



Centre Standardisation Policy

August 2020
Policy authorised by Responsible Officer

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1.0 Purpose

This document sets out OTHM Qualifications approach to standardisation and the expectation of its centres to maintain the validity, quality and consistency of our qualifications.

Robust standardisation practices should be applied both within and between centres and should provide the evidence of consistent practice and ensures that standards are comparable both across centres and over time. OTHM's standardisation policy and procedures are designed to ensure that standards are comparable:

- within approved centres
- across different subject areas
- by modes of delivery (e.g. face to face, classroom, blended, distance learning etc.) over time.

2.0 Scope

This document is applicable for OTHM Ofqual regulated qualifications.

3.0 Regulatory Authorities

We are a UK based Awarding Organisation regulated by Ofqual (Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulation)

Where the requirements of a regulatory authority change which require changes to this document, such changes will be made as soon as practicable and OTHM will inform centres accordingly.

4.0 Audience

This document is for use by the following:

- approved centre staff
quality assurance staff
- tutor/assessors
- internal quality assurers
- external Quality Assurers

5.0 Definitions

Standardisation is a process to ensure that the assessment criteria for a qualification or unit are applied consistently by assessors and verifiers. It is undertaken through a range of activities whereby the assessed work of learners within a unit or qualification is systematically compared to confirm standards.

Effective standardisation processes ensure that standards are comparable within centres (across all sites), across different types of centres, across different sector subject areas and over time.

The achievement of quality and consistency is underpinned by a number of inter-related features of standardisation activity:

Pre-Verification Internal quality assurance processes to pre-verify proposed assessment tasks before they are delivered.

Internal standardisation	Events held by the centre for staff where more than one member of staff assesses learners on the same course or similar courses. Internal standardisation ensures that assessment decisions and recommendations for the award of credit to learners are based on common understanding and practices.
External Standardisation	Standardisation events run by OTHM to which multiple approved centres participate. These events provide opportunity to ensure the consistency of the award of certificates to learners between centres.
External Quality Assurance	The process by which OTHM monitors the ongoing quality and compliance monitoring of each centre. This process ensures that all OTHM units and qualifications are subject to robust centre standardisation, and approved centres contribute to the external
OTHM internal standardisation	Standardisation of our own practice and procedures to ensure that all those providing external quality assurance for OTHM are working to the same standard.

6.0 Policy

OTHM is committed to ensuring that assessment and internal quality assurance decisions are accurate and consistent. Our Standardisation process has been designed to ensure that learners, centres, employers and regulators can be confident about the validity of certificates achieved through OTHM Qualifications.

Confirmation of the consistent application of assessment to ensure learner achievement is a key priority for all awarding organisations and approved centres. Development of a robust standardisation process, which can be applied both within centres and nationally, provides the evidence of consistent practice. The process ensures that standards are comparable both across centres and over time.

OTHM ensures standards are consistent across all centres by:

- ensuring that all approved centres' internal quality assurance procedures incorporate processes for proposed tasks to be pre-verified prior to delivery. Where a course has been previously delivered, centres must review issues raised by learners, assessors, internal quality assurers and OTHM and make changes accordingly.

- ensuring that standardisation occurs within centres as part of a rigorous internal quality assurance process through the centre recognition process, and ongoing monitoring conducted by OTHM.
- ensuring that centres monitor and maintain the quality and integrity of assessment practices and decisions within their centre.
- planning and delivering standardisation events that enable internal quality assurers, and OTHM quality staff to compare outcomes of assessment.
- ensuring that all OTHM quality staff adopt a consistent approach in quality assuring the delivery of qualifications and units at approved centres.

Standardisation activities allow OTHM to:

- Provide an opportunity to ensure the consistency of award to learners which encompasses different verifiers, assessors and centres to agree the standards to be achieved.
- Ensure that the assessment strategy is fit for purpose and allows for the production of evidence which is:
 - Sufficient
 - Appropriate
 - Authentic
 - Valid
 - Reliable
- There is enough evidence to demonstrate achievement against assessment criteria for the level, type and complexity of the learning.
- The evidence is attributable to the learner.
- Relevant to the specifications of the qualification for which achievement is being claimed.
- Consistent standards are operated in awarding learner achievement within and between centres, across different sector subject areas and over time.
- Ensure that the assessment strategy and the assignment task(s) do not prevent any unintended barriers to achievement for a particular learner and pays due respect to any issues of equality and diversity.
- Ensure that assessment decisions made by the assessor and confirmed by the quality assurers are consistently “safe” (i.e. made against specified criteria, valid, sufficient, reliable and fair).
- Ensure consistency in the assessment judgements that are being made based on the available evidence.
- Ensure the standard of the feedback provided to learners is detailed, specific, identifies strengths and highlights areas for improvement.
- Ensure the adequacy of the feedback provided to assessors and the robustness of the internal verification of the assessment judgements is detailed, specific and incorporates SMART targets to address any aspects of assessor practice that needs improvement.
- Review the appropriateness and currency of the units and their fitness for purpose in the current context and make any necessary recommendations/reviews
- Identify and share best practice.

If significant shortcomings are identified, this will be an area of enquiry for future OTHM quality reviews for the relevant centre(s)/ qualification(s).

7.0 Responsibility of centres

Ongoing standardisation through external quality assurance

The OTHM quality assurance team monitors the assessment and internal quality assurance of qualifications and units through external quality assurance activities at each approved centre. These visits are designed to confirm the consistency and authenticity of assessment decisions and confirm the validity of claims for certification and authenticity of learners' evidence.

In line with the centre agreement, centres must comply with our external quality assurance requirements and assist us in carrying out reasonable monitoring and quality assurance activities.

OTHM will liaise with the centre's nominated quality contact in advance to ensure that all evidence needed to complete the external quality assurance activity is made available in a timely manner and in a format that is accessible and indexed.

We adopt a risk-based approach to sampling to take into account the specific circumstances of the centre, which may increase or decrease the sample size. We reserve the right to increase the sample size on the day of the visit.

Pre-Verification

OTHM provides assessments for all our qualifications which have been subject to external quality assurance. However centres can devise their own. If doing so, all approved centres' internal quality assurance procedures must incorporate processes for proposed assessment tasks to be pre-verified prior to delivery.

Pre-verification provides a centre with the opportunity to ensure that the method of assessment is:

- fit for purpose
- an appropriate assessment method that meets the needs of the learners
- consistent with the current specification for that qualification
- achievable based on the available resources.

Pre-verification should take place on a systematic basis as part of the centre's internal review process.

Internal standardisation

Where more than one member of staff assesses learners on the same course or similar courses, the centre must arrange internal, centre standardisation events to review the assessment practices and decisions of each member of staff. This ensures that assessment decisions and recommendations for the award of credit to learners are based on common understanding and practices.

The internal quality assurer is responsible for arranging and facilitating centre standardisation events.

Internal standardisation should include all appropriate team members particularly for centres with a number of dispersed, part-time, contracted or inexperienced assessors. The internal verifier for the course(s) has the responsibility for arranging and facilitating standardisation events.

The frequency of internal standardisation exercises depends on centres' internal quality assurance processes. This will depend on factors such as the:

- size of the centre
- number of tutors/assessors and internal verifiers at the centre
- quantity of units and/or qualifications delivered at the centre
- range of units and/or qualifications delivered at the centre
- number of new or inexperienced staff delivering the unit/qualification.

Documented evidence of internal standardisation exercises must be available for review by OTHM quality staff. This should include detail of the qualifications/ units reviewed and the outcomes of the events, including action plans where appropriate.

Template documents for centre standardisation events are available to approved centres through centre support.

As part of compliance monitoring activities, OTHM may review internal standardisation activities via scheduled spot checks.

External Standardisation

All approved centres are invited to participate in external standardisation events. These events are professional development opportunities which are free of charge. All assessment and internal quality assurance staff should attend.

Where samples are required for standardisation events we endeavour to give centres as much notice as possible, with a minimum of four weeks' notice given in most cases.

Where a member of the OTHM quality assurance team has expressed concern over assessment practices and/or decisions, the centre may be actioned to attend external standardisation. Failure to attend in a timely manner will result in sanctions being placed on the centre as per the OTHM sanctions policy.

OTHM supports working with other awarding organisations to raise quality standards and assure that specified levels of attainment for a qualification are consistent and reliable.

8.0 Regulatory references

Ofqual requires all Awarding Organisations to establish and maintain their compliance with regulatory conditions and criteria. As part of this process, policies that relate to OTHM status as an awarding organisation will reference the particular conditions and criteria that they address.

This policy addresses the following regulatory criteria and conditions

GCoR Reference	GCoR Section title
C2	Arrangements with Centres
D1	Fitness for purpose of qualifications to meet the requirements of validity, reliability, comparability, manageability and minimising bias.
G1	Setting the assessment
G9	Delivering the assessment
H1	Marking the assessment
H2	Moderation where an assessment is marked by a Centre
H3	Monitoring the specified levels of attainment for a qualification
H5	Results for a qualification must be based on sufficient evidence

9.0 Policy review date

July 2021

10.0 Useful contacts

For more information on our qualifications and services visit: www.othm.org.uk. Alternatively, call at: +44(0)20 7118 4243 or email at: info@othm.org.uk

End of policy