

Role of the External Quality Assurer (EQA)

The role of the YMCA Awards EQA is to:

- Advise and support centres on the requirements for units/qualifications delivered
- Monitor the provision within approved YMCA Awards centres
- Monitor the assessment and internal quality assurance process
- Ensure standardisation of assessment within and between centres
- Provide feedback to the centre and YMCA Awards

Responsibilities of the EQA

The EQA is responsible for:

- Monitoring programme delivery and assessment practice and ensuring the continuity and consistency of quality
- Providing information and guidance on YMCA Awards requirements for approved centres
- Acting as the key link between the centres own quality assurance system, in particular with the Internal Quality Assurer (IQA), to ensure that all internal systems are being implemented effectively
- Monitoring assessment practice to ensure consistency within the centre and across the range of centres for which they are responsible
- Communicating and reporting information about consistent interpretation of standards by centres and across centres and supplying feedback and recommendation on all aspects of delivery and assessment to YMCA Awards
- Maintaining flexibility when dealing with centre operations, in accordance with YMCA Awards requirements and centre needs

Please note: In adopting a flexible approach, YMCA Awards will seek to offer support and guidance to centres to achieve and maintain the required standards for accreditation, with the overriding objectives that:

- *The principles behind YMCA Awards requirements are followed*
- *A rigorous approach to systems operations is maintained*
- *Some mandatory requirements remain non-negotiable*

Visit responsibilities and notification to centres

An EQA will be appointed by YMCA Awards to carry out the initial centre approval visit and all subsequent quality assurance visits to centres. Visits will normally take a minimum of four to five hours and will involve meeting key personnel engaged in programme delivery, assessment and quality assurance

Before the visit:

The EQA is responsible for making contact with the centre prior to their visit. They will inform centres of the:

- Date and time of visit
- Details of any special arrangements which should be made
- Aspects of the approval submission they wish to discuss in more detail or which require clarification (centres applying for centre approval only)
- Aspects of programme delivery, assessment and quality assurance which they wish to discuss in more detail or which require clarification
- An EQA may request access to a learner's collection of evidence (portfolio). Advance warning of the learners to be sampled will be given. This will allow centres to retain or recall portfolios as appropriate (see Record Keeping Guidance on the YMCA Awards website)

NB: Cancellation of an EQA visit by the centre will incur a fee if notification is made less than 14 days prior to the visit date (please refer to Terms and Conditions on the YMCA Awards website)

During the visit the EQA will be required to:

- Meet the Centre Contact, IQA and other members of the programme delivery and assessment team to ensure understanding of their roles
- Review the management and quality assurance systems (assessment and internal quality assurance)
- Sample the staff and physical resources that are stated for programme delivery and assessment
- Discuss the proposed or current programme, assessment strategies and internal quality assurance procedures
- Follow up action points from previous visits if appropriate
- Give any help or guidance requested based on knowledge and experience
- Audit reasonable assessment adjustments and/or special considerations records, plus learner evaluations for the relevant YMCA Awards units and qualifications
- Audit assessment paperwork and decisions to confirm adherence to YMCA Awards criteria and national standards
- Return a written report to YMCA Awards within seven working days to make a recommendation regarding centre approval status
- Provide a written report to both YMCA Awards and the Centre Contact providing feedback and appropriate recommendation for action (if applicable)

Please note: It is essential that centres provide access to all appropriate records

Centre Sanction - Centres who fail to respond to an EQA's attempts to contact the centre to arrange a visit, may incur a sanction which could lead to centre approval being removed.

Sampling of assessment and internal quality assurance

The link between sampling for centre internal monitoring systems and external quality assurance is based on the EQA being informed of the systems in place within the centre, and linking to the internal quality assurance sampling plan to inform their own sampling strategy.

The EQA, in sampling assessment practice within a centre, is able to choose from a range of recognised sampling methods.

The EQA will report and make recommendation on all aspects of the standards including:

- Learner profile/achievement monitoring (indication of effective reasonable assessment adjustments)
- Management systems
- Human resources
- Internal quality assurance
- Assessment
- Physical resources
- Learner guidance and support opportunities
- Assessment records including Exemption/RPL/Equivalence
- Learner evidence (portfolio/interview)

Consistency and comparability

YMCA Awards will ensure comparability between centres' interpretation of the standards over time and across the suite of units and qualifications with a range of measures including the use of standardised assessment criteria. Other monitoring procedures will include:

- Standardised paperwork issued to centres
- Training to familiarise EQAs with YMCA Awards requirements
- EQAs carrying out quality assurance activities across a range of centres, sampling similar qualification programme delivery
- YMCA Awards monitoring of EQA performance is conducted by the YMCA Awards Lead Quality Assurer and Regional Quality Assurers who undertake direct observation of EQA performance
- External Quality Assurance Risk Assessment visit reports
- Lead Quality Assurer monitoring reports and EQA decisions and following up on action recommendations
- Centre training days
- Centre feedback on EQA visits
- Internal customer service audits to evaluate service provision
- Standardised resources