plan how often IQA activity is going to take place, this can be done with the help of an IQA. Below are some examples to help you understand sampling further:

## Example 1 - Andy

Andy is a brand new Tutor to your ATC. He has recently joined your ATC and has not long passed his probationary moderation on the STA Level 2 Award in Teaching Swimming. He is yet to run an STA Level 2 Certificate in Teaching Swimming. Andy has been offered work for two other ATCs.

### How are we going to plan his IQA?

First of all, we need to perform a risk assessment. Using the guide in the 'risk rating' section above we know:

- Andy is high risk because he is a new Tutor to your ATC
- Andy is high risk because he is a new Tutor
- Andy is high risk because he works for two other ATCs

Our risk rating tells us Andy is high risk and needs 100% sampling.

Using the guide in the IQA strategy section we know we need to:

- Andy needs to have a face to face observation on his first course as a new Tutor
- Andy needs to have a face to face observation on the first course he assesses
- Andy needs to have one face to face observation on tutoring and one face to face observation on assessing a year (which will be covered by the first two bullet points).

As ATC Centre Co-ordinator you have scheduled Andy to deliver two STA Level 2 Award in Teaching Swimming courses, an STA Level 2 Certificate in Teaching Swimming course and be the Assessor of another course. Therefore, your IQA plan is going to look something like this:

**Award Course 1** – Face to face tutor observation of Andy and post course interview of learners then 100% of portfolios and paperwork.

**Award Course 2** – 100% portfolio and paperwork check and learner interviews by phone.

The information gathered from these two courses will mean you can risk assess Andy again and re-assess his risk rating. If Andy has major action points from the first two courses he will stay as 'high'. If Andy has minor action points from these courses you may consider moving him down one level to 'medium' and you would then plan to IQA 50% of his next Award course.

**Certificate Course 1** – This is Andy's first time delivering the course and therefore, a face to face observation will take place and 100% of portfolios and paperwork will have IQA activity.

**Assessor Role** – Face to face assessor observation of Andy.

Depending on the outcome of this you will review Andy's risk rating. If he has major action points he will remain at 'high' and on his next assessor job he will have a face to face observation again. If he only has minor action points his IQA activity will be decreased and you may check his paperwork from the assessing.

## Example 2 - Paula

Paula is an experienced Tutor for your ATC. She has been delivering courses for you for some time and IQA activity has taken place. It is the start of the new year and you are looking ahead at the courses scheduled and planning IQA activity. Paula works for two other ATC's, delivering first aid qualifications.

Paula works for no other ATC's delivering Baby and Pre-School qualifications or Pool Lifeguard. Paula has a number of minor action points on her recent IQA report with regards to delivering the STA Level 3 Award in Emergency First Aid at Work. She has no action points for the STA Level 2 Award in Aquatic Teaching – Baby and Pre-School. The STA Level 2 Award in Pool Lifeguarding qualification has recently been rewritten so is new to her.

### How are we going to plan her IQA?

First of all we need to perform a risk assessment. Using the guide in the 'risk rating' section above we know:

- Paula is low risk because she is an experienced Tutor with your ATC
- Paula is low risk because she is an experienced Tutor
- Paula is medium risk because she has minor action points for the STA Emergency First Aid at Work
- Paula is low risk because she has no action points for the STA Baby and Pre-School
- Paula is low risk for Baby and Pre-School as only works for your ATC
- Paula is medium risk for First aid as she works for two other ATCs
- Paula is high risk for Pool Lifeguard as it is a new course to her

Our risk rating tells us Paula is low risk for the STA Level 2 Award in Aquatic Teaching – Baby and Pre-School and medium risk for the STA Level 3 Award in Emergency First Aid at Work and high risk for STA Level 2 Award in Pool Lifeguarding.

Using the guide in the IQA strategy section we know we need to:

- Paula needs to have a minimum of one face to face observation a year for tutoring and a minimum of one face to face observation for assessing across multiple disciplines.

As ATC Co-ordinator you have scheduled Paula to deliver six STA Level 2 Award in Aquatic Teaching – Baby and Pre-School and eight STA Level 3 Award in Emergency First Aid at Work courses. Paula will deliver four STA Level 2 Award in Pool Lifeguarding courses. Therefore, your IQA plan will be split in three and is going to look something like this:

### Baby and Pre-School – Low risk

Course 1 – 25% of portfolio and paperwork check

Course 2 – no IQA

Course 3 – 25% of portfolio and paperwork check

Course 4 – no IQA

Course 5 – learner interviews

Course 6 – 25% of portfolio and paperwork check

You would re-assess the risk rating after each IQA report and depending on the outcome Paula would move up or down the risk rating.

### Emergency First Aid at Work – Medium risk

Course 1 – 50% of portfolio and paperwork check

Course 2 – no IQA

Course 3 – 50% of portfolio and paperwork check

Course 4 – no IQA

Course 5 – 50% of portfolio and paperwork check plus learner interviews

*After this course Paula had addressed all action points and you therefore decided she was now low risk.*

Course 6 – 25% of portfolio and paperwork check

Course 7 – no IQA

Course 8 – 25% of portfolio and paperwork check.

You would always re-assess the risk rating after each IQA report and depending on the outcome Paula would move up or down the risk rating. In this case she moved down.

### Pool Lifeguard – High risk

Course 1 – Face to face observation on tutoring plus learner interviews

*Action points rising from this – stay at high risk*

Course 2 – 100% portfolio and paperwork check

*Action points still not addressed – stay at high risk*

Course 3 – Face to face observation of tutoring

*Action points addressed – drop to medium risk*

Course 4 – 50% portfolio and paperwork check

The IQA Policy for your ATC must be uploaded to Synergy – ‘documents’ then ‘add document’ and use the version numbers to keep track of the most current. It should also be made available to STA and the External Quality Assurer (EQA) on request.

It is important to remember IQA is **internal**, therefore, the minimum standards set by Safety Training Awards must be adhered to (**please refer to the flowchart in the appendix**). How you plan and carry out IQA activity is an internal matter for your ATC but on your external quality assurance visit the EQA will examine your IQA policy, strategy, risk rating and sampling as well as look at reports and other policies. You must be able to justify your rationale for how you are conducting IQA activity on your courses and the EQA will make action points for you to address if needed.

Uploading all documentation to Synergy will help keep all your documents in one central file and help with the EQA visit. It could mean an EQA visit is not necessary as the EQA can access the files remotely (this would depend on your centres risk rating as to whether a visit was performed face to face or remotely).

## **Additional Information**

If you need any further information on how to operate effectively as an ATC or on the roles and responsibilities of the ATC staff, please refer to the ATC Manual. This is available to download from the Safety Training Awards website.