

Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) Strategy

Elevate EPA Ltd
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IQA Strategy

Purpose

The purpose of IQA is to systematically monitor assessment activities, ensuring adherence to the principles of assessment, and aligning with relevant regulatory requirements and End Point Assessment Plan.

Elevate EPA Ltd (Elevate) is dedicated to maintaining a standardised approach to internal quality assurance practices that are open, fair, unbiased, and characterised by accurate and detailed record-keeping.

Oversight Responsibilities

The Executive Director and Ofqual Responsible Officer, Melanie Feek, in collaboration with IQA Lead are responsible for the implementation and enforcement of this policy.

Responsibilities and Implementation

The policy is communicated to all staff and contractors involved in end-point assessment operations. All personnel engaged in end-point assessment are obligated to respect and adhere to the Elevate IQA policy and procedures.

Role of IQA (Internal Quality Assurer)

The role of an IQA, including Lead Internal Quality Assurer/s, is crucial to the success, achievement, and positive outcomes of any qualification. The Elevate IQA Lead is responsible for the overall implementation and monitoring of IQA. This IQA Strategy will be communicated to all staff involved in the operation of end-point assessments, all of whom have a responsibility to respect and follow this IQA Strategy. The role of IQA is of paramount importance to the overall success, achievement and positive outcomes for any qualification. This document applies to any Lead Internal Quality Assurers who may be in post.

Internal Quality Assurance Process Areas

Elevates' internal quality assurance process encompasses seven key areas:

- 1. Support in the Preparation of Assessment Activities:** Ensure sufficient resources are in place to carry out the assessment. The IQA collaborates with the Lead assessor and those responsible for developing assessment documentation, ensuring relevance to the knowledge and competence level specified in the Standard. This includes reviewing and updating guidance and support documents and ensuring compliance with regulatory requirements.
- 2. Advise, Support, and Develop Assessors:** The IQA Lead provides guidance, evaluates assessor effectiveness, and supports professional development. This includes offering advice on assessment best practices and ensuring ongoing development and training opportunities as set out in our Assessors Induction and Training Overview.
- 3. Verify and Confirm Assessment Decisions:** The IQA Lead samples assessment evidence, verifies assessor decisions, checks grade accuracy, and ensures proper feedback. Additionally, the IQA reviews summative comments to verify alignment with assessment activities and apprenticeship Standard requirements.

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- 4. Provide Action Points and Developmental Feedback:** The IQA Lead offers feedback to assessors, confirming assessment validity, and suggesting improvements. They follow up to ensure actions are implemented and maintain the "IQA - Assessor RAG Rating Tracker" after each IQA activity.
- 5. Carry Out Regular Monitoring and Standardisation Activities:** The IQA Lead, in collaboration with the Managing Director, plans and conducts quarterly monitoring and standardisation activities to ensure consistency and adherence to regulatory requirements, the Standard End Point Assessment Plan and the Elevate Sampling Strategy and IQA Process as set out below.
- 6. Maintain Accurate and Timely Records:** The IQA Lead conducts Quality Assurance/IQA sampling activities, produces reports, and ensures secure storage of records, complying with GDPR and making records available for external audits.
- 7. Preparing for External Visits:** The IQA Lead collaborates with the Managing Director to ensure all documentation is audit-ready and available for external quality visits.

IQA Standardisation and Moderation Process

Standardisation: Standardisation in the context of Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) refers to the process of ensuring consistent and uniform assessment practices across different assessors, apprentices, cohorts, and assessment activities. This is crucial for maintaining the integrity and reliability of the assessment outcomes.

Elevate recognises the significance of standardisation in achieving high-quality end-point assessments. Elevate holds quarterly standardisation events throughout the year which all assessors and the IQA Lead are expected to attend.

The Standardisation Process involves:

- 1. Training and Development:** Provision of ongoing training to assessors to ensure they are updated on the latest Standards, End Point Assessment Plans, and regulatory requirements as set out in our Assessor's Induction and Training Overview.
- 2. Calibration Meetings:** Calibration is an approach that Elevate EPA applies to ensure consistent standards for judging the quality of apprentice's assessments. Organising regular calibration meetings where assessors discuss and compare their assessment decisions to ensure alignment with the established Standard End Point Assessment Plans.
- 3. Standardisation Materials:** Development and dissemination of standardisation materials such as benchmark criteria as set out in our Guidance and Information Handbook for Assessors, exemplars, and scoring guides as set out in our Assessor Marking Documents to guide assessors in making consistent judgments.

Moderation

Moderation in the context of Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) refers to the process of reviewing and confirming the quality of assessment decisions made by assessors. It ensures that assessments are fair, accurate, and consistent. Elevate employs a rigorous moderation process to maintain the highest standards in end-point assessment.

The Moderation Process involves:

1. **Sampling and Reviewing:** Selecting a representative sample of assessments for review, covering a range of apprentices, assessors, and assessment methods as detailed in our Sampling Strategy/Plan below.
2. **Criteria Assessment:** Evaluating assessments against predetermined criteria, including **validity, authenticity, currency, sufficiency, and reliability** as set out in our Assessor Marking Documents to ensure alignment with the established Standard End Point Assessment Plan.
3. **Feedback and Development:** Providing feedback to assessors based on the moderation results, highlighting areas of improvement and offering support for professional development as set out in our Assessors Induction and Training overview.
4. **Continuous Improvement:** Incorporating insights gained from the moderation process into ongoing improvements in training, guidance, and assessment materials. This includes Assessors conducting mock assessments e.g. Professional Conversation, as part of our assessor's induction and annual training and gathering assessment data for reporting.

The IQA Lead plays a central role in overseeing and facilitating both standardisation and moderation processes. Their responsibility extends to maintaining comprehensive records of all standardisation and moderation activities, including outcomes and actions taken for improvement.

By implementing robust standardisation and moderation processes, Elevate aims to guarantee the reliability, fairness, and transparency of its end-point assessments, contributing to the overall success of apprentices and the credibility of the organisation.

Allocation of Internal Quality Assurers

Elevate allocates Internal Quality Assurers based on their significant experience in quality assurance and relevant qualifications as detailed in the relevant End Point Assessment Plan. The Managing Director is responsible for the allocation process.

Management and Staff Induction

An appropriate IQA Lead is appointed before a new Standard begins, and assessors undergo induction sessions conducted by the Managing Director to clarify requirements and expectations.

Commitment to Continuous Improvement

Elevate is committed to continuous monitoring, reviewing, and updating of its service. This commitment involves collaboration with EQA providers, close work with the IQA Lead and Managing Director, and ongoing self-monitoring and improvement efforts.

End Point Assessment Tools and Delivery

Elevate ensures the design and delivery of end point assessment tools align with regulatory requirements and the Standard End Point Assessment Plan, are fit for purpose, current, and undergo regular reviews. Assessors and IQAs are provided ongoing support and training to maintain high-quality assessments.

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Ongoing Improvements

Elevate engages in continuous improvement efforts through statistical analysis, evaluations, surveys, and maintaining a secure audit trail. Elevate ensures transparency, consistency, and validity of end-point assessment outcomes.

Complaints and Appeals

Elevate has established a Complaints and Appeals Policy for the proper lodging and investigation of complaints and appeals related to assessment decisions.

Sampling Strategy and Plan

Correct sampling entails reviewing the quality of the assessment judgement by evaluating how Independent Assessors have reached those decisions. The IQA Lead must be able to follow an audit trail, which demonstrates assessors have checked that the evidence presented meets the standard outlined in the End Point Assessment Plan.

The evidence must be confirmed by assessors, as detailed in the Assessor Marking Documents within the Assessors and IQA comments areas as follows:

- **Valid:** Relevant to the standard and the claimed competence level.
- **Authentic:** Produced by the apprentice with proper ID verification.
- **Current:** Recent enough to reflect the apprentice's current skills, understanding and knowledge.
- **Sufficient:** Comprehensive and meeting all standard requirements.
- **Reliable:** Pertinent to the job role and sector, ensuring consistent grading by different assessors or EPAOs.

Risks

Identifying potential risks in the Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) process is crucial for maintaining the integrity and reliability of the assessment. Such risks include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Assessment Bias

Risk: Unintended bias in assessment materials or procedures may favour or disadvantage certain groups of candidates, particularly those with additional needs.

Mitigation: We will provide training for assessors on diversity and inclusion, ensure the inclusion of diverse perspectives in question development, and actively address the needs of apprentices with additional requirements.

2. Inconsistency in Assessment Standards

Risk: Variability in the interpretation and application of assessment criteria, particularly with newly appointed assessors.

Mitigation: We will implement a thorough induction process for new assessors, including training, to ensure alignment with established standards.

3. Assessor Reliability

Risk: Assessors may exhibit inconsistencies in their judgment over time, particularly when working remotely.

Mitigation: We have established clear communication channels and conduct regular standardisation and calibration sessions, and monitor assessor performance, especially where assessors are working from home.

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4. Security Breaches

Risk: Unauthorised access to assessment materials may compromise the confidentiality of questions and answers, especially when working from home.

Mitigation: We have secure remote access protocols and will conduct regular security audits to safeguard assessment materials.

5. Lack of Transparency

Risk: Inadequate communication and transparency may be exacerbated when working remotely.

Mitigation: We will utilise virtual platforms e/e/ Microsoft Teams for transparent communication and ensure that all stakeholders are informed of changes to procedures or standards.

6. Technological Issues

Risk: Technical glitches may pose a greater challenge when assessors are working remotely.

Mitigation: Provide robust technical support, offer training on the ACE360 platform, and ensure contingency plans in place for technical issues related to remote work.

7. Insufficient Training for Assessors

Risk: Newly appointed assessors may lack the necessary skills or understanding of assessment criteria.

Mitigation: Implement an intensive induction and training program for new assessors, including detailed guidance on assessment criteria, standards, and expectations.

8. Inadequate Candidate Support

Risk: Candidates with additional needs may face difficulties in understanding assessment requirements or accessing support materials.

Mitigation: we will implement accessible and inclusive communication strategies, provide tailored support materials, and establish channels for addressing specific needs.

9. Failure to Address Changes in Standards and Assessment Plans

Risk: Changes to standards and assessment plans resulting from IfATE review processes may not be adequately incorporated into the assessment process.

Mitigation: We will ensure that we stay informed about updates from IfATE review processes, conduct regular reviews of assessment materials, and update content accordingly to align with the latest standards.

Sampling Plan

The IQA Lead must create and maintain a sampling plan and record any deviations from it. The IQA Lead must review decisions made by the assessment team within a specified timeframe. Each apprentice's work must be sampled to some extent, whether through a full IQA sample activity or, if not included in the sampling percentage, a final check of the Grading Analysis Report and the grade awarded before releasing results.

Sampling occurs **only** after all assessment activities are completed and the Grading Report is finalised. The IQA Lead must cover the full spectrum of assessment methods as set out in the relevant End Point Assessment Plan. The IQA Lead should have an in-depth understanding of the qualification, assessment methods, and evidence sources.

A plan will be maintained for all samplings and conducted showing the following information:

- Apprentices names

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- Employer/Provider name
- Cohort
- IQA & Assessor's Names
- Qualification & Levels
- Sampling

The table below shows an example of the IQA plan for tracking purposes:

Independent Assessor Name & Sample (APP, PC, WS)	Standard	IQA Name	%	1	2	3
	Academic Professional Apprentice		100% - 20% (please refer to the table below)	Date	Date	Date

Please Note: It may be necessary to complete some interim sampling, for example, if there are any discrepancies in the assessment process or where there may be suspicion of malpractice or collusion during the assessment activity. This will be discussed between the

Independent Assessor and IQA Lead, and any sampling will be conducted promptly to avoid any delays in carrying out the next assessment activity.

Sample Size

After six months or six full assessments (whichever comes first), the sample size will be reduced if the IQA Lead deems the assessor to be competent and consistent with their assessment judgments. The percentage reduction is determined by the IQA Leads judgment, taking various factors into account, as outlined below:

Assessors	Sample size (up to 6 months or x6 assessments)	Sample size (after 6 months or x6 assessments)	Sample size (after 9 months or x9 assessments)
New assessors with no experience	100%	50%	50 – 20%
New assessors with EPA experience	100%	50 – 20%	50 – 20%
Experienced assessors	50%	50 – 20%	50 – 20%

Policy Review: This Strategy was last reviewed in February 2024.