Assessor Training
The importance of quality assurance in the assessment process
Introduction

Quality assurance is an important part of the assessment process. There are a number of practices that contribute to assuring the quality of the assessment process at different levels and a number of personnel involved in the chain of quality assurance. This pdf includes links to sources of information where you can gather information to develop your knowledge about the quality assurance process.

The chain of quality assurance

Assessors

Assessors are responsible for preparing learners for assessment for qualifications. They will plan assessments, conduct assessments in line with awarding organisation guidelines, make decisions and provide feedback to learners and contribute to the quality assurance chain by keeping accurate records of all their assessments. The specific records maintained and retained will be determined by the organisation that the assessor works for and the requirements of the awarding organisation that awards the qualifications they assess. The records maintained may include: assessment planning records, observation checklists, feedback records, question and answer records, assessment outcome records and action plans and samples of learner work/evidence (written assignments etc.)

Links:
- An example of a syllabus
- An example of assessment paperwork
- An example of CYQ guidance for assessors

The internal quality assurer

The internal quality assurer is responsible for ensuring all approved centre practice and procedures adhere to awarding organisation guidelines and industry standards. Part of their role will be ensuring that the centre they work with has appropriate policies in place to manage different aspects of the assessment process (eg, Fair assessment policy, appeals policy and procedure, internal quality assurance policy, recognition of prior learning policy, health and safety policy, equality and diversity policy etc.). The internal quality assurer is also responsible for ensuring that assessor practice meets awarding organisation guidelines. As part of their role, they will check assessment practice (sometimes through direct observation of the assessor and sometimes by sampling assessment paperwork retained by the assessor) – in many ways they are ‘assessing’ the assessor’s practice, in that they are making an informed judgement about the skills and competence of the assessor and ensuring that the practice of all assessors is standardised, so that the learner has access to a valid, reliable and fair assessment.
The internal quality assurer will use the information they gather to plan standardisation meetings and activities (such as, peer shadowing or observations), they will also make comparisons of assessor judgements to check the consistency of assessment across different assessors, different learners and different units within the context of the specific qualification(s) being assessed. They will ensure that a comprehensive approach is taken to the assessment from the assessment planning stage (identifying learner needs and recognising prior learning etc.) through to the decision making and assessment outcome stage and will check that assessors maintain appropriate records that will need to be sampled by the external quality assurer. The internal quality assurer will also make recommendations for additional training and development for assessors. The internal quality assurer will maintain their own records, which also form part of the audit trail. These records may include: a sampling plan, internal quality assurance reports, minutes of assessor meetings and records of any standardisation activities.

Links:

- An example of CYQ policy
- An example of CYQ role and records
- Role of IQA and examples of IQA record

The external quality assurer

The external quality assurer is a representative of the awarding organisation. They will visit centres to check consistency of assessment within the centre and across other centres (comparison of centres). They will check that each centre has appropriate management systems and policies in place. They will also sample the activities of the internal quality assurer (plans and reports) and evidence of assessment (assessment records and decisions) to ensure that all practices conform to awarding organisation requirements. They will report on their findings to both the centre (usually via the internal quality assurer, who will disseminate information and follow up on any actions required) and also to the awarding organisation. Any discrepancies in practice will be highlighted and a time frame negotiated for these actions to be completed. Centres who do not comply within the timeframe may be sanctioned by the awarding organisation and in extreme cases, may have their approved status removed.

The awarding organisation develops qualifications (syllabii and assessment specifications) that map to the National Occupational Standards (NOS) that have been developed by the respective industry Sector Skills Council (SSC). The awarding organisation recruits and trains external quality assurers who are technically competent to quality assure their qualifications and report on centre activities. Ofqual is a regulatory body that oversees the qualifications that are placed on the qualification framework. Ofqual regulates the practice of awarding organisations to ensure that they have robust procedures for developing and administering the approval of centres to deliver their qualifications.
Conclusion and actions

As you can see the quality assurance chain involves many processes, personnel and organisations, each have an important part to play in maintaining the integrity of qualifications and ensuring that the assessment process is robust. Take some time to make notes here to help you to evaluate the importance of quality assurance in the assessment process. You may want to consider:

- what could happen if these processes did not exist?
- how might a lack of quality assurance systems impact on the standards within your industry?

You may wish to speak with other assessors and internal quality assurers to gather their thoughts.