

P9 S16 External Authentication Policy

Ownership:

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1. PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY

This document outlines Forus Training’s policy in respect of coordinating and governing Forus Training (FET) with the panel of External Authenticators and the External Authentication Process.

It is important to document from the outset that the role of the EA should not be seen in isolation from the role of the Trainer’s/Assessors. In order for the EA to demonstrate competency and compliance to both Forus Training policy and QQI directives, there needs to be a joined up and integrated approach to the concept of ‘learning’. Promoting learning communities requires the provider (Forus Training) to commit to the development of a ‘Community of Learning’ type approach whereby both Assessors/Trainers and EAs alike are briefed on the same policies and directives, albeit the information and detail is specifically contextualised.

2. DEFINITIONS

External Authentication provides independent authoritative confirmation of fair and consistent assessment of learners in accordance with national standards. It establishes the credibility of the provider’s assessment processes and ensures that assessment evidence has been marked in a valid and reliable way and is compliant with the requirements for the award. External authentication is undertaken through the assignment of an independent External Authenticator (EA) by the provider for each major, special purpose and supplemental award. The EA must be independent of the centre to which they are assigned. The EA will moderate assessment results for an award or across a number of awards within a related field or subfield of learning of the major, special purpose, supplemental award. Please see the link to the [ISCED Fields of Education listing](#) click here.

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3. POLICY STATEMENT

The Role & Responsibilities of the External Authentication process and External Authenticator:

- Extent of the EA's Authority
- Reporting Processes and time-frames
- Attendance at RAP
- The process and criteria for the removal or replacement of an External Authenticator

Underpinned by;

4. RELATED DOCUMENTS AND COMMUNICATION

- * [QQI Effective Practice Guidelines for External Examiners Revised 2015](#)
- * [QQI Quality Assuring Assessment Guidelines for Providers Revised 2015](#)
- * [QQI Quality Assuring Assessment Guidelines for External Authenticators Revised 2015](#)

6. RELATED DOCUMENTS AND COMMUNICATION

Plan, prepare and coordinate regular (annual) 'In-Service' Continuous Professional Development Briefing Sessions for External Authenticators on the Forus Training Panel. The training would have to include the following areas of specific detail:

- The QQI CAS Guidelines on Fair and Consistent Assessment of Learners. This area is particularly important in understanding what principles EAs are expected to scrutinise and report on.
- Ensuring an understanding of the standards: Across QQI NQF Levels (The Grid of Level Indicators), the principles of the Grading Structure, 'measuring' L/O's and their inclusion in LR evidence and understanding Assessment Instruments and the 'Assessment Verb'.
- Ensuring an understanding of the Internal Verification (IV) process and report structures of Forus Training.
- Understanding Sampling Strategies and specifically the Forus Training strategy – how to apply it and ensure it is followed through as well as what to do when an issue within the sampling cohort arises (equality of learning).
- Simulated EA Process – Making the Judgement (equality of learning).

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- Report Writing – What do Forus Training actually expect reporting narrative to detail? Why? What areas of QA are of specific importance and relevance to Forus Training? This information would also inform the signed contractual agreement between EA's and Forus Training.

Plan, prepare and coordinate an annual 'In-Service' CPD Session for Forus Training QQI related Administration Staff/Trainers/Assessors. The training would be similar to that above as they too have to understand the following areas of specific detail: Authenticator In-Service Training.

- The QQI CAS Guidelines on Fair and Consistent Assessment of Learners. This area is particularly important in understanding what **principles** the Assessors are expected to understand.
- Ensuring an understanding of the standards: Across QQI NFQ Levels (The Grid of Level Indicators), the principles of the Grading Structure, 'measuring' L/O's and their inclusion in LR evidence and understanding the Assessment Instrument and the 'Assessment Verb'.
- What is Internal Verification (IV) and how do we ensure we are undertaking it effectively? How is IV currently undertaken within Forus Training? If we aren't involved in IV directly, how do our areas of responsibility impact upon it?
- Understanding Sampling Strategies and specifically the Forus Training sampling strategy – Forus IV EA Sampling Strategy 14.10.19
- Simulated Marking Process – Making the Grade
- Formative V Summative Feedback – What the Assessors need to be evaluating and feeding back on.
- The teaching/facilitation, correctional, scoring and feedback responsibilities from the Assessors/Trainers themselves. Interactive/participatory inclusion on completing Forus Training standardised forms?

Pre- training questionnaire to for Assessor/Trainers:

1. What training guidance/advice would be helpful to your role as an Assessor/Trainer?
2. What areas of the 'assessment' role do you find difficult and or confusing?
3. What areas of training in relation to assessment and certification for LRs would you find most beneficial?

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4. Are the Assessor's/Trainers also the Internal Verifiers?

The foundation for learning has to commence with the Assessors/Training and the External Authenticators understanding their roles within Forus Training QA (specifically fair and consistent assessment).

P9 S15 EA Profile/Competency Document needs to be constructed to specify the skills-set Forus Training wishes to work with when contracting EA's so as to reflect strong QA procedures.

A Trainer's report is generated after each training event to ensure comprehensive documentation of all discussions, outcomes and recommendations.

4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Appoint a 'Lead' External Authenticator – Profile of Role

The specifics of the Lead EA Role would be as follows:

1. To support Forus Training with the coordination and appointments of EAs to the panel as well as assisting, where necessary, to appropriately assigning EA's to FET programmes entering the QQI certification system (subject matter expertise and QA experience). There is an annual EA Schedule and Standardised Operating Procedures (SOPs) which includes the scheduling of **RAPs** prior to the EA leaving the premises. P1 SOP Manual Governance - Annual Key dates
2. To prepare, plan and facilitate QA specific training to Assessors/Trainers and EAs.
3. To work with Forus Training to evaluate the effectiveness of 'Assessment of LRs' as well as ensuring equality of the learning experience.
4. To support Forus Training with developing, streamlining and continuously improving the connection and pathway between/from the delivery of learning and the receipt of a QQI certificate;
 - Are the assessment processes used by the Assessor/Trainer 'fit for purpose'? Do they actually reflect the NFQ standard, the MIMLOs/MIPLOs and overall award theme as well as the component L/O's?

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- Are Schemes of Work in place across programmes? Specifically, were there may be multiples of the same programme facilitated by different Assessors/Trainers? This is important to ensure a transparent approach to learning equality.
 - Are Marking Schemes accurately and transparently devised to support the overall Marking Criteria? This is vital to ensure multiple Assessor's/Trainers are all adopting a uniform and consistent approach to the equality of the marking process.
 - Overall, the programme curriculum is relevant, stimulating and demonstrating a benchmark for high value deliverables for the award programmes?
 - Are all Assessor's/Trainers providing both formative and summative feedback? This is important to ensure clarity in mark and grade allocation as well as to validate the finishing result. Such feedback can also assist where a LR presents an application for an appeal.
5. To support Forus Training with the Appeals process. To ensure a fool-proof Appeals Process is in place and is further supported by a procedure detailing how both an enquiry and subsequently an application for an Appeal will be undertaken, including potential cost to the LR versus the provider. This includes the appointment of an EA (impartial), the process to be adopted (on-site or remote), documentation to be completed and fees. The final element within this process is then the management of the outcome back to the LR.
6. To support the facilitation of the annual CPD training sessions with both EAs and Trainers/Assessors on the QA process of Assessment of Learners and to generate reports thereafter.
7. To facilitate bi-annual (twice yearly)/annual half-day forums with the EA Panel so as to capture issues, common themes and issues arising from EA findings. To generate a report to detail the same and make recommendations to improve as well as ensure such challenges/findings are being integrated into the Training process (for both Assessors/Trainers as well as EAs).
8. To undertake a formal annual evaluation of the EA process on behalf of Forus Training so as to demonstrate continuous improvement in areas such as:
- Fair and Consistent Assessment of Learners
 - Equality in Learning
 - Improving the Quality & Effectiveness of the Learning Experience
 - Ensuring Policy Coherence

The Lead EA is tasked with reviewing all EA Reports and RAP minutes after each EA visit or, on a quarterly basis. This would provide an opportunity to ensure both EA's and Assessors are working within the required standardised operating procedures. The findings would

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generate a report to be presented to the Programme Delivery & Assessment Committee (PDAC).

In order for each of the above areas of work Assessors/Trainers and EAs would all have to have a very clear appreciation of adult education and training principles (this could be embedded into the inaugural training sessions, recruitment and selection policies, job descriptions).

5. CONTACT INFORMATION

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Amendment History			
Amendment summary sheet			
Revision	Date	Amendment summary	Training Requirements
002	16/12/2020	Initial release	Read and Review
003	Review date: 12/03/2023	no changes made	Read and Review