

News story: Consultation on awarding organisation controls for centre assessments

Ofqual has today (25 February 2019) published [a consultation on proposed changes to the way awarding organisations manage and oversee centre assessments](#). These changes are intended to ensure that appropriate controls are in place so that standards are consistent, whenever and wherever an assessment is taken.

Our rules allow awarding organisations to devolve some responsibility for assessments to schools, colleges and training centres, including through a practice commonly known as Direct Claims Status. However, we have found evidence to show that the variety of approaches currently in place to manage this provide different levels of oversight. We have also found that the terms 'moderation' and 'verification' are often used interchangeably and inconsistently with our rules.

[This consultation](#) recognises that centre assessment is central to the way many different qualifications function, and does not look to end it. Instead, we propose to:

- clarify our existing definition of moderation, and provide a new, separate definition for verification
- require awarding organisations to produce centre assurance strategies that explain how their centre assessment arrangements work
- set minimum requirements in certain qualifications
- set minimum requirements for awarding organisation verification processes, including a minimum of two monitoring visits and an additional unannounced visit per centre every year

Sally Collier, Chief Regulator, said:

We have conducted a detailed review of the use of centre assessment and believe that there are risks that can be managed better. We know that there are circumstances in which learners and employers can benefit from centre assessment, particularly in terms of the potential speed a qualification can be awarded. But the controls that awarding organisations have in place with centres must be sufficiently robust for the public to have confidence that assessment standards are being maintained between training providers and over time.

Ailin O'Cathain, Head of Policy, Federation of Awarding Bodies, said:

We welcome the opportunity to feed back on the proposals on

Moderation and Verification of centre assessments. We will be working closely with our members in the coming weeks to gather their views and feed back on the proposals. It will be important to view the proposals in relation to the validity of qualifications, which is something our members are committed to.

It will also be important to focus on the manageability of the proposed requirements. We will need to ensure they add value without placing a disproportionate burden on awarding organisations or the centres we work with.

Mark Dawe, Chief Executive, Association of Employment and Learning Providers, said:

While to many it sounds like a technicality, the differences between verification and moderation are critical, particularly in terms of the timely confirmation of apprentices and students achievements. Ofqual have been very clear in their proposed approach and the potential issues.

As well as the regulatory approach, assessment organisations will need to commit to process speeds, whatever form of assessment is used.

We are interested in hearing from anyone concerned with how qualifications are assessed, including awarding organisations, training providers, business groups, colleges, trade bodies, schools organisations, employer partnerships and learners.

Those who are involved in centre assessment will also be an important source of feedback, and we particularly welcome their input.

[The consultation](#) is open until 20 May 2019.

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