



**cetb**

Bord Oideachais agus  
Oiliúna Chorcaí

*Cork Education and  
Training Board*

# QUALITY ASSURANCE

## QA 6.15 EXTERNAL AUTHENTICATION PROCEDURE

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## PURPOSE

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 results have been marked in a valid and reliable way and are compliant with the requirements of the award (Quality Assuring Assessment – Guidelines for Providers, Version 2 Revised, QQI 2018).

The purpose of this policy is to outline the procedure surrounding external authentication in Cork ETB and the role of the Cork ETB quality assurance unit, individual campuses and centres and external authenticators in the authentication process.

## SCOPE

This procedure applies to all further education and training provision provided by Cork ETB campuses and centres or by organisations funded by Cork ETB to provide further education and training, whether accredited or unaccredited.

## RESPONSIBILITIES

### **Cork ETB Quality Assurance Unit will:**

- collate details of the major award/component awards and the approximate number of portfolios as provided by the centre, via the estimates form
- collate contact details for the staff coordinating the external authentication process in each centre and the dates and times the centre can facilitate the external authentication
- select external authenticators from the approved national panel
- ensure the same external authenticator is appointed to authenticate a Cork ETB centre for no more than 3 consecutive years

- agree times and dates between the external authenticator and the FE campus/centre. Issue a letter of engagement to the external authenticators appointed for all FE campuses and centres. In the case of the Bishopstown Campus, the Bishopstown Campus is responsible for engaging the appointed external authenticator, agreeing dates and times for external authentication and issuing letters of engagement to that external authenticator
- ensure that the external authenticator is set up on the Cork ETB payroll system and provide the external authenticator with the standard HR set up forms if this is not the case
- check the details on the external authentication claim form and complete a QQI EA submission form to the payroll department
- receive a copy of all external authentication reports and file electronically
- review the external authentication reports for issues arising and follow up with the campus/centre to ensure that continuous improvement plans are completed, and corrective action is taken

**The campus/centre will:**

- be responsible for organising the arrangements necessary to facilitate the external authentication process in its campus/centre. External authentication may be carried out in-centre or remotely. It is anticipated that most external authentication work will be carried out remotely. Where it is carried out remotely, the campus/centre may either grant access to the external authenticator to moodle or other electronic drives used by the campus/centre to store assessment material or may organise for assessment material to be couriered to and from the external authenticator at the campus/centre's own expense
- provide details of the major award/component awards and the approximate number of portfolios to the Cork ETB quality assurance unit as soon as numbers on a course are finalised, i.e., when estimate forms are issued by the QA unit

- ensure that each component in the campus/centre is authenticated at a minimum every two years by indicating in the estimates form which components were not authenticated in the previous assessment period
- confirm to the Cork ETB quality assurance unit that they can accommodate external authenticators in their campuses and centre and remotely
- provide dates and times when the campus/centre can facilitate external authentication
- provide contact details of the staff who coordinate the external authentication process to the Cork ETB quality assurance unit and who will be available to provide support to external authenticators in-centre or remotely. This is particularly important when external authentication takes place remotely

**When external authentication is conducted in centre, and material is made available digitally to the external authenticator.**

- ensure all assessment materials and evidence necessary for the authentication process are made available to external authenticators
- the campus/centre must make all digital evidence is available to the external authenticator, either by granting access to the assessors moodle page or by granting access to a shared drive
- to prepare the moodle page for external authentication the assessor should first back up the moodle page and save the file to be restored next year
- all assessor notes and resources should be hidden on moodle. Only assessment material should be present on moodle for external authentication
- the campus/centre should then add the external authenticator to the assessors moodle page as a “non-editing” teacher. This enables the external authenticator to have access to authenticate the learners work but does not allow the external authenticator to make changes to the moodle page
- the campus/centre should remove the external authenticators access when the external authentication process has concluded

- the campus/centre must provide remote support to the external authenticator during the external authenticator process to ensure the external authenticator has access to all required material. This support is only to be given during normal business hours (Monday to Friday from 9am-5pm)

**When external authentication is conducted remotely, and material is made available digitally to the external authenticator.**

- the campus/centre must make all evidence available to the external authenticator, either by granting access to the assessors moodle page or by granting access to a shared drive
- to prepare the moodle page for external authentication the assessor should first back up the moodle page and save the file to be restored next year
- all assessor notes and resources should be hidden on moodle. Only assessment material should be present on moodle for external authentication
- the campus/centre should then add the external authenticator to the assessors moodle page as a “non-editing” teacher. This enables the external authenticator to have access to authenticate the learners work but **does not** allow the external authenticator to make changes to the moodle page
- the campus/centre should remove the external authenticators access when the external authentication process has concluded
- the campus/centre must provide remote support to the external authenticator during the external authentication process to ensure the external authenticator has access to all required material. This support is only to be given during normal business hours (Monday to Friday from 9am-5pm)

**When external authentication is conducted remotely, and material is couriered to the external authenticator:**

- the campus/centre will designate a staff member to be responsible for organising that assessment evidence to be couriered
- material will be sent to external authenticator by courier. The cost of this is at the campus/centres own expense
- the campus/centre is responsible for ensuring that the evidence is collected by courier from the external authenticator on completion of the authentication process
- the courier cost is again at the campus/centres own expense
- when assessment evidence is returned to the campus/centre it must then be stored securely as per [Cork ETB QA 6.9 Secure Storage of Assessment Procedure](#)

**On the day of external authentication, the campus/centre will provide the following:**

- appropriate staff who are available to be contacted on the day of the visit
- the campus/centre will clearly outline to the external authenticator exactly where relevant information is to be found, i.e., on Moodle, SharePoint, OneDrive, Google Drive, in hard copy or in other formats
- the campus/centre will make the following available to the external authenticator (digitally or in hard copy). To reduce the amount of paper being used by Cork ETB staff it is preferable that material be made available digitally to minimise printing:
  - the appropriate up to date Cork ETB descriptors for the major, special purpose, supplemental or minor award for which results are to be authenticated
  - the list of learner group(s) from which the sample is to be selected
  - the assessment plan for the learner group

- a copy of assessment instruments, i.e., briefs/examination papers for each of the component awards
- marking schemes for specific assessment activities and outline solutions where appropriate
- submission sheets/attendance sheets for each assessment
- the internal verification report(s)
- the portfolios of learner assessment and relevant marking sheets
- if the external authenticator is authenticating learner evidence from more than one campus/centre, the campus/centre will provide details on how and where learner evidence is to be made available
- the campus/centre will provide the appropriate equipment to moderate assessment evidence produced in a multi-media format as required
- the campus/centre will ensure that a representative remains in the campus/centre until the external authenticator has completed their duties
- the campus/centre will confirm with the QA unit the start and finish times for in-centre external authentication

**The external authenticator will:**

- sign the appropriate page of the letter of engagement and return it to the Cork ETB quality assurance unit prior to the authentication process. A digital signature will suffice
- attend the briefing session, which may be offered in person or as a webinar, organised by Cork ETB prior to commencing work as an external authenticator
- when conducting remote external authentication, the external authenticator may only contact support staff / assessors / managers within normal business hours (Monday to Friday from 9am-5pm). If the external authenticator experiences issues outside of these times, it must be addressed on the next business day before submitting their final report



- check and sign the internal verification report(s) and authenticate the findings/outcomes. A digital signature will suffice
- review the previous external authentication report if necessary and discuss with principal/campus/centre manager as regards what progress they have made to resolve issues that had arisen in that report
- sample a range of learner evidence using the Cork ETB's sampling strategy
- moderate assessment results in accordance with standards outlined in the Cork ETB programme descriptor/Cork ETB component specification
- sign all authentication report by learner group by minor award results sheets relating to the components moderated by that external authenticator. A digital signature will suffice
- provide constructive verbal and written feedback to relevant staff as appropriate
- produce a word-processed external authentication report using the Cork ETB external authentication template
- in writing the report, ensure that all areas for improvement, whether component specific or general, are highlighted in the section "outline areas for improvement"
- in writing the report, maintain standards of strictest confidentiality. No learner or assessor names or initials to appear on the external authentication report. Class groups can be identified only by the class code which appears on QBS or RCCRS
- bring any significant irregularity or serious issue identified to the attention of the principal/director/campus/centre manager
- once the work is complete the external authenticator will complete the claim form and the authentication report
- The external authentication report should be returned via email to Cork ETB quality assurance unit and the campus/centre within three working days

- the claim form should be forwarded to the Cork ETB quality assurance unit who complete a QQI EA submission form on the basis of the information provided. This is transmitted to the payroll department of Cork ETB
- on occasion the external authenticator may be requested to participate in the results approval panel
- if the external authenticator identifies an issue that significantly undermines the integrity of the assessment process, they should not recommend results for approval. In this instance the external authenticator should notify the campus/centre and contact Cork ETB quality assurance unit
- when the external authenticator has serious concerns regarding the integrity of the Cork ETB assessment process, this should be brought to the attention of QQI **after** it has been brought to the attention of both the campus/centre and the Cork ETB quality assurance unit

**Conflict of Interest:**

The external authenticator is assigned by the provider and must be independent of the campus/centre to which they are assigned. The external authenticator has a responsibility to inform the provider on initial contact if there is any conflict of interest which may arise or may bring into question the integrity of the process. Conflict of interest may include but is not limited to:

- family relationship
- personal relationship
- grievance/similar issues
- other issues

## PROCEDURE

### **6.15.1a Assignment and selection of an External Authenticator**

External authenticators are assigned to each campus/centre by the Cork ETB quality assurance unit from a panel of external authenticators. The Cork ETB sampling strategy for external authentication has been developed with consideration of QQI guidelines on external authentication as described in *Quality Assuring Assessment – Guidelines for Providers, Version 2 Revised* (QQI 2018).

### **6.15.1b Criteria for selection of an External Authenticator**

The following criteria will be used by Cork ETB when selecting an external authenticator from the panel. The external authenticator should:

- have technical/subject matter expertise within appropriate award area/field of learning
- have experience of delivery, programme assessment or work in the industry/field
- agree to undertake appropriate training and attend appropriate briefing
- have qualities needed to interact with learners, assessors and senior staff members, e.g. communication skills
- have administrative, and IT skills, e.g. report writing, time management skills
- undertake to operate within the code of practice and guidelines issued by QQI
- be available to the provider at the appropriate times
- be independent of the campus/centre to which they are assigned
- be a member of the approved national panel of external authenticators

### **6.15.1c Frequency**

External authentication will occur as frequently as required by campuses/centres.

#### 6.15.1d Methodology for moderation of assessment results

The external authenticator will select learner portfolios from each component on the list using the Cork ETB sampling strategy.

If there are 12 or less assessment portfolios a minimum of 6 portfolios will be externally authenticated, to allow for the cut-off points between the grades to be established.

If there are more than 12 assessment portfolios for a minor award, the sample will normally be 15% and will not be less than 6 assessment portfolios for external authentication, as per the following table:

Number of assessment portfolios for a Minor Award	Number of assessment portfolios to be included
0 → 12	Minimum 6
13 → 50	15% with not less than 6
51 → 100	15% of Total
101 → 200	15% of Total
201 → 300	15% of Total
301 → 400	15% of Total

It should be indicated by the external authenticator as to which assessment portfolios were selected as part of the sample.

The external authentication should take a sample from across the four grading categories, i.e. distinction, merit, pass and unsuccessful (where appropriate). The external authenticator should pay special attention to any borderline grades.

If the external authenticator does not have the subject matter expertise to authenticate the result, they are expected to moderate the results and indicate this in their report and flag to the Cork ETB quality assurance unit.

#### 6.15.2 Process of External Authentication

The external authenticator must complete an external authentication report ([QA 6.15.a](#)). Reports should be done by course when possible. When this is not possible (evening provision/BTEI etc), the component name and level should be indicated.

Reports should be emailed to [qa@corketb.ie](mailto:qa@corketb.ie) within three working days of completion of authentication process and before the campus/centre results approval panel meeting takes place. Reports should be saved and emailed to the Cork ETB quality assurance unit using the following convention: External Authenticator name, Campus/Centre Name, Award, Group, Year; for example, Mary Murphy, Campus/Centre X, 5M2009, Childcare1, 2019.

**When authenticating a component, the external authenticator will check that:**

- there is evidence for each learner entered on QBS/RCCRS
- the assessment material has been marked and graded by the assessor
- there is a marking sheet for each piece of evidence in the folder
- the marks have been totalled correctly and entered correctly on QBS/RCCRS
- the assessment briefs are clear, concise and correctly mapped to the learning outcomes as per the component descriptor
- the examination paper is clear, concise and correctly mapped to the learning outcomes as per the component descriptor and outline solutions are available (when relevant to the component)
- the evidence has been marked in accordance with national standards
- provider policies and procedures have been correctly applied, e.g. in relation to plagiarism, late submission
- feedback on assessment has been given to the learners
- if a grade is judged to be awarded incorrectly the external authenticator will moderate and change the result by annotating the learner marking sheet and change to the next grade band. This will also be noted on the authentication report by learner group by minor award results sheet(s)
- if the external authenticator makes a grade change, they will then extend the sample to review the portfolio of evidence for the learner with the next closest total marks until the external authenticator satisfied that the grade cut off is satisfactory
- sign the learner marking sheet for each learner who has been authenticated.  
A digital signature will suffice

- note areas of component specific good practice
- make recommendations of component specific areas for improvement

**Evidence may be made available to the external authenticator digitally or in hard copy. To facilitate remote external authentication and to reduce the amount of paper being used by Cork ETB staff it is preferable to make evidence available digitally.**

## DOCUMENT DETAILS

<b>Title:</b>	QA 6.15 – Cork ETB External Authentication Procedure
<b>Authors:</b>	Cork ETB Assessment Working Group
<b>This Version Number:</b>	3.0
<b>Approval</b>	Cork ETB FET Strategy Group
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<b>Review Date:</b>	April 2025 or as required
<b>Templates/Resources:</b>	<a href="#">QA6.15a External Authentication Report</a>



## QA 6.15a Cork ETB External Authentication Report

This report is to be completed by the external authenticator and to be emailed to the Cork ETB quality assurance unit, qa@corketb.ie, and to the Cork College of FET campus/centre where the external authentication process was undertaken. Where the sample is taken from across more than one campus/centre, the campuses/centres included in the sample should be listed in this report.

The purpose of this report is to confirm that external authentication was conducted in accordance with the guidelines issued by QQI.

### Sample Size

If there are 12 or less assessment portfolios a minimum of 6 portfolios will be internally verified and externally authenticated, to allow for the cut-off points between the grades to be established.

If there are more than 12 assessment portfolios for a component, the sample will normally be 15% and will not be less than 6 assessment portfolios for External Authentication.

This Report is in 4 sections:-

**Section A** - details of the Cork College of FET campus/centre that this external authentication report relates to.

**Section B** - assessment process including identifying examples of good practice/improvements required. Examples could include ease of navigation/identification of digital evidence, Cork ETB QA procedures followed etc.

**Section C** - assessment standards including consideration of fair and consistent assessment in line with national standards, adherence to Cork ETB module descriptors and fitness for purpose of assessment instruments utilised.

**Section D** – Grade Changes and External Authenticator’s Signature.





**Section A - Details of Cork College of FET Campus/Centre**

<b>Registered Cork College of FET Campus/Centre Name &amp; Number:</b>		<b>Assessment Period:</b>	
<b>Total Number of Portfolios Presented:</b>		<b>Total Number of Portfolios Sampled:</b>	
<b>Date(s) of External Authentication :</b>			

<b>External Authenticator Name:</b>	
<b>Named Award(s) and Codes for Sample Selected:</b> Identify the major and component award(s) for which results are being externally authenticated	



## Section B – Assessment Process

### Internal Verification

Have the results been internally verified as per the Cork ETB Internal Verification procedure?

Choose an item.

Enter any comments on the internal verification process here:

### Examples of Good Practice/Areas for Improvement identified in the assessment process (not component specific)

If relevant, please provide details of good practice identified in the assessment process (do not include examples specific to individual components) (consider areas such as compliance with Cork ETB QA procedures and presentation of evidence):

If relevant, please provide examples of how improvements can be made to the assessment process as implemented:



**Section C – Assessment Standards**

Please complete for each component award being authenticated:	Were the Learning Outcomes assessed in accordance with the Assessment Techniques in the Cork ETB Module Descriptors?		Has the work been assessed in accordance with national standards?		Please identify best practice in assessment standards per component below. If indicating “No” to a question, identify areas of concern in assessment standards per component below:
QQI Component Award Title & Code	Yes	No	Yes	No	



### Section D – Grade Changes

Recommended Grade Changes	
Are you recommending grade changes?	Choose an item.
How many grade changes are you recommending?	
Total recommended grade changes as a % of total grades authenticated:	
If you are recommending grade changes, please identify which grades you are changing and the reason for the grade change:	

External Authenticator Name: \_\_\_\_\_

External Authenticator Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

This report is to be emailed to the Cork College of FET Campus/Centre and Cork ETB Quality Assurance Unit



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