



# Vtct

## ***Assessment Guidance Handbook***

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## 1. Introduction

The Assessment Guidance Handbook is designed to give guidance and support to centres on assessing VTCT qualifications. The purpose of assessment is to measure the knowledge, understanding and skills attained by learners against a specific qualification standard.

Additional guidance and support can be found in qualification specifications and/or record of assessment books for the qualification. Where regulatory requirements or assessment strategies exist these must be considered alongside this guidance. VTCT's EQAs are also available to provide guidance and support on the how to carry out assessment of VTCT qualifications.

For queries about external assessment (exams) or series-bound qualifications, please contact VTCT's assessment department via [exams@vtct.org.uk](mailto:exams@vtct.org.uk).

## 2. Assessor and quality assurance requirements

### 2.1 Qualification requirements

Assessors, IQAs and EQAs must hold appropriate qualifications which will ensure a minimum level of understanding of the essential elements of an assessment and internal quality assurance system. At least one qualification from the table below must be obtained for the relevant role. In addition Assessors, IQAs and EQAs are required to be qualified in the qualification, equivalent or above that they are assessing or quality assuring.

Role	Recognised qualifications
Assessor	D32 Assess candidate performance & D33 Assess candidate using differing sources of evidence; A1 Assess candidate performance using a range of methods; Level 3 Award in Assessing Competence in the Work Environment; Level 3 Award in Assessing Vocationally Related Achievement; Level 3 Certificate in Assessing Vocational Achievement.
Internal Quality Assurer	D34 Internally verify the assessment process; V1 Conduct internal quality assurance of the assessment process; Level 4 Award in the Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice; Level 4 Certificate in Leading the Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice.
External Quality Assurer	D35 Externally verify the assessment process; V2 Conduct external quality assurance of the assessment process; Level 4 Award in Externally Assuring the Quality of Assessment Processes and Practice; Level 4 Certificate in Leading the External Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice.

## 2.2 Assessor roles and responsibilities

Assessors are appointed by centre to carry out internal assessment. Assessors are responsible and accountable for:

- managing the assessment system, from assessment planning to making and recording assessment decisions;
- assessing evidence of learner competence against qualification criteria;
- ensuring learner evidence is valid, authentic and sufficient;
- maintaining accurate and verifiable assessment and achievement records.

## 2.3 IQA roles and responsibilities

IQAs are necessary in the assessment and quality assurance process as they ensure:

- the accuracy and consistency of assessment decisions between assessors operating at the centre;
- that assessors are consistent in their interpretation and application of the qualification criteria.

IQAs are appointed by the centre and are responsible for:

- regularly sampling evidence of assessment decisions made by assessors (including observation of assessment practice);
- maintaining up-to-date records of internal quality assurance and sampling activity and ensuring that these are available for external quality assurance;
- ensuring that assessors interpret qualification criteria and
- monitoring and supporting the work of assessors;
- facilitating appropriate staff development, training and standardisation for assessors;
- ensuring that any action required by VTCT is carried out within agreed timescales.
- arranging the checking and countersigning process for unqualified assessors;

*IQAs may only quality assurance evidence that they did not assess.*

## 2.4 EQA roles and responsibilities

EQAs are appointed and contracted by VTCT, EQAs will perform a number of visits a year based on VTCT's Quality Assurance Monitoring Strategy. EQAs are responsible for:

- confirming that centres continue to meet VTCT's approved centre criteria;
- recommending sanction to be applied on centre, when deemed appropriate;
- confirming that the centre is using qualified and occupationally competent assessors and IQAs;
- sampling assessment decisions to confirm that decisions are being made consistently and against qualification criteria;
- confirming that that regular IQA sampling occurs;
- checking that claims for certification are authentic, valid and supported by records;
- confirming that centres have carried out required actions;
- advising and supporting centres on qualifications criteria;
- advising and supporting centres on VTCT's requirements, policies and processes;
- providing centres with up-to-date information.

## 2.5 Unqualified assessors and IQAs

Centres must ensure that unqualified assessors and IQAs are registered on an appropriate qualification and have an action plan and timeframe for completion. Centres must ensure that all decisions made by unqualified assessors or IQAs are countersigned by a qualified and occupationally competent assessor or IQA respectively.

### *3. Storage, record and retention requirements*

VTCT's storage and retention requirements for portfolios and exam papers are stated in the VTCT Centre Handbook. The Centre Handbook is available on the VTCT website [here](#).

### *4. Learner support*

An important part of the assessment and quality assurance process is to allow learners to take ownership of their qualification. This can be achieved if the learner is given the necessary support and access to resources, starting from their induction. The learner needs to be given the record of assessment book and/or qualification specification for their qualification. This will ensure that the learner:

- knows what has to be done;
- agrees any shortfalls in competence;
- is a willing partner in taking action and making improvements.

Additionally, an overview of the assessment and quality assurance process should be explained to the learners, with the learners being given access to the centre's appeals and complaints procedure.

It is of vital importance that learners are given the full facts regarding what is involved in the qualification before committing to it. It is the centre's responsibility to assess the learner and make the decision whether to accept them on a particular course of training for a VTCT qualification.

The centre should provide learners requiring reasonable adjustments appropriate advice and guidance, and encourage learners to pursue qualifications which they have a reasonable chance of reaching the required standard.

As part of the induction process, the centre must make learners aware that if selected for sampling by an EQA they may be required to attend the centre on a day and/or time that is different to their normal attendance. All learners selected for sampling must attend the EQA visit, other than in extenuating circumstances. The centre must ensure that the learner understands that the EQA is monitoring the centre's assessment and quality assurance process, rather than the learners, to allow VTCT to trust the centre's judgement and enable the processing of certification. This requirement is also stated in VTCT's Learner FAQs, available [here](#).

### *5. Formative, summative and synoptic assessment*

VTCT strongly advises centres to use 'holistic assessment', where the assessment covers the whole service that the learner is performing, not just a small segment or task. Assessments are used to judge the learner competence and progress, as such learners must be informed in advance of the type of assessment. The centre must ensure that they maintain accurate records detailing assessments undertaken and outcomes/achievement, including, if appropriate, in the learner's record of assessment book.

### 5.1 Formative assessment

Formative assessment is used to *monitor* learner competence and progression. Formative assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning and involves the assessor providing informal feedback to enable learners to improve their work to achieve a higher grade. It is important to consider the scheduling of formative assessment to allow learners sufficient time to take action and improve. VTCT does not prescribe the number of formative assessments that the centre should undertake, however formative assessment should be recorded and made available to the IQA and EQA when necessary.

### 5.2 Summative assessment

Summative assessment is used to *evaluate* learner competence and progression at the end of a unit or component. Summative assessment should take place when the assessor deems that the learner is at a stage where competence can be demonstrated. The qualification specification and/or Record of Assessment book will provide the number of summative assessments that are required. Learners are required to be registered before any summative assessments are complemented.

### 5.3 Synoptic assessment

Synoptic assessment is a form of assessment which requires learners to demonstrate that they can identify and use effectively in an integrated way an appropriate selection of skills, techniques, concepts, theories and knowledge from across the whole area. Some qualifications. Some VTCT qualifications use synoptic assessment to assess competence of a whole qualification using learning from multiple areas. The synoptic assessment may contribute to the overall grade of the qualification.

## 6. External assessment

External assessment is a form of assessment in which question papers, assignments and tasks are specified by VTCT, then taken at the centre under specified conditions (including details of supervision and duration). Marking and external moderation judgements are made by VTCT.

### 6.1 Invigilation arrangements

All external assessment must be administered in accordance with either the VTCT Invigilation Arrangements (available on the VTCT website [here](#)) or the 'JCQ Instructions for conducting assessments'. Centres must ensure that appropriate guidance is available to and understood by invigilators. The IQA must monitor that invigilation is being applied correctly.

VTCT recommends as best practice that invigilators becomes qualified in the Level 3 Award in Invigilating Test and Examinations.

### 6.2 Multiple choice question papers (MCQs)

Many of VTCT's qualifications require learners to take an external assessment paper(s) at the end of specified units, these will usually be multiple choice question papers. These are available paper based or online.

### Paper-based testing

Paper-based exams and mark schemes can be downloaded securely from the VTCT website. Centre will be required to mark the papers internally using the mark schemes provided. The centre must store and retained all papers in compliance with VTCT's storage requirements, such that these can be inspected by the EQA on future visits.

### Online e-testing

Exams taken online via Linx2Achieve, will be marked by the system, with results populating the learner's VTCT e-portfolio, where used. The results of the exam will be available to the centre's exams officer (the individual who has the secure login for the centre) with feedback on performance and areas that have not yet been achieved. This feedback should be retained in the learner's portfolio.

More information on VTCT's e-portfolio (Linx2Record) and e-testing (Linx2Achieve) is available on the VTCT website [here](#).

### 6.3 Series-bound question papers

Some of VTCT's qualifications have examination papers which is set and marked by VTCT in set windows. The following table indicates whether a qualification is able to be sat paper-based, online or offline (examination is downloaded to be sat and uploaded back into the system). A link for further information on each qualification is also given.

Qualification	Paper-based testing available	Online e-testing available	Offline e-testing available	Further information
Principal Learning	✓	x	x	<a href="#">Click here</a>
Functional Skills	✓	✓	✓	<a href="#">Click here</a>
AM20530 VTCT Level 2 Certificate in Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy (VRQ)	✓	✓	x	<a href="#">Click here</a>
SP2C1 VTCT Level 2 Certificate in Sport and Active Leisure (VRQ)	✓	✓	x	<a href="#">Click here</a>
HC2C1 VTCT Level 2 Certificate in Hospitality and Tourism (VRQ)	✓	✓	x	<a href="#">Click here</a>

Series-bound qualifications will have key dates published that will indicate deadlines for assessment and results release dates. Series-bound qualifications will have variable grade boundaries which are set as part of the awarding process after marking.

### 6.4 Resits, resubmissions and topping up

The qualification specification and/or record of assessment book will state whether resits or resubmissions are restricted or not allowed. In some cases resits and resubmissions may be limited and/or only available where learners have not met the pass requirement. Learners should only be required to resit or resubmit work after an appropriate period for updating and revision. VTCT will charge for resits in accordance with the fee published in the Qualifications Catalogue.

Some VTCT qualifications require all criteria to be met, thus where a learner has passed but not achieved 100%, some units will require the learner to be further assessed by oral questioning or other methods to meet all criteria not yet achieved by in question paper.

## 7. *Internal assessment*

Methods of assessment are detailed in the qualification specification and/or record of assessment book. Internal assessment is set marked and internally quality assured by the centre to clearly demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes. During EQA visits, the EQA will sample internal assessments. Examples of common internal assessment and guidance are given below. All internal assessments must be signed and dated by the assessor and/or IQA to ensure authenticity.

### **7.1 Portfolio of evidence**

As part of many qualifications learners will be required to produce a portfolio of evidence. The portfolio will confirm the knowledge, understanding and skills that you have learnt. The centre must provide learners with guidance on how to prepare the portfolio of evidence and how to show practical achievement and understanding of the knowledge required to successfully complete a qualification. The portfolio of evidence and, if used, the record of assessment book will serve as the main source of evidence for a qualification. Evidence in the portfolio may include the following:

- Observed work
- Witness statements
- Audio-visual media
- Evidence of prior learning or attainment
- Written questions
- Oral questions
- Assignments
- Case studies

All evidence should be documented in the portfolio and cross-referenced to learning outcomes.

### **7.2 Assessment of practical services**

Assessment of a practical service will be observed and assessed against the given performance criteria and competence must be demonstrated over a period of time. Assessment of a practical services must be carried out in the workplace or a realistic working environment. The assessor must be sufficiently satisfied that the learner has covered the range to a competent level, as required by the standards, and within a commercial time limit.

### **7.3 Oral questioning**

Oral questioning can be used to supplement other methods of assessment and used to ensure that ranges and essential knowledge are met. Answers to questions need to be adequate and follow-up questions can be used if clarification is needed. VTCT trusts the judgment and professionalism of the assessor; therefore oral questions do not need to be recorded, only that the outcome has been achieved through oral questioning.

### **7.4 Projects and assignments**

Projects and assignments may be used where this meets the qualification requirements, but should be used in conjunction with other assessment methods to confirm the competence and authenticity. Each project or assignment should be clearly headed with a criteria sheet and marked against the assessment criteria.



## 8. Reasonable adjustments and special considerations

VTCT operates a policy of open and equal access to all its qualifications and so enables centres to submit applications for the reasonable adjustment or special consideration of a learner. The following definitions are taken from Ofqual's General Conditions of Recognition.

### **Reasonable adjustments**

Ofqual defines reasonable adjustments as adjustments made to an assessment for a qualification so as to enable a disabled learner to demonstrate his or her knowledge, skills and understanding to the level of attainment by the specification for that qualification.

### **Special considerations**

Ofqual defines special considerations as considerations to be given to a learner who has temporarily experience an illness, injury or some other event outside of the learner's control, which has had, or is reasonably likely to have had, a material effect on that learner's ability to take an assessment or demonstrate their level of attainment in an assessment.

To help centres with reasonable adjustments and special considerations, guidance and forms are available on the VTCT website [here](#).

## 9. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Recognition of Prior Learning is a method of assessment that considers whether a learner can demonstrate that they can meet the assessment requirements for a unit through knowledge, understanding or skills that they already possess and do not need to develop through a course of learning. Centres are required to have a RPL policy, and provides a template for centres to adapt to their needs, available [here](#). VTCT provides further guidance for centres in its Recognition of Prior Learning Policy on the VTCT website [here](#).

## 10. Sampling strategy

VTCT requires all centres to ensure the quality assurance and quality control of all learner assessment including validity, authenticity and sufficiency. VTCT supports this by providing external quality assurance to centres, which includes the sampling of internal and external assessment and internal quality assurance conducted by the centre.

The sampling strategy applies to internal and external assessment that is assessed or marked by the centre. External assessment completed via VTCT's e-testing system (Linx2Achieve) fall outside of this strategy, as exams are automatically marked through the system. External assessment that is externally moderated by VTCT falls outside of this strategy; VTCT will inform the centre of the sampling requirement for any such assessment within a qualification (e.g. Principal Learning, Project, AM20530 VTCT Level 2 Certificate in Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy (VRQ)).

### **10.1 Centre sampling guidance**

As part of the Internal Quality Assurance process, the centre is required to devise a sampling strategy to ensure that assessment decisions are accurate and consistent, and that the assessor(s) are interpreting and applying qualification criteria correctly.

IQAs are responsible for sampling assessment decisions and need to take a sufficient sample to satisfy the quality assurance of assessment decisions. VTCT does not prescribe a number of learners or percentage that must be sampled, but offers the following guidance for centres.

Therefore the centre's sampling strategy should:

- increase the level of sampling for qualifications being delivered for the first time;
- increase the level of sampling for unqualified assessors and new assessors;
- ensure that all or the majority of learners are sampled across the units of a qualification;
- not restrict sampling to a certain learners;
- plan for sampling to allow for sufficient review;
- include all assessors for a particular qualification;
- reduce the level of sampling, where consistency and accuracy has been reliably demonstrated by assessors.

The centre must record and maintain the details and outcomes of all sampling activity and make these records available to the EQA on request. IQAs will maintain a substantially higher level of sampling than EQAs.

If a centre is in doubt about their sampling plan, they can contact their EQA

### **10.2 EQA sampling strategy**

As part of an EQA visit, the EQA will require access to assessments and records to satisfy them that all learners are being appropriately assessed and internally quality assured. The EQA will inform the centre, when arranging a visit, of the learners selected for sampling. This will allow the centre sufficient time to inform learners of the requirement to attend for the purpose of sampling. The EQA will also randomly sample learners being assessed on the day, this could include observing practical assessment and reviewing portfolio evidence.

Sampling will allow the EQA to check that the centre's assessment and internal quality assurance processes are effective and sufficient, and therefore will be satisfied to agree the centres recommendation for the certification of learners. The EQAs sample selection and size will be derived using the following criteria.

#### **Sample selection**

Over a number of visits, the EQA will select a random sample covering:

- assessment decisions of assessors;
- assessment methods;
- assessment locations;
- learners at different stages of their award;
- internal quality assurance decision of IQAs;
- assessment records;
- internal quality assurance records.

### Sample size

The level of sampling will be influenced by a number of factors including:

- risk rating of the centre;
- size of the centre;
- number of assessors;
- number and range of sites for assessment;
- number and characteristics of Learners (e.g. access arrangements);
- range of assessment methods used by assessors.

### Sampling internal assessment

EQA sampling may include observing assessment, reviewing project and assignments, oral questioning or reviewing other supplementary evidence included in a learner's portfolio of evidence. The EQA will need to hold discussions with Assessors, IQAs and Learners.

### Sampling external assessment

Where the centre is administering paper-based multiple choice question papers, the EQA will sample a number of assessment papers sufficient to ensure that marking is consistent and accurate. Where e-testing (Linx2Achieve), marking is completed by the system, therefore a sample is not required.

Where applicable the EQA will check how the centre is additionally assessing learners to demonstrated 100% achievement of the learning outcomes (e.g. oral questions) and how the IQA monitors this.

## 11. Authenticity of evidence

The authenticity of learner work is the responsibility of the centre. For internally assessed units, declarations of authenticity must be completed by the learner and countersigned by the assessor. Centre must ensure that all learner evidence can be validated through internal and external quality assurance or moderation. Where a qualification has a specific declaration of authentication form, this must be completed. Where this does not exist the centre should ensure that either the declaration on the front of the record of assessment book is complete or the 'VT19 – Declaration that evidence is authentic' is completed. This general form is available [here](#) (login required).

The authenticity of external assessment will be assured through the effective invigilation arrangements implemented by the centre.

## 12. Language of the assessment

### 12.1 English, Welsh, Irish, British Sign Language or Irish Sign Language

All learners taking VTCT qualifications will normally be assessed in English, however where required VTCT will make qualifications available to be assessed in British Sign Language, Welsh in Wales, or Irish or Irish Sign Language in Northern Ireland. Any centre wishing to assess in any of these languages must make a request in writing to VTCT.

## 12.2 Other languages

VTCT is not obliged to offer any qualification, or assessment materials, in languages given above. However VTCT may make qualifications available in other languages, where appropriate. A charge may be made for providing this service, but this will be discussed and agreed with the centre beforehand. Centres in the UK should, first consider alternative support mechanisms for their learners, before selecting translation especially if the learner is seeking employment within the UK.

The centre needs to request assessment in other languages, from VTCT, at the earliest possible opportunity as there is a time lapse from a decision to agree to the assessment being conducted in that language and the translation of any test papers.

## 12.3 Additional requirements

At the point of registration, the centre is required to indicate the assessment language for each learner, where a language is not identified, the assessment language will be recorded as English.

Where a qualification is taken in language other than English, VTCT will clearly identify as assessment material as being written in those languages. Further any certificates will be endorsed 'The assessment for this qualifications has been undertaken in the language of XX' as required by VTCT's regulators.

If you have any questions or want more information, please contact [exams@vtct.org.uk](mailto:exams@vtct.org.uk).