

BTEC Centre Guide to Assessment

2017-18

Levels 4 to 7 (QCF)

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Introduction

This guide is designed for **higher level BTEC programme teams** and provides essential guidance on planning and implementation of internal assessment. It replaces the Specialist Papers, which we previously published on a number of assessment topics.

All BTEC higher level units are assessed through internal assessment, which means that you can deliver the programme in a way that suits your students and relates to local need. The way in which you deliver the programme must ensure that assessment is fair and consistent as defined by the requirements for national standards and that these standards are consistent over time.

To achieve this, it is important that as a centre you:

- make sure that there is a Programme Leader in place, who can support the whole programme team in understanding higher level assessment standards
- make full use of materials provided by us which define and exemplify assessment requirements such as specifications, published assignments, other support materials and guidance
- plan the assessment of units to fit with delivery – your plan should allow for the links between units, such as where one unit needs to build on another
- write suitable assessments (for example, assignments, projects or case studies) or select assessments from available resources, adapting them as necessary
- plan the assessment for each unit in terms of when it will be authorised by your Programme Leader, when it will be taught and assessed, and how long it will take
- ensure each assessment is fit for purpose, valid, will deliver reliable assessment outcomes across Assessors, and is internally verified before use
- provide preparation and support for students before the start of the final assessment
- make careful and consistent assessment decisions based only on using the defined assessment criteria and unit requirements and the overarching approach to grading
- ensure that all student evidence submitted for assessment is valid and authentic
- validate and record assessment decisions carefully and completely
- work closely with us to ensure that your implementation, delivery and assessment are consistent with national standards.

Which qualifications does this guide cover?

This guide covers:

- ✓ BTEC Higher Nationals at Levels 4 to 5 (**QCF**)
- ✓ BTEC Level 3 to 4 Foundation Diploma in Art and Design (FAD)
- ✓ BTEC Professional qualifications at Levels 4 to 7
- ✓ Knowledge-based components of BTEC Higher Apprenticeships – either Higher Nationals or Professional qualifications identified in the Higher Apprenticeship framework
- ✓ Higher Nationals on Pearson’s Self-Regulated Framework (SRF) that were developed **before** September 2016

This guide **does not** cover:

- ✗ BTEC Higher Nationals at Levels 4 to 5 (**RQF**) – please read the **UK Guide to Quality and Assessment**
- ✗ Higher Nationals on Pearson’s Self-Regulated Framework (SRF) that were developed **after** September 2016 – please read the **UK Guide to Quality and Assessment**

For Higher Nationals and programmes at Levels 4 to 7 on Pearson’s Self-Regulated Framework (SRF), you should also refer to the **Pearson’s Self-Regulated Framework (SRF) Quality Assurance Handbook**.

Other essential guidance

BTEC qualification specification

The specification for each BTEC qualification is the document that Programme Leaders and teams must use as a first point of reference for all planning and assessment. Specifications are accompanied by important assessment and delivery guidance which provide instructions and advice for each unit in the qualification. Please note, in larger programmes with a significant number of units available, the units may be published as separate documents to the initial specification guidance. All BTEC specifications are freely available on our [website](#).

UK Vocational Quality Assurance Handbook

We use quality assurance to check that all centres are working to national standards. It gives us the opportunity to identify and provide support where it is needed in order to safeguard certification. It also allows us to recognise and support good practice. Every year we publish an updated [UK Vocational Quality Assurance Handbook](#) to explain our quality assurance processes for the coming academic year.

Forms and templates

We publish a range of useful [forms and templates](#) on our website for you to use in your centre. These forms are not mandatory, but using them will help to ensure that you are meeting requirements.

The forms and templates provided include:

- Internal verification of assignment briefs
- Assignment briefs
- Internal verification of assessment decisions
- Assessment tracking documents
- Tutor observation records and witness statements
- Student declarations.

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) for Higher Education

As well as meeting the quality requirements for the delivery of Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals, centres also need to meet the quality and standards requirements of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). This is the independent body responsible for monitoring and advising on standards and quality in UK higher education, and this includes UK qualifications delivered outside the UK. As such, Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals must also meet the quality standards prescribed by the QAA.

The QAA has developed a Quality Code in liaison with the higher education sector and it is maintained and published on the sector's behalf, by the QAA. It sets out the Expectations that all providers of UK higher education are required to meet.

The purpose of the Quality Code is to:

- safeguard the academic standards of UK higher education
- assure the quality of the learning opportunities that UK higher education offers to students

- promote continuous and systematic improvement in UK higher education
- ensure that information about UK higher education is publicly available.

The QAA has also produced, in liaison with Pearson, a checklist of responsibilities for providers without degree awarding powers. It identifies each Quality Code Expectation and for each one summarises the responsibilities of the provider and awarding body (Pearson). It can be found at [Responsibilities Checklist for providers without degree awarding powers](#).

To help colleges make the best use of the Quality Code, QAA has also developed the [College Higher Education Toolkit: Engaging with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#). The toolkit has been developed with staff in colleges and representative organisations.

- For alternative providers undergoing review QAA has published a handbook, [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).
- A detailed overview of the Quality Code can be found at [The UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#).
- For a list of all the Expectations which make up the Quality Code, please see the [Summary list of the 19 Expectations](#).

Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)

The Higher Education Act 2004 required the appointment of an independent body to oversee a student complaints scheme in England and Wales and the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) was designated to operate this scheme in 2005. From the outset, all universities in England and Wales were required to subscribe to the Scheme.

On 1 September 2015, the relevant section of the Consumer Rights Act 2015 came into force on extending the range of higher education providers that are required to participate in the Scheme. Subscribers now include providers offering higher education courses that are designated for student support funding, as well as institutions with degree awarding powers.

Examples of complaints that the OIA deals with are those relating to teaching provision and facilities, accommodation, bullying and harassment, disciplinary matters, unfair practice, discrimination, procedural irregularities and academic appeals. The OIA does not deal with academic or professional judgements. More information can be found at [Office of the Independent Adjudicator](#).

Through induction and your student handbook, subscribers to the OIA need to ensure that students in England and Wales are made aware of the services offered by OIA.

Quality assurance

This section outlines the quality assurance process for Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals.

What is Quality Assurance?

Quality assurance underpins all vocational qualifications:

- Quality assurance is used to ensure that managers, Internal Verifiers and Assessors are standardised and supported
- Pearson uses quality assurance to check that all centres are working to national standards. It provides the opportunity to identify and provide support where it is needed in order to safeguard certification. It also enables the recognition of good practice
- It ensures that the standards and requirements for the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) are met.
- It facilitates a high-quality learning experience for students to enable high achievement.

Pearson's quality assurance system for all Pearson BTEC Higher National programmes is benchmarked to Level 4 and Level 5 on the Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ). This will ensure that centres have effective quality assurance processes to review programme delivery. It will also ensure that the outcomes of assessment are to national standards.

The quality assurance process for providers offering Pearson BTEC Higher National programmes comprises five key components:

1. The approval process
2. Monitoring of internal provider systems
3. Independent assessment review (external examination)
4. Annual Programme Monitoring Report (APMR)
5. Annual Student Survey.

The final two components of the quality assurance process were introduced in the 2016-17 academic year.

Annual Programme Monitoring Report (APMR)

The Annual Programme Monitoring Report is a **mandatory** written annual review form that provides an opportunity for centres to analyse and reflect on the previous teaching year. By working in collaboration with centres, the information can be used by Pearson to further enhance the quality assurance of Pearson BTEC Higher National

programmes by sharing good practice, identifying problems and supporting centres. Further guidance regarding APMR can be found [here](#).

Annual Student Survey

Feedback from students completing each stage of their programme is essential to enhancing the quality of the teaching and learning experience. Therefore, Pearson will conduct an annual survey of the experience of Pearson BTEC Higher National students.

The purpose of the survey is to enable Pearson to evaluate the student experience as part of the quality assurance process, by engaging with students studying on these programmes.

The annual Pearson BTEC Higher National Student Survey has been designed to provide valuable and quantifiable feedback on the Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals to inform the future design of the qualifications, to triangulate other aspects of the quality assurance mechanisms, and to support the development of resources for Pearson BTEC Higher National students globally. The survey will also provide a global perspective of student opinion from around the world.

The survey will be sent annually to all centres delivering Pearson BTEC Higher National qualifications, and it will form part of the Pearson BTEC Higher National quality assurance cycle. Centres are expected to promote student participation in the survey.

As part of Pearson's responsibilities as the awarding organisation for the qualification suite and in response to the requirements of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) regarding students' experiences, the results from the survey will provide data to better inform the continued development of the Pearson BTEC Higher National qualifications and their efficacy. Pearson has a responsibility to consider and act on the information received. Anonymised results will be shared with centres and Pearson will seek to address what may be common issues, and, where necessary, Pearson will provide appropriate support to both students and centres.

The programme team

The programme team consists of all the staff responsible for the delivery, assessment and verification of a BTEC qualification. It is extremely important that sufficient systems and procedures are in place prior to delivering a BTEC programme. As BTECs are vocational qualifications, it is very important that the programme team includes individuals with up to date and relevant vocational experience or knowledge, in order to get the best out of the qualifications. The roles undertaken by the programme team include the following:

Programme Leader

A Programme Leader is a person designated by a centre to take overall responsibility for the effective delivery and assessment of BTECs in their subject. The Programme Leader may also act as an Assessor and/or Internal Verifier.

Internal Verifier

Internal Verifiers conduct quality checks on assessment processes and practice to ensure that they meet national standards and that all students have been judged fairly and consistently. An Internal Verifier can be anyone involved in the delivery and assessment of the programme that is able to give an expert "second opinion". Where there is a team of Assessors, it is good practice for all Assessors to be involved in internally verifying each other. Please note that as an Internal Verifier, you cannot internally verify your own assignments or assessment decisions. There is no requirement for a Lead Internal Verifier (LIV) to be registered for BTEC higher level programmes.

Assessor

An Assessor is anyone responsible for the assessment of students and acts under the guidance of the Programme Leader, who will direct Assessors to appropriate training, support and standardisation. Typically, Assessors will devise assignment briefs, deliver the programme of study and assess the evidence produced by students against the assessment criteria in the programme specification.

Staff handbook

A handbook for the teaching and delivery team will give key messages and clarify the major differences between BTECs and other qualifications that they manage. A staff handbook is recommended to help support full- and part-time members of a delivery team.

A handbook for staff to support their delivery of the BTEC Higher Nationals should provide essential information. Indicative content could be:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme title • Programme structure • Progression opportunities • Assessment plans, including dates, terms, semesters, assessment timings • Student complaints and appeals procedure (including the role of Pearson and the Office of the Independent Adjudicator) • Plagiarism policy and other types of malpractice • Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) • QAA Expectations • Assessment Boards and how to process results • Academic regulations • Internal verification, plans and timings, responsibilities, etc. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of External Examiners (EEs) and Pearson quality assurance visits • Staff roles and responsibilities • Conflict of Interest policy • Continuing Professional Development (CPD)/Staff Development policy • Internal verification policy • How to conduct a mitigating circumstances claim • Learning and Teaching policy • Equality Diversity and Equal Opportunities policy • Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations policy • Pearson Annual Student Survey • Pearson Annual Programme Monitoring Report (APMR) |
|---|--|

All staff should be made aware of how to report suspected staff malpractice or maladministration to Pearson. Staff should complete the [Notification of suspected malpractice or maladministration involving staff](#) (JCQ M2(a) form) and send it to pqsmalpractice@pearson.com. More information regarding malpractice and plagiarism can be found [here](#).

For more guidance on developing handbooks and quality assurance procedures, please refer to the [BTEC Centre Guide to Managing Quality](#) and the [BTEC Centre Guide to External Examination](#).



Student handbook

A student handbook is essential in terms of guiding students through the course so that they are aware of course requirements, know what is expected of them and understand their rights as students.

Content could include:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General information about the provider • Course specific information (for example, course title HNC/HND, pathway, units available, mode of study, course dates) • Progression opportunities • Student rights • Available resources, including HN Global • Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) • Assessment and feedback | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plagiarism and other types of malpractice • Referencing • Collusion and cheating • Student complaint and appeal procedure (including the role of Pearson and the Office of the Independent Adjudicator) • Student participation and feedback • Annual Student Survey • Progression opportunities |
|---|--|

Programme specification

It is a Pearson requirement that all centres delivering BTEC Higher National programmes produce a programme specification(s).

What is a programme specification?

A programme specification is a concise description of both the intended outcomes of learning from a higher education programme and the means by which these outcomes are achieved and demonstrated. The programme specification should not be confused with the standard Pearson BTEC qualification specifications that comprise the full guidance and units for each of these qualifications. The latter are the nationally devised and accredited structures, curriculum content and related guidance. They do not define the local dimension that your programme specification is intended to capture.

Programme specifications should make explicit:

- The intended learning outcomes of the programme
- The teaching and learning methods that enable students to achieve these outcomes and the assessment methods used to demonstrate their achievement
- The relationship of the programme and its elements to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) and, where appropriate, subject benchmark statements

A good programme specification will improve student understanding of how and when learning occurs, and of what is being learned, and thereby inform reflection upon personal learning, performance and achievement, and subsequent planning for educational and career development.

Why is a programme specification produced?

Programme specifications provide clear and explicit information for students so that they can make informed choices about their education and the levels that they are aiming to achieve. They should provide comprehensive information regarding a programme that can be accessed by stakeholders including students, centre staff, Pearson, employers, and external agencies such as QAA. Your External Examiner (EE) will request a copy of all relevant programme specifications during their visit. Programme specifications also allow you to capture the local dimensions of your programmes, the distinct ethos of programme design and the unique characteristics of graduates, and how this is articulated through the choice of units and projects, and the approaches to teaching and assessment.

How does a programme specification differ from a programme profile?

The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) has developed programme profiles. These provide prospective students with information that is mostly, although not always, of a summary nature. Programme specifications are different; they are typically used for a wider range of purposes, as well as providing information in greater detail.

Who should write a programme specification?

Writing a programme specification is an academic activity and the responsibility therefore lies with the programme team. They may wish to seek guidance and advice from quality assurance experts but they need to take ownership of the programme specification and must therefore make the most significant input.

When is a programme specification required?

A separate programme specification is required for each and every Higher National programme on offer. There are no Pearson rules regarding which qualifications should be included in each programme specification, as long as **every** BTEC Higher National programme and pathway is included in a programme specification. For example, you may wish to:

- Produce one programme specification for the entire department that includes the relevant information for each individual programme (for example, a HN Engineering programme specification that includes sections on the HNC General Engineering, HND General Engineering, HNC Mechanical Engineering, and HND Mechanical Engineering)
- Produce separate programme specifications for each and every programme (for example, four separate programme specifications for the HNC General Engineering, HND General Engineering, HNC Mechanical Engineering, and HND Mechanical Engineering)
- Produce separate specifications for each pathway/specialism, even if they are within the same sector (for example, two separate programme specifications for HN Engineering: one for HNC/D General Engineering and one for HNC/D Mechanical Engineering)

In programmes with a number of pathways, you should identify any units and learning outcomes that are specific to each pathway, together with the relevant teaching, learning and assessment strategies. It is appropriate to produce a template containing all relevant generic information and to use this as a basis for the production of programme-specific programme specifications.

Is there a recommended format and style for programme specifications?

There is no recommended format and you are free to decide upon the format that best suits your provision. The programme specification should contain all the information required by the student but should avoid educational jargon wherever possible. Any specialist terms that cannot be avoided should be defined and explained and the entire programme specification should be written in the most accessible style possible.

Who will use a programme specification?

Programme specifications are used by:

- students and prospective students seeking information and understanding of a programme
- institutions and teaching teams, to promote discussion and reflection on new and existing programmes and to ensure that there is a common understanding about the aims and intended learning outcomes for the programme
- internal and external reviewers as an important source of information
- External Examiners (EEs), so that they can refer to and review your centre's assessment guidance and methodology
- employers seeking information about the skills and other transferable intellectual abilities developed by the programme
- professional and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) who accredit higher education programmes
- staff during programme validations, annual monitoring and review, and teaching and learning discussions regarding the delivery of learning outcomes and support methods
- centres, as a basis for gaining feedback from students or recent graduates on the extent to which they perceived that the opportunities for learning were successful in promoting the intended outcomes.

Who should write a programme specification?

The Pearson guidance and unit specifications are generic and take no account of local market conditions, local student needs, the choice of option units made by your centre and/or the student, any additional units imported under 'meeting local needs' or units that have been locally devised by centres.

What information should be included in a programme specification?

The following information should be included as a minimum:

- Name of awarding organisation (Pearson)
- Name of teaching institution
- Details of accreditation
- Precise title of the final award
- Programme title
- UCAS code (if applicable)
- Aims of the programme
- Relevant subject benchmark statements
- Programme outcomes; knowledge, understanding, skills, and other attributes
- Teaching, learning and assessment strategies to be used
- Programme structure and requirements; levels, modules, credits, and awards
- The role of the awarding body and information on external examination
- Date at which the programme specification was written
- Date at which the programme specification will be revised
- The names and contact details for all members of staff involved in the delivery and assessment of the programme
- The appeals process, including students' rights to appeal to Pearson and the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

The following information would also prove useful:

- Admission criteria
- Assessment regulations
- Practical workshop rules, e.g. etiquette and health and safety details, etc.
- Centre policies and rules, e.g. Malpractice, Authenticity and Assessment, Appeals
- Information on attendance, late work policy, drugs, smoking, college information, helpline details
- Programme team and other key personnel details where appropriate
- Quality indicators
- Learning support provision
- Methods used to evaluate and improve quality and standards
- Name of programme leader
- Mode of study
- Duration of programme
- Level of programme within the Framework for Higher Education (FHEQ), if appropriate (does not apply to HNC)
- Date of last Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) subject review
- Details of accreditation by professional bodies
- Work-based learning elements
- Distinctive features of the programme.

Stage	Planning	Implementation	Internal Verification
Programme Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discusses the qualification specification to ensure a shared understanding and awareness of relationships between units • Creates assessment plan • Plans assessment activities and timescales • Agrees entry requirements for the programme • Develops external links with employers and other sources of relevant vocational input • Identifies staff development needs and opportunities • Selects appropriate units relevant to students' needs and the local context • Considers resource needs for the programme including published, digital, staff, external inputs • Develops programme handbooks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivers programme according to agreed assessment plan • Ensures timescales are met. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adheres to agreed process for internal verification • Ensures understanding of the documentation used, keeps it up to date, and makes use of electronic and paper versions as agreed.

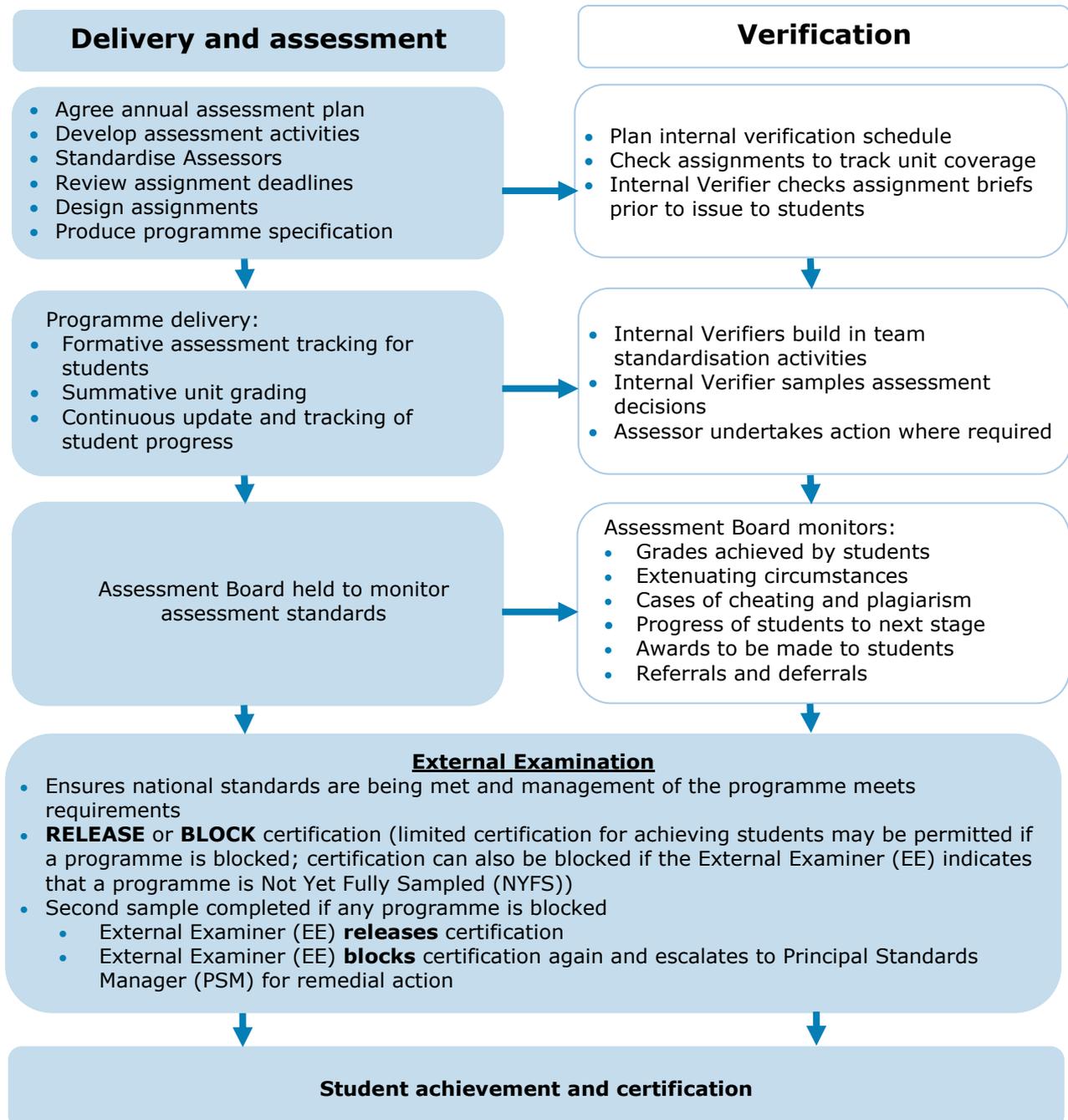
Stage	Planning	Implementation	Internal Verification
Assessor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertakes standardisation with team • Applies assessment arrangements to deliver national standards • Designs, adapts and uses assessment instruments • Identifies formative and summative assessment opportunities for the student. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivers content using effective approaches and takes account of support materials • Checks that all student work is authenticated and that any evidence accepted for assessment is the students' own work • Assesses student work according to the agreed assessment plan and against national standards • Provides constructive formative feedback to student • Provides guidance for the student to enhance assessment achieved on formative assessment • Provides interim/summative assessment decisions • Tracks student achievement and maintains accurate records • Plans next steps with the student • Oversees any permitted resubmissions/repeat units. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completes any remedial action identified by the Internal Verifier.

Stage	Planning	Implementation	Internal Verification
Internal Verifier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works with assessment team to ensure standardisation • Ensures that an assessment and internal verification plan is in place and operational for all qualifications • Confirms the quality of assessment instruments as fit for purpose • Advises on the interpretation of national standards • Coordinates assessment arrangements including additional sites, if appropriate • Approves and signs the programme assessment plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures an effective system of recording student achievement is in place • Advises on opportunities for evidence generation and collection • Keeps records of the verification process • Liaises with the External Examiner (EE) where appropriate • Monitors course file • Ensures appropriate corrective action is taken where necessary • Takes part in the formal stages of any appeal • Advises programme team on any training needs • Approves requested additional assessment opportunities for students • Provides feedback to the programme team, senior management and Pearson as required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides advice and support to Assessors on a regular basis • Undertakes internal verification, covering all Assessors and all units, in line with the internal verification plan • Checks the quality of assessment to ensure that it is consistent, valid, fair and reliable • Confirms whether assessment decisions meet national standards • Provides feedback to the Assessor, including action to be taken if assessment decisions are judged to be incorrect • Arranges standardisation meetings across teams and additional sites • Ensures own assessment decisions are sampled if assessing on a programme.
Student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completes induction to BTEC programme • Agrees to abide by the centre's policy on assessment including producing valid evidence for assessment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produces work for assessment to meet national standards as set out in assignments • Meets deadlines for assessment • Responds to formative feedback • Confirms authenticity of own work • Receives assessment decisions and feedback from the Assessor • Plans next steps with the Assessor. 	

Stage	Planning	Implementation	Internal Verification
Pearson External Examiner (EE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allocated by us, according to BTEC programme requirements Contacts centre to negotiate arrangements for external examination visit and sampling of students' work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepares visit schedule covering allocated programmes Checks management of the programmes is effective and meets our requirements and those of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education Undertakes sampling in line with current requirements Checks consistency of the interpretation of national standards by each Assessor Identifies whether assessment decisions meet national standards Confirms that student evidence meets the grading criteria awarded Confirms student work has been accepted as authentic by the Assessor Checks that timely and effective internal verification has been carried out on assignments, assessment decisions and feedback to students Gives verbal feedback to the programme team or other centre-nominated person on decisions made Completes online report clearly identifying whether national standards are being met Where required, identifies any remedial action required for re-sampling and conducts re-sample. 	

Planning

Good planning is the first step to successful programmes. It is the best way of making sure everything is in place to ensure unit coverage is robust and achievable.



Planning assessment

Plans should be developed jointly by the programme team and agreed by the Programme Leader. Key areas to consider are:

- unit sequencing or integration
- assignments and projects
- resource planning, such as when to deploy specialist staff
- timetabling, events, shows and trips
- schemes of work
- external resources available
- planning assignment deadlines across the programme to ensure that students are not overwhelmed at key points
- feedback from students and from external sources, such as progression providers
- how authenticity of student work can be assured.

If you deliver a programme where units are integrated, the plan will allow you to establish that all targeted criteria can be achieved. As a minimum requirement, the assessment plan must include:

- names of all Assessors and Internal Verifiers
- dates for:
- assignment hand-out and hand-in
 - formative feedback
 - summative feedback
 - internal verification and an opportunity for reassessment.

Conflict of interest

Assessment staff may encounter a potential conflict of interest in their work. Examples of these may include:

- a close relation, spouse or partner within the centre who is either a student or another member of staff
- a close relation, spouse or partner acting as an External Examiner (EE) or other external quality assurance role.

A formal log of potential and actual conflicts of interest should be kept up to date within your centre, including actions taken to minimise risk. This record must be made available on request. Individuals must always disclose an activity if there is any doubt about whether it represents a conflict of interest.

Planning internal verification

Internal verification is the quality assurance system you use to monitor assessment practice and decisions.

It ensures that:

- assessment plans and schemes of work are in place to ensure full coverage of the qualification
- assessment instruments are fit for purpose
- assessment decisions accurately match student evidence to the unit grading criteria and assessment guidance
- assessors are standardised and assessment and grading is consistent across the programme.

It is essential that internal verification is planned for at the start of a programme. An internal verification schedule must be agreed, to ensure that:

- all assignment briefs are internally verified before distribution to students
- a sample of assessment decisions is internally verified, covering every unit, every Assessor and a range of student achievement (e.g. Ungraded, Pass, Merit, Distinction).

Full guidance on internal verification can be found on our website and in the **BTEC Centre Guide to Internal Verification**.



Student recruitment and induction

Student recruitment

It is crucial that students are recruited with integrity onto the correct programme and level. There is a carefully designed progression route within the BTEC framework of qualifications. The appropriate levels are set against the equivalent expectations of achievement at Foundation Learning level, GCSE and GCE. Every BTEC specification has clear guidance on the level of the qualification.

Centres delivering BTEC higher level programmes are expected to ensure that all students who are non-native English speakers or who have not studied the final two years of school in English, can demonstrate capability in English at a standard commensurate with:

- IELTS 5.5, with a minimum of 5.0 being awarded on individual sections for a Level 4 or 5 qualification
- IELTS 6.5 for a Level 6 or 7 qualification

Our External Examiners (EEs) will expect centres to demonstrate that their students meet these requirements.

Student induction

The induction the student receives is key to the success of the student on their chosen qualification. Students must understand the programme specification, including:

- programme structure (how and when units are assessed)
- programme/unit content
- assessment grading
- level of programme and equivalency
- purpose of the assignment briefs for learning and assessment
- relationship between the tasks given in an assignment and the grading criteria
- nature of vocational and work-related learning
- responsibilities they have in the learning process (e.g. the importance of meeting assessment deadlines and using opportunities for wider attainment)
- importance of presenting authentic work and being clear on what constitutes plagiarism
- rules relating to submission and resubmission of evidence
- appeals procedure
- arrangements for any units that have external assessment or other exceptional assessment (e.g. through performances, trips, exhibitions).

Student attendance

Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals currently carry a maximum registration period of five years. However, it is important, and expected, that students complete their studies in a timely manner, in line with both the advertised programme duration and the expected completion date set at the time of registration. Centres offering Pearson BTEC Higher National programmes are required to review student registration information annually to ensure that it is accurate and up-to-date. For students who are no longer active on a programme, their registration must be withdrawn from Edexcel Online (EOL) at the earliest opportunity.

Whilst Pearson do not set a minimum percentage attendance requirement, for Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals, centres are reminded of the Expectation in Chapter B3 of the QAA's Quality Code:

Higher education providers, working with their staff, students and other stakeholders, articulate and systematically review and enhance the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices, so that every student is enabled

to develop as an independent learner, study their chosen subject(s) in depth and enhance their capacity for analytical, critical and creative thinking.

In particular, Indicator 8 states:

Higher education providers take deliberate steps to assist every student to understand their responsibility to engage with the learning opportunities provided and shape their learning experience.

Centres must ensure that their attendance policy and processes enable and encourage their students to fully participate in the learning opportunities offered.

Annual student fee

The annual student fee will not apply to students in the first year of their study, as this is already built into the qualification registration fee charged to centres.

Please note that this fee will be charged for each subsequent year students take to complete a HNC/D programme, after their first year of study. This means that if students complete the HND in two years, their centre will only have the £20 fee to pay once in their second year, whilst for any students who complete the HND in three years, their centre will have the £20 annual fee to pay twice (in their second and third years).

Unit structure

BTEC units follow a standard structure. There may be slight variance between Higher Nationals and other Professional qualifications, but the basic principles remain the same.

Unit structure	Guidance
Unit number and title	The unit title is accredited on the QCF and this form of words will appear on the student's Notification of Performance (NOP).
Level	Each unit is assigned a level, indicating the relative intellectual demand, complexity and depth of study, and student autonomy. All units and qualifications within the QCF will have a level assigned to them, which represents the level of achievement. There are nine levels of achievement, from Entry Level to Level 8. The level of the unit has been informed by the QCF level descriptors and, where appropriate, the National Occupational Standards (NOS) and/or other sector/professional benchmarks.
QCF credit value	Each unit in Pearson BTEC (QCF) qualifications has a credit value which specifies the number of credits that will be awarded to a student who has achieved all the learning outcomes of the unit. Students will be awarded credits for the successful completion of whole units.
Aim	The aim provides a clear summary of the purpose of the unit and is a succinct statement that summarises the learning outcomes of the unit.
Unit abstract	The unit abstract gives the reader an appreciation of the unit in the vocational setting of the qualification, as well as highlighting the focus of the unit. It gives the reader a snapshot of the unit and the key knowledge, skills and understanding gained while studying the unit. The unit abstract also highlights any links to the appropriate vocational sector by describing how the unit relates to that sector.
Learning outcomes	The learning outcomes identify what each student must do in order to pass the unit. Learning outcomes state exactly what a student should 'know, understand or be able to do' as a result of completing the unit. Students must achieve all the learning outcomes in order to pass the unit.
Unit content	<p>The unit content identifies the breadth of knowledge, skills and understanding needed to design and deliver a programme of learning to achieve each of the learning outcomes. This is informed by the underpinning knowledge and understanding requirements of relevant National Occupational Standards (NOS) where appropriate.</p> <p>Each learning outcome is stated in full and then the key phrases or concepts related to that learning outcome are listed in italics followed by the subsequent range of related topics. The information below shows how unit content is structured and gives the terminology used to explain the different components within the content:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning outcome: this is given in bold at the beginning of each section of content. • Italicised sub-heading: it contains a key phrase or concept. This is content which must be covered in the delivery of the unit. Colons mark the end of an italicised sub-heading. • Elements of content: the elements are in roman text and amplify the sub-heading. The elements must also be covered in the delivery of the unit. Semi-colons mark the end of an element. • Brackets contain amplification of elements of content which must be covered in the delivery of the unit. • 'e.g.' is a list of examples used for indicative amplification of an element (that is, the content specified in this amplification that could be covered or that could be replaced by other, similar material). <p>It is not a requirement of the unit specification that all of the content is assessed.</p>
<p>Assessment criteria</p>	<p>Each unit contains statements of the evidence that each student should produce in order to receive a pass.</p>
<p>Guidance</p>	<p>This section provides additional guidance and amplification related to the unit to support Assessors. Its subsections are given below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links: sets out possible links between units within the specification. Provides opportunities for the integration of learning, delivery and assessment. Links to relevant National Occupational Standards (NOS) and Professional Bodies Standards will be highlighted here. • Essential requirements: essential, unique physical and/or staffing resources or delivery/assessment requirements needed for the delivery of this unit are specified here. • Employer engagement and vocational contexts: this is an optional section. Where relevant, it offers suggestions for employer contact to enhance the delivery of the unit. <p>These subsections should be read in conjunction with the learning outcomes, unit content, assessment criteria and the generic grade descriptors.</p> <p>The centre will be asked to ensure that essential resources are in place when it seeks approval from Pearson to offer the qualification.</p>

Planning units

How you plan assessment of units may differ from subject to subject, and relates to your timetable, Assessor expertise, resources available, etc. You should always take full account of the published guidance for each unit to ensure a coherent programme of study. For example, core units often provide a platform of underpinning knowledge for other units and you should think carefully about how these units fit together for delivery.

Delivering and assessing unit-by-unit

A BTEC qualification comprises individual units that cover specific topics. For many sectors, a unit-by-unit approach to delivery is a valid and appropriate method. You may break a unit down into two or more assignments if appropriate. However, you should not split a Learning Objective across assignments, or require extra assignments or tasks to meet the Merit or Distinction criteria within a unit. Tasks should be written to allow opportunities for the full achievement of Pass, Merit and Distinction criteria.

Integrated units

In certain sectors, the unit delivery can be integrated so that evidence can be mapped into two or more units. This approach may lead to a deeper understanding of the content and its application. It is important to map the assessment of evidence against unit criteria across units and keep accurate records of student achievement.

Learning strategies

Learning in the BTEC Higher Nationals should be vocational, active, motivational and progressive. It will be closely linked to assessment, allowing development of skills, knowledge and attributes that will enable the student to complete assessments. From the start, it is important to consider the most effective way of delivering and assessing a unit or assignment. Learning strategies may include:

- project work carried out as an individual or as part of a group
- work-based learning
- lectures and seminars
- facilitated activities
- visits to companies with a facilitator to structure the visit
- visiting speakers from the vocational sector.

The emphasis should be placed on active learning, drawing on materials gained from the working environment or industry wherever possible. This will help students to develop the transferable skills necessary in a changing and dynamic working environment.

A large proportion of units are practical in nature, giving students the opportunities to tackle 'real life' examples to apply their skills and knowledge to case studies or projects. As well as Assessors in your programme team having vocational experience, having someone currently working in the sector providing an active role in an assignment will increase the relevance of the assignment and further motivate the student.

When assessment has taken place, it is important that formative feedback informs students what they are able to do to improve the quality of the outcomes for a particular assignment. Feedback should be recorded to clarify this and a further deadline agreed leading to the summative assessment decision.

External links

Where possible, work-related programmes will benefit from external links with those working in the vocational sector. These links could be provided in any of the following ways:

- Checking the vocational relevance of the assignments
- Provision of 'live' case study material that is company or organisation based
- Student visits to companies and other vocational settings
- Professional input from companies and vocational practitioners, especially where vocational expertise is clearly identified in the delivery section of the units
- Work placement that is specifically related to the qualification
- Tutor placements to enhance vocational expertise.

Assessment strategies

The assessment programme must be designed so that skills and knowledge can be developed in line with the assessment criteria. There is a range of assessment methods that can be utilised, such as:

- presentations, written reports, accounts, surveys
- log books, production diaries
- role play
- observations of practical tasks or performance
- articles for journals, press releases
- production of visual or audio materials, artefacts, products and specimens
- peer and self assessment

- professional discussion.

Using a variety of assessment methods enhances learning and should improve the validity of assessment. They improve the knowledge of the assessment criteria and what is required to gain higher grade achievement.

Peer and self assessment

While self assessment is not sufficient on its own, it can provide valuable additional evidence of learning and formative assessment. Ask students to self assess by providing them with self assessment criteria or helping them to develop their own. Self assessment has been shown to improve attainment if it is used consistently. It encourages the reflective habit of mind essential for improvement; it ensures students take responsibility for their own learning; it focuses attention on criteria for success and increases effort and persistence.

Where appropriate, peer assessment impacts on self assessment by enabling individuals to become self critical and evaluative. It can provide a useful first and second stage prior to tutor assessment. It should generate action plans that are followed up prior to summative assessment.

Group work

Working in groups is an accepted part of learning within higher education. There are widely recognised benefits of collaborative group work in terms of learning and skills development. When groups work well, students can produce quality learning outcomes and develop specific teamwork skills, as well as generic skills valued by employers.

Most students can benefit from learning in groups, provided the groups are well managed and there are clear and fair assessment requirements. In a group assignment, it is essential that each student provides their own individual contribution to meeting each of the unit assessment criteria.

It is important that Assessors clearly identify the purpose of using group work within an assessment:

- Generally, it is not the group work activities themselves that will form the basis of the assessment activity
- Group learning activities and skills, such as team building, leadership, etc. may be assessed towards gaining transferable skills and recorded as being achieved and feedback given, but they are not to form part of the assessment decisions for specific units.

Concerns about group assignments can be reduced by:

- developing a suitable process for the selection of the team and having an interim appraisal and assessment process to check that each individual makes a sufficient contribution to the group work
- helping students to understand the criteria to be assessed for the group product and process, where process is being assessed
- informing them how individual contributions to the group will be measured and assessed against the unit specific learning outcomes, assessment and grading criteria
- developing assignments with tasks that have multiple sub-tasks that students can select and allocate to one another within the project
- reviewing and agreeing all assessment decisions and overall grading in the Assessment Board.

Guidelines on assessing group work

- Group projects should be included in the assessment schedule for a unit only where one or more learning outcomes of the unit indicate that they might be appropriate. In other words, does the learning outcome naturally fit the device of a group assessment?
- QAA expects a variety of assessment methods and consequently where appropriate group working skills should be developed
- Students should be informed, in detail and in advance, of the basis for assessment of group projects, including the methods to be used to measure the extent of individual contributions
- If the group project or its assessment places on students an obligation to exercise skills or judgements beyond those required for the subject (e.g. peer assessment), then adequate training should be provided to assist students to exercise that judgement
- If there is to be peer assessment of the contribution of the students to a group project, then the process for collecting feedback should be confidential between the individual student and the Assessor. If peer assessment includes the measurement of the contribution, the method should be clear and simple to use and self-assessment should also be included
- A common group grade should not be assigned to all members of the group; individual contributions should be measured and graded against the learning outcomes, the assessment and grading criteria
- Evidence of observation of presentations and discussions (with peers, Assessors etc.) should be detailed and mapped to criteria in order to provide evidence of achievement of individual contributions
- It is good practice to encourage students to reflect on what they have learnt from the group work experience and produce a written evaluation
- In some cases, presentations may provide evidence only sufficient for Pass criteria, for example where a presentation contained no corroborated detail of individual tasks undertaken by members of the group. In such cases, evidence for higher

grades may be achieved through formalised questioning of individual students mapped to the assessment criteria, or having the students produce a supplementary report of their activities

- Feedback can be directed to the group with reference to individual contributions and achievement
- For graded programmes, the achievement of the Merit and Distinction grade descriptors should be measured against individual contributions and the method of measurement should be clear within the assignment brief.

Time constrained assessment activities



The word 'test' is used below to describe any type of time limited assessment activity. The widespread use of time limited assessment activities (e.g. tests) is not encouraged within BTEC (QCF) qualifications, but limited use is permitted, as this assessment method is common in top-up degrees offered by higher education institutions (HEIs). Where tests are used, the programme team should ensure that their use can be justified and that they are valid for the purpose stated.

When planning this type of assessment, you should consider the following aspects:

- Is the test an integral part of an overall unit assessment plan?
- Is the test structured validly so as to satisfy the targeted learning outcomes and assessment criteria? If used, are grade descriptors appropriately contextualised?
- Does the unit (and programme) have an appropriate spread of assessment activities?
- Is the test assessed according to QCF assessment procedures?

Integration within a unit assessment plan

All units should have a unit assessment plan, indicating where assessment and grading opportunities are available within the various assessment activities of the unit. An individual assessment activity should show which of the learning outcomes, assessment criteria and/or grading descriptors are being targeted. From the context and student tasks, a judgement can then be made regarding the validity of the assessment in terms of the grading opportunities.

The same principles apply to a test. A test should clearly specify which assessment criteria and grading descriptors are being targeted. The action verbs/contextualised grading descriptors used in each of the questions can then be attributed to individual assessment criteria/grading descriptors and thus confirm that the test is valid in terms of content and level.

The test should also be valid in terms of purpose. Tests provide a high level of certainty where authenticity is an issue. As such, a test could be a valid method of assessment, where the principal requirements are confirmation that a student has an 'on-demand' factual knowledge of an aspect of a subject and if necessary, the ability to apply or explain it.

Tests could be constructed to address only selected assessment criteria or to include material relating to contextualised grading descriptors and so discriminate between Pass, Merit and Distinction levels of performance. However, since the grade descriptors relate mainly to methodology, it is likely that M1 (identify and apply strategies to find appropriate solutions), M3 (present and communicate appropriate findings), D1 (use critical reflection to evaluate own work and justify valid conclusions) and D3 (demonstrate convergent/lateral/creative thinking) most readily lend themselves to a test format. However, in some disciplines, it may also be possible to assess M2 (select/design and apply appropriate methods/techniques) and D2 (take responsibility for managing and organising activities), using certain forms of time-limited activities.

If appropriate, a test may be a reasonable means of reassessment after a late submission at summative assessment.

Spread of assessment activities

A holistic view of the programme should be taken to ensure there is an appropriate spread of assessment activities within and across the units. The units making up the programme should collectively allow students opportunities to develop, and be assessed in, higher level skills, such as analysis, literature searching, teamwork, management responsibilities, effective communication etc. Where tests are used, they should not be so numerous as to skew the balance of skills that can be best developed through written assignments, case studies, experimentation, investigative activities etc.

Structure of a test

The duration of the test should be clearly stated. Where a test relates only to the Pass criteria of learning outcomes, each question relating to the targeted assessment criteria should:

- Be identified and clearly annotated on the test paper (programme teams may wish to use the notation 1.1, 2.2 etc., to indicate the first and second listed assessment criteria for outcomes 1 and 2 respectively)
- Have 'sufficiency' in terms of unit content
- Be set at the appropriate level
- Use valid action verbs that address the demands of the assessment criteria.

Where a test is used to distinguish Merit and Distinction performance, i.e. contextualised grading descriptors are being assessed, then the different grading components of the questions should be identified so that it is clear which grading descriptors are being targeted (programme teams may find it convenient to use the notation M1, D2 etc for this purpose). It is essential that the questions are appropriately contextualised so as to satisfy the demands of the respective grading descriptors.

In addition to the overall duration of the test, there should be clear guidance to students on recommended times to be spent on answering Pass, Merit and Distinction items in the paper.

BTEC assessment procedures

It is not acceptable to use numbers to assess individual questions or to aggregate numbers to arrive at a final grade. Within the assessment of BTEC qualifications, there is no system of compensation or transference of credit whereby a relatively poor performance in one aspect of unit achievement can be offset by a good performance in another aspect. These fundamental features of outcome-based assessment must be taken into account in test-based assessments.

Authenticity and authentication

You can accept only evidence for assessment that is authentic, i.e. that is the student's own and that can be judged fully to see whether it meets the assessment criteria.

You should ensure that authenticity is considered when setting assignments. For example, ensuring that each student has a different focus for research will reduce opportunities for copying or collaboration. On some occasions, it will be useful to include supervised production of evidence. Where appropriate, practical activities or performance observed by the Assessor should be included.

Students must authenticate the evidence that they provide for assessment. They do this by signing a declaration stating that it is their own work when they submit it. For practical or performance tasks observed by the Assessor this is not necessary.

Assessors should only assess student evidence that is authentic. If they find through the assessment process that some or all of the evidence is not authentic, they need to take appropriate action, including invoking malpractice policies as required.

It is important that all evidence can be validated through verification. This means that it must be capable of being reassessed in full by another person. When you are using practical and performance evidence, you need to think about how supporting evidence can be captured through using, for example, videos, recordings, photographs, handouts, task sheets etc.

The authentication of student evidence is the responsibility of your centre. If during external examination, an External Examiner (EE) raises concerns about the authenticity of evidence, your centre will be required to investigate further. Depending on the outcomes, penalties may be applied.

Plagiarism

There are many definitions of what constitutes plagiarism. All of them agree that plagiarism is a form of academic misconduct or, put more simply, a form of cheating. Plagiarism is much more than simple copying from another student, or from books or the Internet, and can be taken to include paraphrasing, sub-contracting the work to someone else, submitting the same piece of work for two different purposes, etc. Ultimately, plagiarism is attempting to pass off other people's work and ideas as your own.

Why is plagiarism wrong?

- It is fundamentally dishonest
- Students who commit plagiarism are seeking an unfair advantage over other students
- Students who commit plagiarism are devaluing the value of the qualification they seek
- It is disrespectful to their Assessors, and a betrayal of their trust.

What are the undesirable consequences of plagiarism?

- Students who commit plagiarism learn far less than those who do not
- Assessment procedures are compromised if the work submitted is not the student's own
- Assessors are unable to form correct decisions on the progress of individual students
- It may result in legal action due to infringement of copyright laws

- It may be penalised by failure in one or more components of a course
- It could be unfairly interpreted as professional incompetence on the part of the Assessor
- The External Examiner (EE) will block the programme if they find evidence of student plagiarism that has not been detected by the centre.

Why does plagiarism happen?

There are many reasons. Students may:

- not understand what is meant by plagiarism, because it has never been explained to them
- not believe plagiarism to be wrong; they download music, video clips and games all the time
- not understand the concept of individual ownership of ideas and words
- have misconceptions about the ownership of electronic material
- struggle to differentiate between intellectual property rights and common knowledge
- regard the conventions of academic documentation as unimportant or irrelevant to them
- lack referencing skills, and therefore be unable to record and cite sources correctly
- lack the study skills, research skills and writing skills needed to produce the work required
- not know how to adapt published literature sources so that they do not require citation
- regard plagiarism as a shortcut to success.

What can you do to help minimise the risk of plagiarism?

The most important thing you can do is contribute to a culture in which students do not consider plagiarism an option. You should:

- develop clear policies and procedures regarding plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct, and explain at induction what is meant by 'plagiarism' and how it will be monitored and policed
- explain, at an early stage of the course, the concepts of individual ownership of ideas and words, the ownership of electronic material and the difference between 'intellectual property' and 'common knowledge'
- provide instruction in study skills, research skills, writing skills, time-management skills and the use of a suitable referencing system to record and cite sources correctly
- insist upon the use a standard referencing system and a comprehensive bibliography from day one

- act as a team, with every Assessor rigorously applying centre policies on referencing and bibliographies
- avoid the use of highly generic assignments and, instead, produce contextualised tasks that require the student to research in depth and individually analyse and evaluate their findings
- avoid the unhelpful practice of recycling assignments year after year
- include an authenticity statement with every assignment brief that students must sign and date to acknowledge that the work produced is their own and that they understand the penalties that will be imposed on students who submit plagiarised work
- provide students with opportunities to discuss any problems they may encounter, support them at each step and provide them with the resources they need to do the work properly
- ensure that students are not overloaded by providing them with an assessment schedule, agreed by all of the programme team, and then ensure that the team adheres to the schedule.

How can you identify plagiarism?

The expertise of individual Assessors is the best safeguard against plagiarism, supported by appropriate technology where available. Assessors should check student work for:

- the use of unfamiliar words
- grammar and syntax of a standard far higher than that demonstrated previously
- a discontinuous rise in the quality and accuracy of the student's work
- the use of texts familiar to the Assessor, but without appropriate referencing
- the use of American spellings and unfamiliar product names.

You might also:

- build an oral element into the assessment process, wherever appropriate, to check on understanding
- ask students to elaborate on suspect passages within their work
- type a few selected phrases into a search engine such as Google: simple but effective
- employ a sophisticated electronic plagiarism detection device such as 'Turnitin'
- discourage the use of unregulated websites such as Wikipedia
- familiarise yourself with the more widely-used 'essay banks' that can be found on the Internet
- pay particular attention to those students who perform well in coursework but considerably poorer in examinations and tests

- share concerns with colleagues; if everyone has the same suspicions about a particular student, it would seem appropriate to apply rigorous checks to all of his or her work.

What kind of policies and procedures are needed to address plagiarism?

You will need to have policies and procedures in place to address this issue. These policies and procedures should include:

- a precise definition of plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct
- a statement of why plagiarism, and all other forms of academic misconduct, are wrong
- the actions that will be taken by the centre to address the culture of plagiarism
- the techniques that will be used to monitor students' assessed work and detect plagiarism
- the procedures that will be employed to investigate allegations of plagiarism
- a tariff of penalties that will be applied to students found guilty of plagiarism
- details of the appeals system for students to use when appealing against decisions made.

Observation records and witness statements

We strongly recommend the use of witness statements, Assessor observation records or other paperwork. However, in order for these to be useful, they must record achievement at criterion level against the activity that is being observed. Checklists prepared against unit grading criteria are one way of doing this.

Tutor observations and witness statements are very useful supplementary evidence of achievement. However, an observation sheet or witness statement on its own may not be considered sufficient evidence for verification. It is important that it is supported by other evidence, such as audio/visual records of the activity, production reports, notes, self-evaluation by the student, etc. that can substantiate that the activity took place as described.

Observation records

An observation record is used to provide a formal record of an Assessor's judgement of student performance (process evidence e.g. during presentations, practical activities) against the target grading criteria. The record will:

- relate directly to the evidence requirements in the grading grid of the unit specification
- may confirm achievement or provide specific feedback of performance against national standards for the student
- provide primary evidence of performance
- be sufficiently detailed to enable others to make a judgement about quality and whether there is sufficient evidence of performance
- confirm that national standards have been achieved.

Observation records should:

- be accompanied by supporting/additional evidence. This may take the form of visual aids, video/audio tapes, CDs, photographs, handouts, preparation notes, cue cards, diary record or log book and/or peer assessments records, etc.
- note how effectively these were used to meet the grading criteria
- record the Assessor's comments
- be evidenced in student's portfolios when assessment is carried out through observation along with relevant supporting evidence
- be completed by the Assessor who must have direct knowledge of the specification to enable an assessment decision to be made
- be signed and dated by the Assessor and the student
- also include students' comments.

Witness statements

A witness statement is used to provide a written record of student performance (process evidence) against grading criteria. Someone other than the Assessor of the qualification/unit may complete it. This may be an Assessor of a different qualification or unit, a work placement supervisor, a technician, learning resources manager, or anyone else who has witnessed the performance of the student against given grading criteria. It can be someone who does not have direct knowledge of the qualification, unit or evidence requirements as a whole but who is able to make a professional judgment about the performance of the student in the given situation.

The quality of witness statements is greatly improved, and enables the Assessor to judge the standard and validity of performance against the grading criteria, if:

- the witness is provided with clear guidance on the desirable characteristics required for successful performance
- the evidence requirements are present on the witness testimony, but this may need further amplification for a non-Assessor

- the student or witness also provides a statement of the context within which the evidence is set.

The witness statement does not confer an assessment decision. The Assessor must:

- consider all the information in the witness statement
- note the relevant professional skills of the witness to make a judgment of performance
- review supporting evidence when making an assessment decision
- review the statement with the student to enable a greater degree of confidence in the evidence
- be convinced that the evidence presented by the witness statement is valid, sufficient and authentic.

When a number of witnesses are providing testimonies:

- it may be helpful to collect specimen signatures
- all witness testimonies should be signed and dated by the witness
- the job role/relationship of the witness with the student should also be recorded.

These details add to the validity and authenticity of the testimony and the statements made in it. Centres should note that witness testimonies can form a vital part of the evidence for a unit but they should not form the main or majority assessment of a unit.

Assignment design

Assessment instruments designed by you should collectively ensure coverage of all assessment criteria within each unit and should provide opportunities for the evidencing of all the grade descriptors.

You must clearly indicate the targeted assessment criteria and contextualised grade descriptors on each assessment instrument to provide a focus for students and to assist with internal standardisation processes.

Tasks and activities should enable students to produce evidence that relates directly to the assessment criteria and grade descriptors.

When you are designing assessment instruments, you need to ensure that they are valid, reliable and fit for purpose, building on the application of the assessment criteria.

You are encouraged to place emphasis on practical application of the assessment criteria, providing a realistic scenario for students to adopt, making maximum use of work-related practical experience and reflecting typical practice in the sector concerned. The creation of assessment instruments that are fit for purpose is vital to achievement.

Programme planning at the beginning of the year must include assignment mapping. This will ensure that you have fully met the content of the units in your delivery and that students are able to provide evidence for assessment that demonstrates full achievement of all the learning outcomes and grade descriptors.

Assignments tasks will identify the criteria being assessed to meet unit coverage, as described in the mandatory guidance within the unit. Tasks should be challenging rather than easily achievable, differentiated by outcome so that they stretch the most able but are open to lower achieving students.

Assignment mapping will allow you to monitor:

- that all assessment criteria from every unit being delivered will be assessed
- arrangements for staffing and resourcing of assessment activities where criteria from two or more units might be integrated in one assignment
- the planning of the internal verification of assessment during the programme.

Assignment briefs

The assignment brief is the document issued to students at the start of the assessment process. Clear assignment briefs will:

- inform the student of the tasks set
- inform the student of the methods of assessment
- set clear deadlines for submission of work.

You can send two assignment briefs to your External Examiner (EE) to review prior to their visit, for which they will provide formal feedback. You can also utilise our free [**Assignment Checking Service \(ACS\)**](#).

We provide assignment templates for you to use under 'Teaching and Learning Materials' on the subject pages of our [website](#). If you wish, you are free to design your own. However, any assignment brief must contain the following information:

Key information

- Assignment title
- Assessor
- Date issued
- Deadline (for assessment and grading)
- Title and level of qualification (as published in the specification)
- Unit(s) covered (as published in the specification)
- Duration (approximate time it expected that the assignment will take to complete)

Purpose / Scenario

- Overview and aims
- Vocational scenario (if appropriate, giving you the opportunity to place the assignment within a vocational context)

Task

- A task is a detailed description of specific activities the student will undertake in order to produce assessment evidence to address the criteria targeted
- You must reference tasks to the learning outcome and criteria they address
- Where possible, it is good practice for a task to encompass Pass, Merit and Distinction criteria within a learning outcome – however, for some units it may be appropriate for a learning outcome to be addressed by more than one task, depending on the assessment criteria it contains
- Merit and Distinction criteria should not be written as separate tasks: they are achieved through a qualitative improvement in the evidence submitted for the tasks set across the unit
- **Learning outcomes should not be split across different assignments**
- It is good practice that the stating of tasks is clear, specific, time-bound, stepped, relevant and realistic
- Tasks should be written in appropriate language for students at the level of the qualification
- Include details about any specific preparation students will need to make

Assessment and grading criteria

- The brief must state exactly which criteria are being addressed
- You must not rewrite any aspect of the published criteria
- Please see the section on grading for guidance on grade descriptors and contextualised grading criteria

Forms of evidence

- A clear statement of what the student is expected to produce as evidence
- Guidance on how the evidence will be assessed

Other information may include

- Resources and reference materials
- Wider assessment opportunities built into the assignment or mapped within the specification
- Employer links

Assignments involving group work

In assignment briefs, students should be provided with a full explanation of the requirements for the assignment in writing together with the usual assessment details (scenario, hand-out and hand-in dates, learning outcome/s and associated assessment criteria, etc.). It is suggested that this should include:

- The tasks to be undertaken
- The basis for group membership
- Rules that cover the operation of the group
- Confidentiality agreements over what occurs within the group
- Task allocation within the group
- The criteria for assessing the group report/presentation (product)
- The criteria for assessing the group process, if it is to be assessed
- The procedure for assessing individual contributions mapped to the learning outcome/s and associated assessment and grading criteria
- Who will carry out the assessment (e.g. Assessor, peers, employers, self, etc.)
- The fall-back position if a group loses a member or an individual's contribution does not meet the requirements of the tasks.

Internal verification of assignment briefs

All assignment briefs, even those provided by published sources, must be internally verified every year, **prior to issue** to the student.

Internal verification of the assignments should be carried out by a staff member who is familiar with BTEC assessment at the appropriate level and has subject knowledge within the programme area. Internal verification should always be reported and recorded. If further actions are identified by the Internal Verifier, the Assessor is required to complete all actions and return it to the Internal Verifier for review and sign off. Once the assignment has been signed off as being fit for purpose by the Internal Verifier, it may be issued to the students.

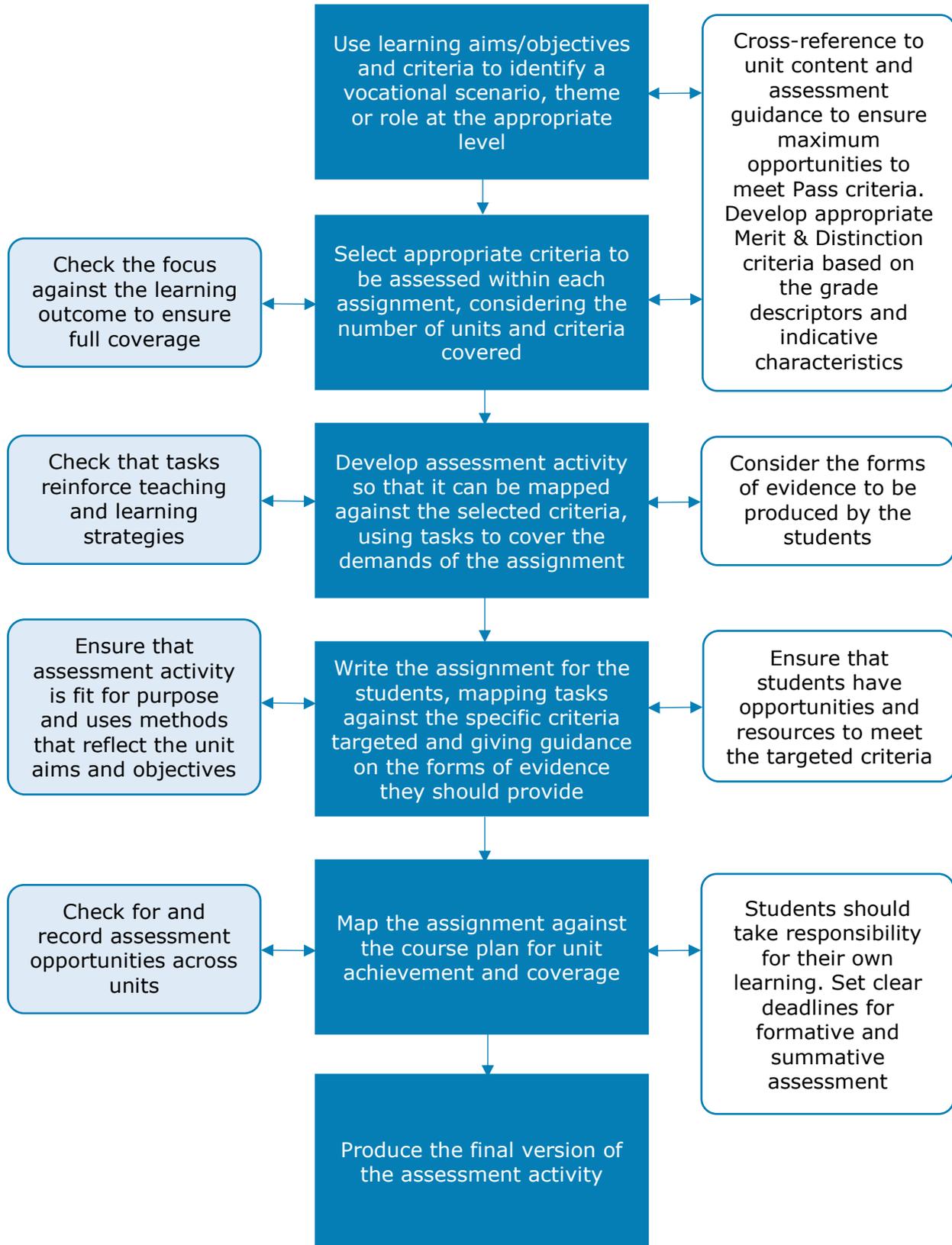
The purpose of internal verification is to confirm that the brief is fit for purpose, by ensuring:

- the tasks and evidence will allow the student to address the targeted criteria
- the brief is written in clear and accessible language
- students' roles and tasks are vocationally relevant and appropriate to the level of the qualification
- timescales and deadlines are appropriate
- equal opportunities are incorporated.

Further guidance on internal verification is provided in the [BTEC Centre Guide to Internal Verification](#) on our website.



Assignment planning



Assessment and grading



As part of Pearson’s annual review of centre guides and handbooks, amendments have been made to this section. Centres should familiarise themselves with the changes that have been made, which are applicable to students registered from September 2017 onwards.

Assessment tracking and recording

It is essential to track and record student achievement throughout your BTEC programme. All assessment must be recorded in such a way that:

- assessment evidence is clearly measured against national standards
- student progress can be accurately tracked
- the assessment process can be reliably verified
- there is clear evidence of the safety of certification.

Therefore, you should plan a timetable of assessment activities with clearly identified evidence requirements and target completion dates. Include internal verification of:

- assessment plans
- assignment briefs prior to distribution to students
- assessment decisions.

This enables a holistic approach to assessment of the programme and organises the sequence of delivery and assessment of units.

Prepare assessment tracking to record all assessment activities for the qualification on a unit-by-unit basis, at criterion level. Incorporate time for regular formative feedback. This helps to motivate students and provide learning targets and goals.

Track student progress, recording what each student has achieved and what still has to be done. This helps to ensure full coverage of the units and provide opportunities for grading. It also helps enable internal verification and provide samples for External Examiners (EEs) and other external audits as required.

Formative assessment

Students working at higher levels should be capable of undertaking independent study and research, developing strategies to improve their own performance, supported by teaching staff.

Formative assessment is an integral part of the BTEC assessment process, involving both the Assessor and the student in a two-way conversation about their progress. It takes place **prior** to summative assessment and does not confirm achievement of grades, but focuses on helping the student to reflect on their learning and improve their performance. The main function of formative assessment is to provide feedback to enable the student to make improvements to consolidate a Pass, or attain a higher grade. This feedback should be prompt so it has meaning and context for the student and time must be given following the feedback for actions to be complete. Students should be provided with formative feedback during the process of assessment and be empowered to act to improve their performance. Feedback on formative assessment must be constructive and provide clear guidance and actions for improvement.

Though we do not prescribe any hard and fast rules for higher level BTECs relating to the nature of formative assessment, the role of feedback in motivating students must not be underestimated. We recognise that informal verbal feedback is an ongoing process and is an important part of the Assessor/student relationship. However, it is good practice to plan for at least one formal opportunity to provide written formative assessment feedback on each assessment, at a point when students will have had the opportunity to provide evidence towards all the assessment criteria targeted. This should be built into the Assessment Plan and be formally recorded. This will help Assessors to manage their assessment workload by avoiding multiple assessments, and also reduces the risk of malpractice.

Usually, further formal opportunities for formative feedback should not be necessary. However, if it is clear at the formative assessment stage that students have misinterpreted or have been misdirected by the assignment brief, there may be the need for another formative assessment once issues have been addressed.

Your judgment as a professional should be used to determine when this is appropriate. You must not create an advantageous situation for one student. You should operate all assessment procedures in line with your responsibility as a member of a Pearson approved centre.

Following formative assessment and feedback, students are able to:

- revisit work to add to the original evidence produced to consolidate a Pass grade or to enhance their work to achieve a higher grade
- submit evidence for summative assessment and final unit grade.

All records should be available for auditing purposes, as we may choose to interrogate records of formative assessment as part of our ongoing quality assurance.

Summative assessment

Summative assessment is the final consideration by an Assessor of a student's assignment, agreeing which assessment criteria the student has met in the assignment and recording those decisions. However, students should be aware that summative assessment is subject to confirmation by the Assessment Board, and thus is provisional and can be overridden by the Assessment Board.

Assessors should annotate on the learner work where the evidence supports their grading decisions against the unit grading criteria. It is not expected that students are offered opportunities to revisit assignments at this stage of the assessment process unless approved by the Programme Leader.

Students will need to be familiar with the assessment criteria so that they can understand the quality of what is required. They should be informed of the differences between grading criteria so that higher skills can be achieved.

Marking spelling, punctuation and grammar

It is good practice for Assessors to "mark" spelling and grammar, i.e. correct mistakes on student work and expect the student to either correct them (at the formative feedback stage) or note them (at the summative feedback stage).

If student work has consistently poor spelling, grammar or language it should not be accepted for marking, but should be returned to the student to be corrected. The student must be given a deadline by which to correct the work.

Mistakes in spelling and grammar should not influence assessment decisions unless:

- the mistakes are so problematic that they undermine the evidence of student understanding, or
- specific assessment criteria require good communication, spelling and grammar and/or correct use of technical language.

Grading Higher National units

Please note: This section is only applicable to BTEC Higher Nationals.

- The grading of BTEC Higher National qualifications is at the unit and the qualification level
- BTEC Levels 4 to 7 Professional qualifications are usually Pass only. Therefore, this section on grading is not applicable
- In the BTEC Foundation Diploma in Art and Design, only Unit 10 is graded. It contains specific Merit and Distinction grading criteria which must be followed. Therefore, this section on grading is not applicable.

Each successfully completed unit will be graded as a **Pass**, **Merit** or **Distinction**.

- A **Pass** is awarded for the achievement of all outcomes against the specified assessment criteria
- **Merit** and **Distinction** grades are awarded for higher level achievement

The generic Merit and Distinction grade descriptors (listed below and published in **Annexe C** of each qualification specification) are for grading the total evidence produced for each unit and describe the student's performance over and above that for a Pass grade. They can be achieved in a flexible way, for example in a sequential or holistic mode, to reflect the nature of the sector concerned.

In order to achieve a Pass in a unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all learning outcomes and associated assessment criteria have been met
In order to achieve a Merit in a unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all learning outcomes and associated assessment criteria have been met • all Merit grade descriptors are achieved
In order to achieve a Distinction in a unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all learning outcomes and associated assessment criteria have been met • all Merit and all Distinction grade descriptors are achieved

Each of the generic Merit and Distinction grade descriptors can be amplified by use of **indicative characteristics**. These give a guide to the expected student performance, and support the generic grade descriptors. The indicative characteristics should reflect the nature of a unit and the context of the sector programme.

The indicative characteristics shown in the table for each of the generic grade descriptors in Annexe C are **not** exhaustive. Consequently, you should select appropriate characteristics from the list, or construct others that are appropriate for their sector programme and level.

It is important to note that each assessment activity does not need to incorporate all the Merit and/or Distinction grade descriptors.

Generic grade descriptors and indicative characteristics

The differences between assessment criteria, grade descriptors and indicative characteristics are outlined in the following table:

Assessment Criteria	Statements that identify the important features to be present in the assessment evidence and are indicative of a satisfactory (i.e. Pass) level of achievement.
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Grade Descriptors	Statements that identify the features within the assessment evidence which enable an Assessor to measure achievement above the satisfactory level (i.e. Merit and Distinction).
Indicative Characteristics	Guides to the expected student performance within a particular assignment , supporting the generic grade descriptors. The indicative characteristics should reflect the nature of a unit and the context of the sector programme.

The Merit and Distinction grade descriptors and indicative characteristics identified below are published in **Annexe C** of the Higher National specifications.

Merit descriptors	Exemplar indicative characteristics
In order to achieve a Merit the student must:	(Centres can identify and use other relevant characteristics. This is not a tick list). The student's evidence shows, for example:
Identify and apply strategies to find appropriate solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective judgements have been made • Complex problems with more than one variable have been explored • An effective approach to study and research has been applied.
Select/design and apply appropriate methods and techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant theories and techniques have been applied • A range of methods and techniques have been applied • A range of source information has been used • The selection of methods and techniques/sources has been justified • The design of methods/techniques has been justified • Complex information/data has been synthesised and processed • Appropriate learning methods/techniques have been applied.
Present and communicate appropriate findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The appropriate structure and approach has been used • Coherent, logical development of principles/concepts for the intended audience • A range of methods of presentation have been used and technical language has been accurately used • Communication has taken place in familiar and unfamiliar contexts • The communication is appropriate for familiar and unfamiliar audiences and appropriate media have been used.

Distinction descriptors	Exemplar indicative characteristics
In order to achieve a Distinction the student must:	(Centres can identify and use other relevant characteristics. This is not a tick list). The student's evidence shows, for example:
Use critical reflection to evaluate own work and justify valid conclusions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conclusions have been arrived at through synthesis of ideas and have been justified • The validity of results has been evaluated using defined criteria • Self-criticism of approach has taken place • Realistic improvements have been proposed against defined characteristics for success.
Take responsibility for managing and organising activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autonomy/independence has been demonstrated • Substantial activities, projects or investigations have been planned, managed and organised • Activities have been managed • The unforeseen has been accommodated • The importance of interdependence has been recognised and achieved.
Demonstrate convergent/ lateral/creative thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideas have been generated and decisions taken • Self-evaluation has taken place • Convergent and lateral thinking has been applied • Problems have been solved • Innovation and creative thought throughout • Receptiveness to new ideas is evident • Effective thinking has taken place in unfamiliar contexts.

Contextualising the generic grade descriptors

The generic Merit and Distinction grade descriptors need to be viewed as a qualitative extension of the assessment criteria for Pass within each individual unit. The relevant generic grade descriptors must be identified and specified within an assignment and the relevant indicative characteristics should be used to place the required evidence in context.

Each assessment activity does not need to incorporate all of the Merit and/or Distinction grade descriptors. The assessor should include Merit and/or Distinction grade descriptors and an associated indicative characteristic that are relevant for the activity or task in hand. For example, when the student has to select and apply appropriate methods and techniques in order to carry out the assessment activity or task, then M2 would apply. Please note that if the assessor has included more than

one indicative characteristic against an individual grade descriptor such as M2 in an assignment, only one indicative characteristic (for example, i) or ii)) needs to be achieved by the student for the grade descriptor, M2, to be achieved:

- i) a range of methods and techniques have been applied and
- ii) the selection of methods and techniques has been justified.

More than one opportunity can be given within a unit to achieve each of the Merit and Distinction grade descriptors and may enhance the breadth and depth of study depending on the unit content or subject requirements. Care must be taken however, not to disadvantage the student through over-assessment, when it is not necessary.

Submission of late work

Your centre will need to develop and publish its own assessment regulations relating to BTEC higher level programmes, that is aligned with expectation B6 of the QAA Quality code. The regulations should include a code of practice on how late submission of student work is dealt with.

It is good practice for assessment regulations to be:

- Made available to students as well as the programme team: key regulations could be included in the programme specification
- Presented in an accessible and easy-to-understand format.

Extensions

Students should only be given authorised extensions for legitimate reasons and extenuating circumstances, such as illness at the time of submission. It is best practice to have a clear, published assessment procedure (e.g. in your code of practice and programme specification) for a student to formally apply for an extension if they have genuine reasons for not meeting a deadline. If an extension is granted, the new deadline must be recorded and adhered to.

Extension requests should be made prior to the assessment deadline and should be formally approved by the Programme Leader. The duration of extensions should be consistent across all students and should not be after summative feedback has been issued to the other students on the programme. All extensions granted by the Programme Leader must be recorded and made available at the Assessment Board and to the External Examiner (EE). Recording details of extensions enables the Assessment Board and the EE to confirm that the programme is operating consistently in accordance with the centre's and Pearson's policies and guidance.

Alternatively, it can be considered good practice to convene an 'Exceptional Circumstances Panel' that would be responsible for reviewing and accepting or rejecting extension requests from students. While there are no formal guidelines regarding the membership of such a panel, the Programme Leader must be present in order for the panel to be quorate. Minutes of Extenuating Circumstances Panels (if held) must be retained and made available to the Assessment Board and the EE.

Resubmissions

Every assignment contributes to the final qualification grade, therefore it may be appropriate for the Programme Leader or Assessment Board to authorise an opportunity for a student to resubmit evidence to meet the assessment criteria targeted by an assignment. The Programme Leader can only authorise resubmissions if this responsibility has been delegated to them by the Assessment Board beforehand.

A student may request or be offered a resubmission if they have not met all of the criteria (Pass, Merit or Distinction) available in an assignment. You **must not** cap resubmissions at Pass level, although if a student who submitted their work late is offered a resubmission, this **is** capped at Pass level*. Resubmissions can be authorised by the Programme Leader or the Assessment Board and should **only be authorised if all of the following submission conditions are met:**

- The student has met the initial deadlines set in the assignment, has met an agreed deadline extension, or has submitted work late that has been accepted*
- The assessor judges that the student has fully attempted to achieve all targeted learning outcomes in their original submission
- The assessor judges that the student will be able to provide improved evidence without further guidance
- The assessor has authenticated the evidence submitted for assessment.

If a student **has not** met the conditions listed above, the Programme Leader or Assessment Board **must not** authorise a resubmission. In these instances, the student will be required to repeat the unit.

* If you have accepted student work that has been submitted late, a resubmission can **only** be authorised if the work has not met the Pass criteria and can only provide an opportunity for the student to achieve the Pass criteria. We strongly recommend that you do not accept work that has been submitted late, and for which an extension was not requested and approved, under any circumstances.

A list of all resubmissions authorised by the Programme Leader must be submitted to the Assessment Board and made available to the External Examiner (EE) for review and discussion to ensure that the Assessment Board and EE have oversight of all authorised resubmissions.

A new assignment brief must be issued to students for whom a resubmission has been authorised. Any evidence produced by the student in their original submission that did not meet the criteria remains valid and may be used for the resubmission assignment brief. Any assignment briefs used for resubmissions must be internally verified before being issued to students.

Procedure for resubmission

If the Programme Leader or Assessment Board does authorise a resubmission, the following conditions apply:

- The resubmission must be recorded in the relevant assessment documentation
- The student must be given a clear and realistic deadline for resubmission that is consistent across all students granted a resubmission. We recommend that students be required to resubmit work within 15 working days of the student being notified that a resubmission has been authorised
- The resubmission must be undertaken by the student with no further guidance
- Only one opportunity for reassessment of each assessment criterion and Merit and Distinction descriptor will be permitted
- The original evidence submitted for the assessment can remain valid and be extended, or may need to be replaced partially or in full
- You should make arrangements for resubmitting the assessment in such a way that does not adversely affect other assessments and does not give the student an unfair advantage over others.

You may opt to conduct a resubmission of the assignment under supervised conditions, even if this was not necessary for the original assessment. For example, this may be necessary to ensure that plagiarism cannot take place.

The External Examiner (EE) is likely to want to include assessments that have been resubmitted as part of the sample they will review.

Repeat Units

The Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) does **not** allow for compensation. This means that BTEC Professional and Higher Nationals qualifications on the QCF require students to achieve every Pass criterion in order to successfully achieve the qualification.

Conditions for repeating a unit

If a student has met all of the submission conditions, but still not achieved the targeted Pass criteria following resubmission, the Assessment Board may authorise a repeat unit opportunity to meet the required Pass criteria.

Alternatively, the Assessment Board, having reviewed and discussed a student's assessment profile, can offer one **final** resubmission of Pass criteria if it is agreed that it is necessary, appropriate and fair to do so.

- If the Assessment Board does not authorise a final resubmission opportunity, the student would be required to repeat the unit.
- If the Assessment Board does authorise a final resubmission opportunity, a new assignment must be issued to the student. If, after this final resubmission opportunity, the student has still not met the Pass criteria in the unit, they would be required to repeat the unit.

The Assessment Board must **only** authorise a repeat unit in circumstances where they believe it is necessary, appropriate and fair to do so. When repeating a unit:

- The student must study the unit again
- The overall grade for a successfully completed repeat unit is capped at a Pass for that unit
- You should have a policy that states the maximum number of opportunities a student has to repeat a given unit or the maximum number of repeat units that would be allowed within a programme
- The standard rules regarding assessment, including those stipulated in this guide, apply to students who are repeating units, although the assessments that they submit will be treated as first submissions
- The External Examiner (EE) is likely to want to include assessments for students that have repeated a unit as part of the sample they will review.

Any evidence previously produced by the student for the unit being repeated that did meet the Pass criteria remains valid and may be used for assignments within the repeat unit. Students who are repeating a unit only need to generate evidence for any Pass criteria that they did not achieve in their previous submissions.

Internal verification of assessment decisions

Internal Verifiers must sample assessed work for each assignment to check the accuracy of assessment decisions. Internal verification of assessment decisions should be carried out by a staff member who is familiar with BTEC assessment at the appropriate level and has subject knowledge of the programme area.

More sampling should be undertaken with new or inexperienced assessors and/or with new BTEC qualifications.

During the course of the programme, internal verification sampling should cover the following:

- Every Assessor
- Every unit
- Work from every assignment
- Every assessment site (for multi-site centres)
- Pass, Merit and Distinction achievement (a student who has not yet achieved or a referred student is also a valid selection).

Feedback from the Internal Verifier to the Assessor should comment on the quality of their feedback to the student and the effective completion of documentation. The Internal Verifier should also give developmental feedback to the Assessor telling them what could be improved e.g. annotation of assessment evidence to show where grades are achieved. Internal verification of assessed work should be clearly recorded. If the Internal Verifier requires action, the Assessor should complete this and return it to the Internal Verifier for their review and sign off.

Internal verification of assessment decisions must not be end-loaded. It is important that it is undertaken as soon as possible after assessment as this will improve the quality of assessment practice and not disadvantage students. Internal Verification must be undertaken before work is returned to the students.

Further guidance on internal verification is provided in the [BTEC Centre Guide to Internal Verification](#) on our website.



Student appeals

A student appeal is a request to review decisions made by a centre on their progression, assessment and awards.

You should have in place a means for ensuring all students and staff are aware of:

- what constitutes an academic appeal and what is considered assessment malpractice
- the related processes for instigating an appeal or investigating malpractice
- the possible outcomes that may be reached
- the consequences of both internal and external outcomes
- the process that exists to enable students to make an appeal with Pearson relating to external or internally awarded assessment outcomes.

Procedures should be known and understood by students and staff. Malpractice issues can be minimised by ensuring students/staff are aware of the issues: plagiarism, collusion, fabrication of results, falsifying grades, fraudulent certification claims; referencing skills; promoting a zero tolerance approach. You do not need to inform Pearson of student malpractice for internally assessed units. You should follow your centre's malpractice policy in resolving the matter. If an External Examiner (EE) discovers plagiarism that has not been identified and/or dealt with by your centre, they will block certification for the relevant programme(s).

The appeals process must be understood by students and staff. It should be transparent and enable formal challenges to assessment grades. A thorough student induction programme could cover this. The student handbook is also a useful way to ensure the key information about your assessment and appeals policies are communicated.

Students have a final right of appeal to Pearson, but only if the procedures in place at the centre have been fully utilised or if the student is dissatisfied with the outcome. Further details are given in the [Enquiries and appeals about Pearson vocational qualifications policy](#).

If students are not satisfied with the result of their appeal after following their centre's processes, they can also request that the [Office of the Independent Adjudicator \(OIA\)](#) review their complaint. The OIA will not deal with complaints about academic judgment but will look at academic appeals. Centres can check if they are a member of the OIA scheme in the [list of providers covered in the OIA scheme](#). Following the OIA process does not prevent students from pursuing a complaint or appeal with Pearson and they may choose whichever route(s) they feel is the most appropriate.

Student complaints

A student complaint is the expression of a specific concern about matters that affect the quality of their learning opportunities.

Centres should have in place procedures to enable students to constructively complain about their learning opportunities, to enable provision to be enhanced in a timely way.

Making a complaint should not disadvantage the student. Centres must publish their complaints procedure to students.

The Pearson External Examiner (EE) will ask to meet with students annually when they visit the centre. They will ask the students directly about their experiences of teaching and learning on the programme and report appropriately in their report.

Students can also raise their complaint with the [Office of the Independent Adjudicator \(OIA\)](#).

Recognition of Prior Learning

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a method of assessment that considers whether students can demonstrate that they can meet the assessment requirements for a unit through knowledge, understanding or skills they already possess and so do not need to develop through a course of learning. It is used sparingly and can be applicable to adult students returning to education.

Your centre is expected to develop its own RPL policy in line with Pearson policy. Further guidance can be found in Pearson's [Recognition of prior learning policy and process](#).

Mapping achievement

Where centres need to map achievement in units attained from the previous HN (NQF) qualifications to current HN (QCF) units, the following guide can be used. First, check Annexe D of the relevant HN qualification specification to see if the previous NQF unit maps to the current QCF unit fully, partially, or not at all.

To identify the gaps in a partially mapped NQF or other previously achieved unit, follow these stages (using the HND in Mechanical Engineering (QCF) as the example):

Stage 1: Consideration of any mapping requirements

- This consideration should start at the programme development stage. Programme teams should obtain copies of the BTEC HND specification in order to identify core units and core content
- The core units for a particular BTEC Higher National programme can be found on the [HN subject pages](#) on our website
 - Select the Higher National programme of interest e.g. Mechanical Engineering
 - This will take you to the page for the HN in Mechanical Engineering. The two key documents here are Specification and Units. These are pdf files which you can download.

Stage 2: Identifying units and unit content

From the specification you will be able to identify the core units and from the units you will find:

- Unit title
- Aim
- Abstract
- Learning Outcomes
- Unit Content
- Learning Outcomes
- Assessment Criteria

The two key areas for the mapping process are the unit content and the learning outcomes and assessment criteria. The former simply defines the indicative content, whereas the latter sets out how this may be assessed, and hence the expected level. From the specification for the HND in Mechanical Engineering (QCF), it will be seen that there are four core units. These are:

1. Analytical Methods for Engineers
2. Engineering Science
3. Project Design, Implementation and Evaluation
4. Mechanical Principles

From the units document, the unit content for each of the learning outcomes for the four core units can be found.

Stage 3: Mapping of unit content

The next task is to identify where in your HND in Mechanical Engineering programme the unit content is covered.

Probably the easiest way to present the mapping is to list the unit content, by learning outcome, and alongside this indicate where in your programme this is covered or not. For example, for the core unit Analytical Methods for Engineers the mapping might be presented in tabular form, such as:

Core unit: Analytical Methods for Engineers

Learning Outcome	Where covered in Programme
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be able to analyse and model engineering situations and solve problems using algebraic methods. • Be able to analyse and model engineering situations and solve problems using trigonometric methods. • Be able to analyse and model engineering situations and solve problems using calculus. 	Note: Here you should list the module or unit where the associated material is covered in your programme.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be able to analyse and model engineering situations and solve problems using statistics and probability. | |
|--|--|

It will, of course, be necessary to complete a similar table for each unit for which RPL is being claimed.

Any gaps in coverage of learning outcome and assessment criteria must be fulfilled by additional student evidence. When claiming RPL for a student it is good practice to send the mapping and additional student evidence to the External Examiner (EE) in advance of their visit.

Where Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) evidence is being assessed against graded units, Pass, Merit and Distinction criteria can be awarded. Where Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL) is being assessed against graded units, only Pass criteria can be awarded.



Retention of student evidence and assessment records

You must keep student evidence and assessment records safely and securely to ensure that they are available for verification. Up to date, securely stored assessment records also help to minimise the risk of assessment malpractice, or potential issues if an Assessor leaves during a BTEC programme.

You will need to:

- store all assessment records securely and safely relating to both internally and externally set assessments
- maintain records of student achievements that are up to date, regularly reviewed and tracked accurately against national standards
- retain both internal and external assessment records for centre and awarding body scrutiny for **a minimum of three years following certification**
- have all current student evidence available for verification purposes.
- retain all student work for **a minimum of 12 weeks** after certification has taken place. In certain cases, it may be more feasible to retain photographic evidence of three-dimensional pieces of work rather than retaining the work itself.

All assessment records (including internal verification records) must be secure against hazards like theft and fire, etc. The records must be of sufficient detail to show exactly how assessment decisions were made (i.e. to assessment criterion level). Data should only be accessible by relevant staff. Records must be securely kept for Pearson audit and in case of student appeals, certification issues, etc.

Up to date and accurate student progress information regarding registration, student feedback and progress, and achievement (at assessment criterion level) must be recorded. Staff must check the accuracy of the information recorded.

Student records and monitoring information should be kept in an appropriate and accessible format. This may be electronic. Records must be available to Pearson for audit on request. This is particularly important when there are changes to assessment staff. Experience tells us that this is a common cause of quality issues.

Student work must be made available to Pearson as required. On occasion, the regulator may also request portfolios of student work and assessment records. The format and storage of evidence must allow for this: security needs to be maintained. This is usually at programme team level. It is a risk to allow students to keep work long-term while on programme. Wherever possible, evidence produced by students still on programme should be kept at the centre. Electronic archiving is acceptable, providing it is sufficient and accessible on request.

Assessment Boards



It is a formal Pearson requirement that centres hold Assessment Boards for all of their BTEC Higher National programmes. Centres are not required to hold Assessment Boards for their BTEC Professional programmes.

The main purpose of an Assessment Board is to make recommendations on:

- the grades achieved by students on the individual modules or units
- extenuating circumstances
- cases of cheating and plagiarism
- progression of students onto the next stage of the programme
- the awards to be made to students
- referrals and deferrals.

Assessment Boards may also monitor academic standards.

The main Boards are normally held at the end of the session, although if your centre operates on a semester system there may be (intermediate) Boards at the end of the first semester. There may also be separate Boards to deal with referrals. Where a centre does not currently have such a process, the External Examiner (EE) will discuss this with the Quality Nominee and Programme Leader, stressing the requirement for Assessment Boards by both Pearson and QAA, and that Assessment Board reports and minutes provide valuable evidence for QAA's review processes.

Preparation for an Assessment Board

All members of Assessment Boards must be aware of the associated policies and procedures prior to the meetings taking place. Written information should be provided about:

- membership
- how the views of those unable to attend might be recorded
- the quorum for meetings and how to deal with the meeting being inquorate
- provision for Chair's action, its limitations and the recording and reporting of such decisions
- the exercise of discretion in a consistent manner, for example in relation to extenuating/mitigating circumstances, and borderline cases.

It is essential that centres develop these policies prior to organising an Assessment Board and that they have been accepted by the formal structures of the centre's quality assurance systems.

Good preparation prior to the Assessment Board is essential if it is to be effective. Ways of ensuring this are to:

- Plan meeting dates for the academic year and circulate them to the members of the Assessment Board
- Ensure that these dates are after the External Examiners' (EEs') visit
- Collate all information regarding students' achievement and ask appropriate staff to indicate which students will need discussion at the Assessment Board, for example because of mitigating circumstances (this will save time during the meeting)
- Circulate an agenda in good time before the Assessment Board meeting and ask members to confirm their attendance. This is important as meetings must be quorate in accordance with the centre's policies
- Include a declaration of Conflicts of Interest as a standing agenda item so that members can abstain from specific discussions if they need to
- Identify who will minute the meeting and that he/she is aware of the responsibilities of this role.

Membership

It is advisable that the Chair and the Secretary of an Assessment Board are, as far as possible, independent of the programme under consideration. Larger centres often use the head of a different department, or a Faculty Dean, or even a Head of Quality Assurance to ensure this. Likewise, the Secretary can be from another department or from the Quality Assurance department. It is more difficult for small centres to arrange for this requirement. The main point is that the Programme Leader **should not** chair Assessment Boards.

Your centre cannot insist that Pearson's External Examiners (EEs) attend Assessment Boards, although it is essential that they have the right to attend. It may be possible for centres to arrange with their External Examiner (EE) an examination visit that includes time for them to attend the Assessment Board. Alternatively, they will need to see the minutes from the most recent Assessment Board(s) held.

All members of the programme team should attend the Assessment Board. Clearly, absences are sometimes unavoidable, but it would become a quality issue if certain members were regularly absent, or if attendance were to be persistently poor.

In larger centres the agenda is normally determined centrally, so that all Assessment Boards operate in the same way. In smaller centres this may be left to the department. The style of agenda will vary from centre to centre, but should cover the main purpose of Assessment Boards.

Centres with little experience in operating higher education programmes may request advice from the External Examiner (EE) in developing good practice for Assessment Boards.

It can save time if the programme team has discussed results prior to the Assessment Board meeting, although these discussions must remain strictly confidential.

Assessment Board decisions

There must be clarity for students and staff about when and how results will be provided, and about whom students can contact should they require clarification of their results or advice on decisions affecting their future study. Consideration should be given to how students obtain results when they are released during vacations, or for students who are away from the location of delivery. When results are provided, they should include clear information about whether each result is provisional or final. If provisional, the information must make clear when the results will be finalised. Students also need to be aware of the timescale for lodging an academic appeal or complaint following final results.

Centres should implement an explicit policy detailing the length of time for which records of decisions and student results will be retained. This process helps to demonstrate that assessment processes have been properly applied through the records of Assessment Board discussions. This is particularly important in the event of an academic appeal or student complaint.

If a Pearson External Examiner (EE) attends an Assessment Board it is in the capacity of an adviser, they have no power of veto at the Board. If an EE feels that a wrong decision is being made, they can only register disagreement with the decision on their report.



Minutes

Assessment Boards are responsible for ensuring that assessment decisions are recorded accurately, supported by taking adequate minutes of any discussions which, in particular, demonstrate the factors taken into account when discretion is exercised or extenuating/mitigating circumstances are considered. Such an approach provides assurance and transparency. The minutes of the Assessment Board **must** be made available to the External Examiner (EE) upon request.

Confidentiality

Centres should be extremely careful about what happens to the documentation used in the meeting. Practice varies, with some centres insisting that only the Chair and Secretary keep the documentation, while others allow the programme leader and

External Examiners (EEs) to keep them too. Your centre must have clear regulations on how students are informed of their results. No discussion of individual results or counselling of students should take place until after your centre has formally ratified the results and published results lists. It is good practice for only certain people, authorised by the Assessment Board to do so, to discuss results with students.

Example materials

Blank templates of the following documents are available in the [assessment and verification forms](#) section of our website. These documents may be used as a starting point to help plan, deliver, assess and verify BTEC programmes. They are not mandatory, and may be amended to suit the requirements of your own centre.

- Assessment planning
- Assignment brief – BTEC (QCF)
- Internal verification of assignment brief – BTEC (QCF)
- Observation record
- Witness statement
- Assessment tracking
- Internal verification of assessment decisions – BTEC (QCF)

Glossary of BTEC terminology

Academic Management Review (AMR)	This is the annual centre quality visit for UK Alternative Providers.
Annual Programme Monitoring Report (APMR)	The Annual Programme Monitoring Report is a written annual review form that provides an opportunity for providers to analyse and reflect on the most recent teaching year.
Centre Quality Manager (CQM)	Centre Quality Managers (CQMs) are an important part of our partnership and are full-time managers who work in Centre Management. They support Vocational Quality Standards to maintain effective quality assurance within Pearson vocational centres. CQMs provide support to maintain regulatory requirements and the integrity of centre assessment, delivery and quality assurance. They also monitor the Quality Management Review (QMR) and Academic Management Review (AMR) processes, including 'block recommended' centres. The CQMs can be contacted at qualitymanagement@pearson.com .
Edexcel Online (EOL)	This is a multifunctional system for centres. Access is password protected and is managed by your examinations officer. Screens show programmes and students within a centre, allow for new registrations or withdrawals. Lead Internal Verifier registrations and withdrawals will be done through this portal. External Examiner and Centre Quality Reviewer allocations and consequent standards and Quality Management Review status can be viewed here. EOL can be accessed at www.edexcelonline.com .
External Examiner (EE)	The External Examiner (EE) is a subject assessment specialist appointed by the awarding body to conduct external examination. This verifies that centre management of programmes and assessment decisions meet national standards. External examination is conducted by an annual visit.
Guided Learning Hours (GLH)	Guided learning hours are a notional measure of the substance of a unit. It includes an estimate of time that might be allocated to direct teaching, instruction and assessment, together with other structured learning time such as directed assignments or supported individual study. It excludes student initiated private study. Centres are advised to consider this definition when planning the programme of study associated with this specification.
Internal Verification (IV)	This is a centre/team based process. Your Internal Verifiers check the quality of assignments before delivery to students and verify the accuracy of assessment decisions to meet national standards. You should have an internal verification plan to manage the process.

Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual)	The regulator of qualifications, exams and tests in England. Qualifications Wales has responsibility for education in Wales, and the Department for Education (Northern Ireland) has responsibility for education in Northern Ireland.
Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)	This is the independent body responsible for monitoring and advising on standards and quality in UK higher education, this includes UK qualifications delivered outside the UK. As such Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals must meet the quality standards prescribed by the QAA.
QAA Quality Code	The QAA has developed a Quality Code in liaison with the higher education sector and it is maintained and published on the sector's behalf, by the QAA. It sets out the Expectations that all providers of UK higher education are required to meet.
QCF	Qualification Credit Framework
Quality Management Review (QMR)	This is the annual centre quality visit for UK Further Education Colleges and is currently conducted by a Centre Quality Reviewer (CQR).
Quality Nominee (QN)	This is the person nominated by the centre who acts as main contact for BTEC.
Principal Standards Manager (PSM)	There is a team of Principal Standard Managers across all sectors whose remit is to ensure that standards are met and maintained for vocational qualifications. The PSM team support, monitor and evaluate quality assurance processes to ensure they remain fit for purpose, making decisions on revisions and changes required and provide sector specific support to centres to ensure that centres provide and maintain effective quality assurance of national standards for vocational qualifications. They work alongside Vocational Assessment teams, Centre Quality Managers, Vocational Quality Advisors and External Examiners to ensure that national and quality standards are met and maintained.
RQF	Regulated Qualification Framework
Vocational Quality Advisor (VQA)	The Vocational Quality Advisors (VQAs) are a team of specialists in vocational quality assurance. They provide support to Quality Nominees, Lead Internal Verifiers and Assessors regarding a range of topics related to quality assurance, such as Quality Management Review (QMR), internal assessment and verification, and standards verification and external examination. In addition, they provide support, communication and development for Quality Nominees both online and face-to-face. They can be contacted at qualitynominees@pearson.com .

If you have any questions, please contact the HE Assessment team at btecdelivery@pearson.com.

