

Crossfields Institute

Quality Assurance Handbook



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Crossfields Institute Quality Assurance Handbook

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1. Introduction

Welcome to the Crossfields Institute Handbook for Quality Assurance.

Crossfields Institute Awarding Team supports holistic and integrative education practitioners to meet regulatory standards, whilst not diluting their educational principles, practice, vision and values.

We consider ourselves part of an action research culture and we aim to create an ongoing dialogue with peer organisations to share practice. In quality assurance – as in many other fields – there are generic standards and given coordinates within which we create a specific system.

Since the context, circumstances and resources are not identical within each Crossfields Institute Approved Centre, we work with each centre to design a quality assurance process that best fits the needs of the organisation whilst ensuring all centres adhere to the standards expected and associated with our qualifications. It is our intention to provide an individualised approach to the support of centres, depending on their experience, their needs and their vision. We encourage a dialogic approach to centre support so that we can better understand our approved centres and their needs. We focus on achieving benefits which are significant to the individual learner and their context and therefore will have a positive impact on their experiences and achievements. Our quality assurance system is about the learner and their learning environment.

We hold ourselves to account against our own quality assurance standards:

- the meaningful design of qualifications to achieve their purpose
- fostering a culture of shared conscious and reflective practice
- recognising and respecting autonomy and professional accountability and engendering a culture/climate of professional confidence and excellence
- minimising bureaucracy whilst upholding excellent standards, where the processes are responsive to the practice
- we are committed to building communities of practice
- we recognise the value of research
- we take a holistic approach to design and delivery of assessment
- we take a holistic approach to teaching and learning
- we periodically and regularly review our approach to the design, delivery and development of awards and qualifications

The role of internal and external Quality Assurance is an important and valued part of any educational organisation. The quality assurance procedures described in this handbook are those that need to be carried out by QA staff of Crossfields Institute and our centres in order to maintain a consistent approach to assessment and quality assurance whilst ensuring that the quality of assessment and learner work produced at our centres compare favourably to national standards.

This Handbook explains the responsibilities of all roles relating to quality assurance and if you are new to quality assurance, we suggest that you start with the self-assessment activity in the relating to your particular role as this is a good way to familiarise yourself with the requirements you will need to fulfil. For IQAs, this activity can be found in the [Assessment and Quality Assurance Resource Pack \(Fig. 8\)](#). For EQAs it can be downloaded from Trello.

Continual Professional Development (CPD) is essential for quality assurance practitioners to ensure that their skills and knowledge of their subject specialist area is up to date as well as their assessment and quality assurance practice. It is beneficial in a number of ways including:

- Supports continuous development of assessment and/or quality assurance practice
- Ensures practitioners are up to date in their own sector/area of specialism
- Encourages reflective practice
- Promotes lifelong learning
- Meets the requirements of Crossfields Institute and Ofqual

2. Overview of Internal Quality Assurance

The IQA plays a pivotal role in maintaining standards of assessment by enabling assessors to carry out their role, helping them to develop their practice and ensuring effective procedures are in place.

The aim of the IQA role is to ensure consistent and reliable assessment decisions. Monitoring assessment activity, confirming the assessor's decisions are valid, reliable and fair whilst giving feedback and support to the assessor is integral to the process.

Support for assessors will include regular standardisation, where assessors and IQAs work together to sample assessments, discuss assessment practice, draw on experience and arrive at a shared understanding of standards and expectations for the qualification. These standardisation activities ensure that IQAs are aware of any assessment areas that need attention. The IQA will assess the impact of any issues and put appropriate actions in place to ensure learners are not disadvantaged. The IQA will also arrange training and mentoring in order to share and develop good practice.

The IQA is likely to be the point of contact with Crossfields Institute EQA who will monitor the centre's IQA and assessment process whilst providing guidance and feedback as part of the EQA activity.

3. The Role of the Internal Quality Assurer (IQA)

For all Crossfields Institute centres delivering regulated and self-regulated qualifications IQAs are required to have (or be working towards) an internal quality assurance qualification. For centres delivering Quality Marks, it is good practice but not essential to have or be working towards an internal quality assurance qualification.

Responsibilities include:

- Creating and implementing a robust IQA process with a clear audit trail of all IQA activity and judgements that meet Crossfields Institute requirements for regulated and self-regulated qualifications and Quality Marks
- Observing assessors, reviewing assessments and reporting on findings
- Ensuring assessors keep complete assessment records whilst keeping own records to a high standard so as to model good practice
- Giving support, advice and training to assessors (this is likely to include induction and training for new assessors and ongoing development for existing assessors)
- Facilitating standardisation meetings and ensuring accurate records are kept
- Facilitating EQA visits and providing them with all necessary resources and support
- Sharing information from Crossfields Institute with assessors (e.g. from Touchstone meetings)

Knowledge required:

- How to implement and manage the internal quality assurance process
- Existing quality assurance and/or improvement procedures within own centre
- Up to date and current practice in both occupational area and in assessment and quality assurance processes
- The relevant regulatory framework governing the delivery of qualifications, and the responsibilities of IQAs within that
- Current policies and procedures, quality assurance processes and responsibilities for these

4. Planning IQA Activity

To help you be an effective IQA you should have an overview of the qualification(s) that you are working with, be familiar with the assessment plan used by the assessor and then plan all of the IQA activities you will undertake in advance. Planning and sampling should begin immediately a programme has started and take place throughout the programme so that any issues or areas for improvement can be identified early and remedial action taken.

Formative sampling takes place throughout the delivery and assessment of a qualification or programme.

Summative sampling takes place at the end of the programme of learning and is likely to confirm that the learner has completed and can be certificated.

There are several documents you will need to prepare: an IQA sampling plan, an IQA strategy and IQA Report forms.

5. Writing an IQA sampling plan

Good planning will ensure that the quality assurance process supports the assessor and happens in a timely way. The sampling strategy involves reviewing the quality of assessor judgements. This includes:

- both interim (formative) and final (summative) sampling
- reviewing learner portfolios when the first one or two assignments or assessment activities are completed and assessed
- checking the planning, review and feedback given to learners by assessors
- evaluating the quality of formative feedback to pick up any problems at an early stage
- observing assessor performance
- sampling the full range of assessment methods used for the programme or qualification, e.g. observation, witness testimony, professional discussion, reflective accounts, questioning, products, RPL, simulation
- identifying individual assessor training and support needs which may also be useful to develop the assessment team as a whole

An exemplar IQA sampling plan is available in the IQA [Assessment and Quality Assurance Resource Pack \(Fig. 4\)](#).

6. Factors to consider when sampling

The IQA must complete a sampling plan at the beginning of the assessed programme or qualification. It is a “live” document, and any changes should be recorded in the plan.

Sampling involves reviewing the quality of the assessment decisions by evaluating how assessors have reached those decisions. The IQA must be able to follow an audit trail, which clearly demonstrates that assessors have checked that the evidence presented by the learner meets the principles of assessment, the evidence requirements and the learning outcomes of the qualification or programme.

You will need to prepare a written statement explaining your rationale for sampling, which the EQA will ask to see at their visit (see above). The sample size should be based on risk and therefore may need to be increased when there are high risk factors such as when the assessor, the programme/qualification or assessment methods are new, or, reduced when the risk factors are low e.g. an experienced team making accurate and timely assessment decisions on a well-established programme or qualification.

In preparing the sampling plan, IQAs need to consider:

Learners – Taking an assessment sample to include consideration of diversity and particular assessment requirements. This will help guide the amount of portfolios to be sampled.

Assessors – Sampling all the assessors on the qualification or programme taking into consideration their experience and qualifications, workload, occupational experience, CPD, known issues or challenges and any staff changes. There should be evidence of IQA support for new assessors.

Methods of assessment – Sampling different methods of assessment e.g. observation, witness testimony, professional discussion, RPL, product evidence, assignments, projects and tests.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) – when RPL has taken place, it must go through the IQA sampling process to ensure that the centre's RPL policies and procedures have been followed and that there is a clear audit trail from the initial assessment of the learner through to the assessed evidence. RPL must be identified and included in the sampling.

Record keeping – Sampling the assessment records for the qualification or programme e.g. reports from assessors, correct assessment practices, internal quality assurance records, assessor records, candidate portfolios and files.

Assessment locations – Sampling assessments from the workplace and other assessment locations if relevant.

Learner recruitment and initial assessment – Initial assessment is an important part of the recruitment process. As the IQA you will need to ensure that your recruitment and initial assessment process is fit for purpose and effective. You must also be aware of any reasonable adjustments that have been requested for a learner taking a programme or qualification to ensure that assessment practice is consistent and does not advantage or disadvantage any learner.

The EQA may request documentation relating to learner recruitment, the initial assessment processes, additional support and the corresponding records at a visit and/or for centre review.

Learner Induction – Induction is a valuable activity for learners and helps them settle into their qualification or programme. Your centre must have a process in place to ensure that learners have an overview of the qualification/programme and that every aspect is covered. As the IQA you will need to ensure that your learner induction programme is effective and meets the requirements of CFI

An exemplar IQA sampling plan is available in the IQA [Assessment and Quality Assurance Resource Pack \(Fig. 4\)](#).

7. Writing an IQA strategy

You will need to write a sampling strategy to explain the Centre IQA process as well as the plans and rationale for sampling. The strategy sets out the processes to be followed by assessors and IQAs within the approved centre and should be made available to all assessors and IQAs. The EQA will request a copy of the IQA strategy when they sample and monitor.

The content areas to cover within the strategy are:

Assessors

1. Role of the assessor
2. Assessor responsibilities
3. Assessor experience and/or qualifications required
4. Assessment documentation
5. Validating of unqualified assessor decisions (if required)
6. Assessor development and CPD requirements

IQA

1. Role of the IQA
2. Sampling and verifying assessments
3. Sampling strategy
4. Monitoring assessment practice

5. Standardisation
6. Developing and supporting assessors
7. IQA documentation
8. Validating unqualified IQA decisions (if required)
9. IQA development and CPD requirements

The rationale is a statement which gives an overview of the reasons for selecting the IQA sample, the expected outcomes from the sample and how it might improve the quality of assessment.

The key areas to consider in the rationale are:

- Assessors – level of risk posed to the assessment process e.g. new or experienced
- Learners – the demographics of cohorts e.g. learning needs, language barriers etc.
- Methods of assessment – any that may be difficult to use
- Record Keeping
- Assessment locations – any that may be remote or are new
- Qualification or programme – level of risk posed e.g. new to centre or well established

8. Writing IQA Reports

The purpose of the IQA report is to record the IQA findings following sampling of assessor activity and assessment decisions. It should:

- Clearly list what has been sampled
- Give feedback to the assessor on good practice demonstrated
- Identify any areas where the assessor needs development and/or support e.g. ensuring that the assessment criteria are covered, that evidence is sufficient etc.
- Identify any coaching or training needed to develop assessor skills
- Be a part of the audit trail from the sampling plan

The IQA report must include:

- Confirmation if summative or formative sampling has taken place
- The qualification or programme name
- Names of the assessor(s) and learner(s) sampled
- IQA date
- Actions for the assessor and timescales
- Confirmation that the IQA agrees with the assessment decision (or not)
- Feedback comments to the assessor
- Response from the assessor to the IQA

The report provides the assessor with an opportunity to respond to the IQA feedback. This is useful for the assessor to describe any issues arising from the assessment, suggestions to develop the qualification or programme delivery or assessment, or any ideas for training opportunities for the team. Completing this also helps the EQA to see that the quality assurance process provides an opportunity for ongoing development of assessment practice.

The EQA will look at the IQA reports and assessor feedback to check that the achievement for the programme or qualification is valid, reliable and consistent. The EQA will also check that the size of the IQA sample is appropriate for the qualification or programme, and takes key factors into account e.g. samples new assessors early in their assessment, samples the range of assessment methods.

An exemplar IQA sampling report is available in the [Assessment and Quality Assurance Resource Pack \(Fig. 5a, 5b\)](#).

9. The cycle of IQA activity

It is useful to have an overview of the activities which need to be carried out by the IQA over the course of a programme in order to manage the IQA process for the qualification or programme; typical activities could include:

At the start of the qualification or programme

- Ensure all assessors have the correct qualification or programme specification, units and assessment documents (see [Assessment and Quality Assurance Resource Pack](#))
- Review the assessment plans for the qualification or programme to check they are still “fit for purpose” and that tasks cover all the assessment criteria. ([Assessment and Quality Assurance Resource Pack \(Fig. 1\)](#))
- Work with the assessment team to plan dates for standardisation meetings ([Assessment and Quality Assurance Resource Pack \(Fig. 2\)](#)), team meetings, and any other relevant quality assurance activities
- Prepare a sampling rationale for the qualification or programme ([Assessment and Quality Assurance Resource Pack \(Fig. 3\)](#))
- Prepare a sampling plan for the qualification or programme ([Assessment and Quality Assurance Resource Pack \(Fig. 4\)](#))

During the qualification or programme

- Carry out **formative** IQA sampling after the first one or two assessment activities have been completed (initial sampling) and write IQA Reports ([Assessment and Quality Assurance Resource Pack \(Fig. 5a & 5b\)](#))
- Check learner achievement/ tracking records are updated
- Carry out sampling activity as detailed on the sampling plan. Feedback to the assessor(s)
- Feedback to the assessor(s) verbally and using the sampling reports

At the end of the qualification or programme

- Carry out final or **summative** IQA sampling and write IQA Reports giving feedback to the assessor(s)
- Once the EQA has agreed that qualification standards have been met, prepare and submit a certification claim to Crossfields Institute for the learners’ certificates
- Meet with the assessment team to review the assessment activity and plan any improvements for the next cycle of delivery

In addition to the above activities, the IQA is also responsible for:

- New assessors’ induction ([Assessment and Quality Assurance Resource Pack \(Fig. 6\)](#))
- Working with assessors to support CPD and meet their assessment training needs whilst ensuring that assessor/IQA CPD records are up-to-date and uploaded to Mercury ([Assessment and Quality Assurance Resource Pack \(Fig. 7\)](#))
- Keeping assessors up to date with current practice such as assessment and regulation updates from Crossfields Institute, occupation and sector updates
- Ensuring that assessor/IQA CVs are up to date and uploaded to Mercury
- Liaising with the EQA and preparing for External Quality Assurance activity
- Disseminating feedback and outcomes of EQA activity whilst following up on any actions set

10. Standardisation

Standardisation is a process within each programme or qualification to check that assessment is consistent across all assessors. It will help to ensure that assessors are assessing to the correct standard and that their assessment decisions are valid, reliable and fair.

The EQA will request to see evidence of standardisation activity.

Standardisation meetings

Meetings should be scheduled to meet the needs of the assessment team and centre. For example, a well-established course may hold meetings two or three times a year whereas a new course is likely to require meetings more often to enable the assessment team to become familiar and confident with the new qualification or programme.

There is a variety of activities which can be carried out during standardisation, for example:

1. **Discuss assessment decisions made on completed learner work** – present the team with already assessed learner evidence to consider if the learning outcomes have been met and the assessment feedback sufficient.
 - Do they agree with the assessment decisions?
 - Was there sufficient evidence?
 - Was the evidence at the right level?
 - Did the assessment feedback identify opportunities for development and progression?
 - Does the team have a shared understanding of the programme or qualification requirements?
2. **Create assignments and assessment materials** - this could involve writing new assignment tasks or review existing assignments. The team may wish to write assessment guidance for the learners, link the tasks more clearly to the assessment criteria or learning outcomes, reduce the number of assessments, or prepare more integrated assignments which require evidence from across units in the programme.
3. **Compare documentation used on the programme or qualification** e.g. recording assessment feedback and IQA Reports, comparing how documents have been used and records completed, areas of strength and needs for development to ensure a clear audit trail of assessment and IQA activity.
4. **Discuss understanding of policies and procedures** - the team can consider different scenarios and then discuss the appropriate priorities and actions using the Centre's policies and procedures. This will develop staff understanding and provide useful information for the annual review of the policies.
5. **Prepare materials for induction** - the assessors and IQAs can work together to create materials to help learners understand the requirements of the programme and the assessment approach and process.
6. **Prepare materials for initial assessments** - the team can design activities to identify areas where learners need additional support and create the recording documentation. This may also lead to a discussion regarding the reasonable adjustments policy and procedure.

Standardisation between IQAs

Where there is more than one IQA for a programme it is important to have consistent practice to ensure that all IQAs are monitoring assessment decisions consistently across all provision.

IQA decisions and shared practice can be discussed:

- At scheduled IQA meetings either in-person or remotely
- At a pre-standardisation meeting
- After the standardisation meeting
- At Touchstone meetings (Crossfields Institute standardisation meetings)

Recording standardisation meetings

Records of the standardisation meetings must be noted, including any actions and dates for these to be completed. The EQA will ask to see the standardisation meeting notes during sampling and/or the annual Centre Review. The record can be a list of bullet points or brief notes for reference to show the key areas discussed and actions agreed. Useful headings could include:

- Quality of assessment feedback
- Good assessment practice for the qualification or programme
- Methods of assessment
- Hot spots for difficult learning outcomes/assessment criteria
- Training needs and CPD
- Updates to the qualification or programme

Managing Learners who are not achieving on a programme or qualification

The IQA should monitor learner achievement, and where learners are not achieving should work with the assessor at the earliest opportunity to establish if there are ways that the learner may be supported.

In rare instances, there may be a point when the learner is clearly not able to achieve regardless of everyone's best efforts.

The IQA must ensure that the process for managing learners who are not achieving is well documented and shared with the EQA as appropriate.

11. Working with Assessors and giving feedback

The Role of the Tutor/Assessor

Tutor/Assessors are responsible for:

- Assessing learner knowledge, understanding and skills against assessment criteria
- Choosing and using a range of appropriate assessment methods
- Reviewing evidence and giving constructive feedback to learners
- Recording assessment decisions
- Attending meetings with the IQA (standardisation)
- Undertaking regular CPD to update their own knowledge and experience in their subject area and in relation to assessing. Reflecting on their own practice

They need to know:

- How to make valid, fair and reliable judgements for the subject or occupation (subject expertise)
- A range of assessment methods and activities (assessment expertise)
- The Centre's quality assurance/improvement procedures
- The correct documentation to record assessment decisions
- How assessment decisions compare with other assessor judgements and share good practice
- How to share good practice to develop the qualification or programme

The IQA process may be new to the assessor, and it is important to remember to explain the process of the IQA cycle and expectations of the IQA. Ensure that assessors understand your role in advising and supporting them to develop their practice and competence.

By sampling the assessor's decisions near the start of the qualification or programme as well as at interim and final stages means that any issues can be picked up early and resolved before they become a problem.

The Programme pre-delivery checklist is a useful checklist to ensure assessors are well prepared for the start of their qualification or programme – [Assessment and Quality Assurance Resource Pack \(Fig. 9\)](#).

12. The IQA Report

All sampling activity must be written onto an IQA report that corresponds with the detail on the sampling plan.

The purpose of the IQA report is to:

- Give the assessor feedback on good practice in their assessment
- Identify in writing any areas where the assessor needs support e.g. ensuring that the assessment criteria are covered, that evidence is sufficient and so on
- Identify in writing any coaching or training needed to develop their skills

Good IQA reports support the assessor to develop their practice and do this through:

- Explaining judgements made on assessment decisions
- Being constructive and giving specific examples to back up comments
- Providing opportunities for the assessor to develop their skills
- Explaining clearly any action points required if and by when
- Giving timely feedback so that assessors can confirm achievements with their learners and put any actions promptly into effect

13. Archiving and Storage

The security of portfolios and learner work is essential. It is very important that any student work is treated with respect and kept safe and secure.

We recommend the following procedures:

- Learner portfolios are stored in lockable cupboards within the centre.
- If original work is sent by post it should always be sent by a secure, tracked postal service.
- If Dropbox, Google Docs or other file hosting services are used, ensure that learner work and assessment records are secure and learner's personal data is protected.
- Learners' evidence should be kept until after certificates have been issued and the EQA has sampled and released that cohort of learners
- IQA Reports and assessors' summative feedback should be kept for 3 years.

14. Overview of External Quality Assurance

The EQA is responsible for monitoring centres to ensure they comply with the requirements and expectation of Crossfields Institute and where relevant the regulatory authority, Ofqual.

The EQA has a key role within the quality assurance system and their purpose is to ensure that CFI approved centres understand the requirements for delivering and assessing regulated (QCF) and self-regulated (SRQ) qualifications and/or Quality Mark programmes whilst ensuring that centres are fully compliant.

An aim of the EQA role is to ensure consistency and validity of assessment and IQA activity through sampling assessment and internal quality assurance decisions in order to confirm that CFI (and Ofqual where relevant) requirements have been met. They will offer guidance and support to centres as part of the EQA process, which may be either remote or in-person.

Responsibility for managing the Crossfields Institute Centre Assessment Scrutiny Standards (CASS) Strategy

Through the EQA process EQAs will ensure Crossfields Institute (and Ofqual where appropriate) requirements are being communicated and scrutinised for each approved centre. EQAs will determine the rationale for centre sampling and the actions required where centres are not meeting requirements. The EQA report will provide an overview of the factors considered by Crossfield Institute when determining Centre Assessment Scrutiny Arrangements.

15. The Role of the External Quality Assurer (EQA)

Crossfields EQAs will be working towards or hold a relevant EQA qualification.

Responsibilities include:

- Planning and carrying out external quality assurance sampling and centre annual reviews
- Supporting tutor/assessors and IQAs and help them to understand the Crossfields requirements for their programme/qualifications they are delivering and how these can be met
- Advising and supporting IQAs to carry out their role effectively and giving constructive feedback
- Agreeing actions with centres to develop good practice
- Giving feedback to Crossfields Institute following EQA activity
- Authorising claims for certification

Knowledge required:

- Crossfields requirements for the relevant qualification or programme delivered by their allocated centres
- Crossfields requirements for continuing centre approval e.g. centre arrangements for governance, quality assurance, assessment
- All policies that centres are required to have in place and what they must contain
- Details of centre staff, their roles, expertise and professional development activities
- Current practice in both their occupational area (of expertise) and in assessment and quality assurance processes
- The relevant regulatory framework governing the delivery of qualifications or programmes, and the responsibilities of EQAs within that
- How their own beliefs and values may affect their decisions

When an EQA undertakes an annual review and/or sample of a centre they will work with a nominated member of centre staff, usually the IQA, to:

- Check that learners are registered with Crossfields Institute
- Ask for centre updates and establish if there have been any changes
- Look at the IQA sampling and tracking plans and sampling reports
- See a selection of learner portfolios (or other assessed forms of evidence of achievement)
- Talk with some learners and assessors (and observe an assessment if possible)
- See any notes or minutes from standardisation meetings

16. Planning EQA activity

The EQA will plan their sampling activity once centres have registered learners for the first time; the frequency and timing of subsequent sampling activity will be determined by a number of factors all of which are risk-based. The EQA will discuss exact requirements with the centre.

The first annual centre review will take place on or near the first anniversary of becoming an approved centre and then each year following.

The EQA must be familiar with the qualifications and/or programmes that their centres are delivering and will communicate with the centre to establish current activity that will inform their sampling strategy.

17. EQA strategy and rationale for sampling

In developing a sampling strategy, the EQA will take into account the specific circumstances of the centre. Particular factors which will be considered when determining the scope of a sample such as:

- The risk rating and/or any changes to the centre risk rating
- The number of registered learners and number of certificates claimed
- Assessor and IQA qualifications and/or experience. Inexperienced or unqualified assessors may not be familiar with the assessment methods or standards and may need careful monitoring until they develop the necessary expertise. Therefore, a sample should contain a sufficient proportion of their assessment decisions.
- Learner/assessor ratios
- IQA/assessor ratios
- Number of sub centre/satellite sites and their geographical location. Where a centre has a number of assessment sites the sampling plan must enable the EQA to verify that assessment and internal quality assurance practices are maintained with equal rigour and consistency at all locations.
- The centre's track record in complying with CFI requirements and any agreed action plans
- Rate of staff turnover
- If the qualification gives a license to practice

The EQA will ensure that their sampling strategy involves not only the sampling of evidence, and scrutiny of audit trails, but will also engage with IQAs, assessors and learners where possible, in order to confirm whether the processes of assessment and IQA being used to judge learner competence, are consistent and meet CFI (and Ofqual where appropriate) requirements.

The EQA should ensure that the selection of learners, assessors and IQAs for sampling is not left solely to the discretion of the centre and should therefore select some learners without prior notification to the centre, to minimise the risk of fraudulent claims for certification. If a centre fails to make available learner work for sampling or enable learners to be interviewed the EQA should notify the Lead EQA who will investigate to ensure the learners exist. If this cannot be clearly established, the Responsible Officer in consultation with the Lead EQA will decide what sanction should be applied and the nature of any potential malpractice or maladministration investigation. See [Tariff of sanctions - Assessment and Quality Assurance Resource Pack \(Fig. 10\)](#).

The EQA sampling strategy will inform the preparation and planning of the EQA activity.

18. EQA preparation

The EQA will contact the centre to explain the scope of the EQA sampling activities and/or annual centre review that is due to take place and will arrange a mutually convenient time with the centre's nominated contact, usually the IQA, for a remote meeting to discuss the centre's recent activity. In some circumstances, this may be an in-person visit.

Once the date has been arranged the EQA will complete a sampling requirements form to send in advance of the arranged meeting (*this document is for EQA use only and can be downloaded by the EQA from [Trello](#)*).

The sampling requirements form details what the EQA would like to discuss during the arranged meeting, such as which learner portfolios, IQA/assessment records they would like to sample and/or which assessors, IQAs and learners they would like to interview. On occasions the EQA may wish to observe assessments taking place if it is an in-person visit.

Centres are obliged to comply with any requests for access to people and records for the purposes of external quality assurance. If a centre fails to provide access, the EQA will inform the Lead EQA who will then decide on the appropriate action to take with the centre.

If a centre cancels any planned EQA activity at short notice, depending on the circumstances, a new date should be arranged. If this is not possible and there is no legitimate reason for the cancellation, CFI will reserve the right to withhold certification claims until satisfactory EQA sampling activity has been completed.

19. EQA sampling, monitoring and annual centre review

Prior to sampling and monitoring activity, the EQA will visit the centre's website to ensure that information about Crossfields Institute and our qualifications is up to date and accurate.

In addition to sampling assessments of learner work and IQA activity, the purpose of the EQA sampling, monitoring and annual centre review is to ensure that centre staff are fully engaged in their own roles and understand the relevant policies and procedures. The EQA will want to establish that they know what to do should a situation arise, such as an appeal and that staff are regularly engaged in standardisation and personal development.

The EQA will want to ensure that centres meet CFI requirements and that they can see evidence of:

- Previously identified action points have been met or that the centre is making progress towards them
- Assessment arrangements being fit for purpose, consistent and implemented in accordance with requirements specified for each qualification and/or programme
- An assessment plan for each qualification/programme and that it is fit for purpose and being implemented
- Assessments being conducted by appropriately qualified and occupationally expert assessors
- Appropriate resources and expertise to deliver CFI qualifications and/or programmes in accordance with CFI and any regulatory requirements
- Assessment decision being regularly sampled through internal quality assurance for accuracy against the qualification/programme requirements.
- The centre retaining appropriate records of assessment and internal quality assurance decisions and judgements for three years.
- Certificate claims being authentic, valid and supported by auditable records and that learner have met the specified level of attainment
- The centre meeting CFI requirements for learner data retention as set out in the guidance for centres
- The centre taking all reasonable steps to prevent the occurrence of malpractice or maladministration

During and after the EQA sampling and monitoring the EQA will:

- Advise and support centres on the interpretation of the qualification/programme requirements, learning outcomes and assessment criteria (where relevant)
- Provide centres with feedback and support in relation to assessment and internal quality assurance activities
- Provide centre with up-to-date information and advice in line with CFI and regulatory authority guidance and requirements
- Identify opportunities for centres to offer additional CFI qualifications/programmes (where appropriate)
- Recommend the application of appropriate sanctions in line with the CFI sanctions policy for centres that fail to meet CFI and/or Ofqual requirements

20. Factors the EQA will consider during a sample and/or annual centre review

The EQA will complete a rationale for sampling and record this on the EQA sample report which is a word document and will be attached to the visit report on Mercury (this document is for EQA use only and can be downloaded by the EQA from [Trello](#)). This form also records the details of the qualifications/programmes being sampled and observations/comments on the centre's approach to Total Qualification Time (TQT) and Guided Learning Hours (GLH). Details of the learner portfolios sampled and the outcomes of the sample are also recorded along with any recommendations and/or action points from the EQA.

Assessment and quality assurance – The EQA will ask to see the assessment plan for each qualification/programme and will sample a range of learner portfolios looking at assessment records, assessment methods, learner work, feedback to learner, IQA sampling plans and IQA reports. The EQA may also speak to learners and/or observe an assessment taking place.

The EQA will want to establish:

- Learners have access to fair and unbiased assessment
- Assessments are appropriate and structured effectively through planning, assessment, reviewing and feedback
- There is a centre policy for learner claims for exemptions or recognition of prior learning (RPL)
- Whether any complaints, appeals and/or reasonable adjustments have been made since last communicating with the EQA

The EQA will want to sample:

- Assessment decisions of all active assessors
- Evidence from all assessment locations to ensure consistency is applied
- Assessment records that includes feedback to learners
- IQA sampling strategy and sampling records that includes feedback to assessors
- Records of learner registration and certificate claims

Standardisation – A check will be made that standardisation is taking place at the centre, which may be in the form of meetings, shadowing assessors, peer assessment and so on (see the IQA section of this guide). They will ask to see records of standardisation activity such as notes or minutes from meetings or reports when shadowing assessors and will want to check that centre standardisation is regular, appropriate and effective.

Centre staff – The EQA will check that assessors, trainers and IQAs have appropriate qualifications, expertise and experience to meet the assessment strategy for the qualifications/programmes. There must also be evidence of their professional development (CPD)

Policies and procedures – CFI has policies and procedures in place which provide clear instructions and guidelines on what must be done in a particular set of circumstances or with regard to a particular issue. Policies and procedures help the EQA, centres and learners understand CFI practices and responsibilities as an awarding organisation. Policies are regularly reviewed to ensure that they meet

the needs of those involved in the development, delivery and awarding of CFI qualifications and/or programmes whilst taking into account any changes or incidents that may take place.

Comprehensive, well thought out and consistently implemented policies and procedures help to ensure:

- Good practice
- A professional and effective organisation
- A consistent approach to issues and circumstances which arise
- Clear processes and how they should be managed
- Efficient and effective delivery of a learner-led service

The EQA must be familiar with all CFI policies and will check that the centre is compliant with CFI policies and procedures and will want to see evidence that the centre has policies appropriate to their own delivery in place ([see centre guide](#)) and that centre staff and learners have access to them. CFI policies are available at: <https://crossfieldsinstitute.com/awarding/#resources>

Centre Governance – The centre must have a single named point of accountability in place and there must be evidence of effective centre coordination and compliance with CFI and Ofqual requirements. Key policies must be in place and key documents kept secure. There must be evidence of appropriate management and monitoring of centre staff and resources that are required for the delivery and assessment of the qualifications/programmes for which the centre is approved. Any conflict of interest within the centre must be declared to CFI and the EQA will want to see evidence of effective management by the centre should the centre declare a conflict of interest.

21. Outcome of the sampling and monitoring activity

The EQA must undertake a sufficient sample to:

- Confirm the consistency and authenticity of assessment decisions
- Confirm the validity of claims for certification and authenticity of learner evidence
- Provide evidence to support their conclusions

If the sample shows that the centre is not applying CFI and/or Ofqual requirements, the EQA will:

- Identify and record specific areas of concern
- Confirm that, where appropriate, they will request the centre conduct further assessments of the learner until all qualification/programme requirements are met
- Notify the Lead EQA who will engage with the CFI Awarding team to assess the impact on CFI qualifications, materials and/or certificates that have/have not been awarded and will take appropriate action in accordance with CFI arrangements for dealing with actual/potential adverse effects.
- Feedback immediately to the centre nominated person and/or IQA and request a further sample to ascertain the extent of the non-compliance
- Recommend sanctions if appropriate
- Create an appropriate action plan for the centre
- Record the findings, judgements and actions in the EQA report

22. EQA Reporting on Mercury

At the beginning of the sampling, monitoring and/or the annual review process the EQA will generate a 'visit report' on Mercury. At the completion the EQA will submit their findings using Mercury and request the centre to complete the feedback section and return to CFI using Mercury.

Stage	Person responsible	Section of Mercury form to be completed	Action
1	EQA	Visit purpose	<p>Complete section giving as much details as possible.</p> <p>Upload the completed sampling requirements plan.</p> <p>Click 'submit to centre'</p> <p>EQA to note that once submitted to centre, they will not be able to view the 'form' until the centre completes the next stage – pre-visit preparation.</p>
2	IQA or centre nominee	Pre-visit preparation	<p>Answer questions on the form.</p> <p>Download the sampling requirements plan for further information and details of the EQA requirements.</p> <p>Upload relevant documents.</p> <p>Once complete click 'return to Crossfields'</p>
3	EQA	<p>Governance</p> <p>Quality assurance arrangements at the centre</p> <p>Assessment and quality assurance arrangements</p> <p>Learner experience</p> <p>Advice and Support</p> <p>Visit summary and main outcomes or actions</p>	<p>Populate each page of the form with findings and outcomes of the sampling, monitoring and/or annual review.</p> <p>Upload any relevant documents such as EQA sampling report.</p> <p>Consult with EQA if there are any queries or advise on the EQA report and activity before submitting the report to the centre.</p> <p>Click 'submit to centre'</p>
4	IQA or centre nominee	Centre feedback	<p>This part of the form invites the centre to give feedback on the EQA activity and approach as well as CFI as an awarding organisation.</p> <p>Once complete click 'return to Crossfields'</p>
5	EQA	The whole Mercury form	<p>Once the centre has 'returned' the form to Crossfields, the report should be 'closed' using the appropriate button on Mercury at the bottom of the page.</p>

24. Further Support

For administration and Mercury enquiries: info@crossfieldsinstitute.com

For assessment and quality assurance enquiries: lead.eqa@crossfieldsinstitute.com

Stroud Office telephone number: 01453 808118

Responsible officer is Lou Doliczny and she can be contacted through:

dialogue@crossfieldsinsitute.com