

Quality Assurance Requirements

Quality Assurance is fundamental to all iPET Network processes, products and services as an Awarding Organisation. It guarantees the integrity and value of qualifications and assessments throughout their life cycle. iPET Network ensures that quality is embedded in the design and delivery of qualifications and programmes, and work with Training Providers to ensure this.

The robust Quality Assurance process helps to prevent, deter and identify malpractice and maladministration.

This document details the requirements for the Quality Assurance required for iPET Network qualifications. All Training Providers must adopt and implement these requirements across their qualification provision. This policy is to be used in conjunction with the Centre Assessment Standard Scrutiny (CASS) Strategy

Who are Quality Assurance Requirements for?

It is an approval requirement that all Training Providers have access to the latest version of this document. All employees of the Training Provider that are involved in assessment and quality assurance must be familiar with the requirements detailed in the latest version.

This document is also used by External Quality Assurers (EQAs) to reference during their quality assurance visits and activities.

Regulatory Requirements

iPET Network Quality Assurance Requirements comprehends the relevant regulatory requirements of the following document, which apply to all Training Providers working with iPET Network.

iPET Network uses a range of monitoring and evaluation activities to assess the quality, consistency and integrity of all Training Providers and check that each Training Provider continues to meet approval requirements.

Quality Assurance Strategy

Training Providers must:

- monitor and maintain the quality, consistency and integrity of the delivery and assessment of iPET Network qualifications within the Training Provider (including Training Provider Branches, additional assessment sites and subcontracted providers)
- ensure a standardised approach to quality assurance practice, under a single documented quality assurance strategy
- review the strategy regularly and act on the findings of those reviews, taking all reasonable steps to protect the interest of the candidate(s), in case of withdrawal of qualification and/or Training Provider approval
- provide records of standardisation activities for internal quality assurers and tutors

Access to Training Provider information

Training Providers must provide iPET Network and any relevant regulator with access to premises, people and records relating to Candidate assessment, achievement and internal quality assurance. Failure to do this may result in Sanctioning.

Updating Training Provider information

Training Providers must inform iPET Network of any changes to the details on their initial approval application, if there any changes to the information below this must be updated on the WebPortal or directly to info@ipetnetwork.co.uk.

- Training Provider name and address
- Training Provider contact, and their contact details
- staffing resources, including directors and senior management
- physical resources

- details of any Training Provider Branches, assessment sites and subcontracted providers.

If there is a change in ownership or management control at a Training Provider, then iPET Network reserves the right to terminate the Training Provider approval for delivering iPET Network qualifications. The new Training Provider must follow the same process for new Training Providers joining iPET Network and complete all necessary application forms and agreements.

In cases where Training Providers fail to inform iPET Network of a change in ownership or management control, then the Training Provider's right to register Candidates and claim certification for all qualifications will be automatically suspended until iPET Network determine the appropriate course of action.

Non-compliance

While iPET Network recognises that all Training Providers share a commitment to consistent quality assurance, a Training Provider's Qualification Approval Risk Status will be increased in any situations of non-compliance. If external monitoring and evaluation show that a Training Provider is not meeting the quality assurance requirements set out in this document, iPET Network will:

- take what is deemed to be the appropriate action
- set a realistic deadline for the Training Provider to complete these actions.

Where non-compliance is found with an IQA from iPET Network, this is dealt with internally through HR and disciplinary procedures.

Incorrect information

If iPET Network find that a Training Provider has made any inaccurate or misleading statements and/or submissions during the Training Provider approval process or qualification approval process, or at any time in the assessment process, the appropriate action will be taken.

Failure to implement actions

Where Training Providers do not implement the corrective actions specified by iPET Network Training Provider and/or qualification approval will be withdrawn and the relevant regulatory authorities will be informed.

Certification

Claiming certificates

Training Providers must have a system in place that ensures that all certification claims are valid and signed off by an appropriate person.

Certificates can only be claimed on completion by the Candidate of a unit/qualification (as appropriate).

All claims for certification must be authenticated by an appropriate occupationally qualified Internal Quality Assurer, if this is specified in the qualification and/or assessment documentation. iPET Network do not accept certification claims without this.

Following iPET Network's CASS Strategy, EQAs are required to review each certificate request before the certificate request is approved. This process will be completed by either an external visit by the External Quality Assurer or a remote desktop review if the appropriate systems are in place such as an electronic portfolio system where the Candidate, Tutor and Internal Quality Assurer feedback and processes are transparent.

If a Training Provider does not have someone appropriately qualified, they must contact iPET Network who will provide further advice.

Valid certificates are the property of the Candidate and cannot be withheld by Training Providers.

Invalid Certificates

If Training Providers claim any certificates in error, they must notify iPET Network and comply with any actions that are specified.

In instances where certificates are found to be invalid, iPET Network will inform the relevant regulatory authority and other appropriate authorities and agree the appropriate actions with them. Certificates are deemed invalid in the following circumstances:

- The evidence assessed is not the candidate's own work
- The candidate is still working towards the qualification after the certificate has been claimed
- The certificates have been claimed based on falsified or incorrect records

These circumstances may also constitute malpractice and will follow the sanctions policy and actions.

Assessment and Internal Quality Assurance Criteria

iPET Network is committed to providing valid and reliable assessments, and effective Internal Quality Assurance plays a vitally important role in achieving and maintaining the required quality of assessment practice. For that reason, Training Providers must adopt and implement the criteria listed in this section across all iPET Network qualifications and/or assessments, not just those that are competence-based.

Assessment

Training Providers must appoint Tutors to carry out the assessments, and those Tutors are responsible and accountable for:

- Managing the assessment system, from assessment planning, to recording assessment decisions against qualifications and/or assessments
- Assessing evidence of candidate competence/capability against vocational qualifications and/or standards, assessment criteria or mark schemes
- Ensuring that candidates' evidence is valid, authentic and sufficient
- Maintaining accurate and verifiable candidate assessment and achievement records in line with requirements
- External Quality Assurer's will not look at any work by Candidates who have not been registered with iPET Network

Training Providers must ensure that Tutors are competent to perform their role and provide appropriate training and development opportunities to ensure that they meet the required standards set out in the qualification and/or assessment documentation.

Training Providers must know and comply with iPET Network requirements for recording assessment decisions and maintaining assessment records and must be familiar with all relevant policy and guidance documentation.

Internal Quality Assurers may only quality assure evidence that they did not assess, and this should be carried out before Training Providers can claim certificates.

Tutors and Candidates must provide a declaration that Candidate evidence is authentic and that assessments took place under the conditions or context set out in the qualification and/or assessment documentation.

Failure to do this constitutes grounds for the suspension or withdrawal of approval for the qualification/assessment in question.

Training Providers must provide appropriate training, support and/or development opportunities to enable Tutors to meet their responsibilities. Tutors must be allowed enough time to fulfil their duties. Records must be kept of all staff development as this will be monitored by the allocated External Quality Assurer(s).

Training Providers will ensure that assessment arrangements comply with those detailed in the qualification and/or assessment documentation.

Assessments may not be carried out in any language other than English, unless prior approval has been granted by iPET Network. For further information, see the iPET Network Training Provider manual.

Internal Quality Assurance Criteria

Training Providers must operate the Internal Quality Assurance Strategies outlined by iPET Network to ensure:

- The accuracy and consistency of assessment decisions between Tutors operating at the Training Provider
- That Tutors are consistent in their interpretation and application of the assessment criteria/requirements specified in the qualification and/or assessment documentation

Sampling requirements

IQA Level of support	Sampling requirements
Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20% Sampling of the total qualification units • Minimum of 1 formal assessment per Candidate (where applicable) • 1 x Direct observation of assessment practice per year • 1 x Candidate interview per year
Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% Sampling of the total qualification units • Minimum of 1 formal assessment per Candidate (where applicable) • 1 x Direct observation of assessment practice per year • 2 x Candidate interviews per year
High <i>(A minimum of the first 5 candidates certificated for new Tutors and qualifications)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% Sampling of the total qualification units • All formal assessments • 1 x Direct observation of assessment practice per year • 3 x Candidate interviews per year

Risk ratings are applied to the Qualification and Tutor. The IQA must always sample according to the highest risk rating.

Where there are no formal assessments for a qualification the portfolio of evidence must be sampled per the applied risk rating.

Cohort sampling – For some qualifications, they may be sampled by the IQA as a cohort, the IQA will sample the applicable percentage according to the highest risk rating of the total cohort including a formal summative assessment for each Candidate sampled, where applicable.

Portfolio sampling - For some qualifications, the IQA will sample the applicable percentage according to the highest risk of all Candidate portfolios.

Each qualification has a specific IQA strategy to ensure the integrity of the qualification is upheld to the highest quality, IQAs must refer to the individual Qualification Handbooks for the relevant IQA strategies.

Training Providers must appoint Internal Quality Assurers who are responsible for:

- Regularly planning sampling activities, and sampling (throughout and before certification) the evidence of assessment decisions made by all Tutors across all assessment methods, including observation of practice against competence-based qualifications
- Regularly sampling and being present at practical assessments
- Maintaining up-to-date records of internal quality assurance and sampling activity, ensuring that these are available, upon request, for external quality assurance activities
- Establishing procedures to ensure that there is standardisation between Tutors
- Monitoring and supporting the work of Tutors
- Planning and holding standardisations for Tutors / Tutors to retain consistency across the assessment process and delivery

- Facilitating appropriate staff development and training for Tutors (including continuous professional development)
- Providing feedback to the allocated Tutors and External Quality Assurer(s) on the effectiveness of assessment
- Ensuring that any action that iPET Network require is carried out, within the agreed timescales

Training Providers must ensure that Internal Quality Assurers are competent to perform their role and have sufficient time to fulfil their duties. They must provide appropriate training, support and/or development opportunities to ensure that internal quality assurers meet the requirements set out in the qualification and/or assessment documentation and must keep auditable records for checking by the External Quality Assurers.

iPET Network will only approve any employee involved in Internal Quality Assurance hold the following qualification or equivalent:

- Level 4 Award in the Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice

Where Training Providers do not have access to the appropriately trained or qualified personnel to carry out Internal Quality Assurance activities on their behalf, iPET Network Internal Quality Assurance services can be purchased for each registered Candidate and qualification.

On the application of a new Training Provider where they do not employ or contract a qualified Internal Quality Assurer, the nominated person must undertake a qualification leading to the 'Level 4 Award in the Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice' within a 12-month period from the date of the Training Provider approval and evidence of enrolment / registration on the chosen Internal Quality Assurance qualification must be submitted.

Where Training Providers are using unqualified Internal Quality Assurers, the Training Provider must register the first 4 candidates on the gold package to gain support from the quality team. Standardisation activities are planned and recorded with tutors, sampling activity is robust and communicated clearly and direct observations are planned with relevant tutors.

If the nominated Internal Quality Assurer has not achieved the qualification by the Training Provider's re-approval date then an iPET Network Internal Quality Assurer will be appointed.

Training Providers must provide evidence of Internal Quality Assurers development activities and qualifications.

Internal Quality Assurers may carry out assessments, but only if they have the qualifications and occupational expertise specified for Tutors in the qualification and/or assessment documentation. Internal Quality Assurers may only quality assure evidence they did not assess.

Training Providers must provide evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of such internal quality assurance procedures upon request by External Quality Assurers. Failure to do so puts the integrity of assessment decisions made at the Training Provider at risk, and in that situation the Qualification Approval Risk Status will be increased.

External Quality Assurance Criteria

External Quality Assurers must follow explicit, written external quality assurance procedures to ensure:

- the accuracy and consistency of internal quality process
- Internal Quality Assurer's decisions are consistent in their interpretation and application of the assessment criteria/requirements specified in the qualification and/or assessment documentation.

External quality assurers are responsible for:

- Regularly planning sampling activities, and sampling the quality assurance process around the evidence of assessment decisions made by all Tutors across all assessment methods, including observation of practice against competence-based qualifications
- Regularly sampling and being present at practical assessments (Minimum of 1 candidate per Training Provider should receive a direct sampling on a practical activity per audit)
- Maintaining up-to-date records of external quality assurance and sampling activity, ensuring that these are available, upon request, for any potential investigations involving the specified Training Provider
- Establishing procedures to ensure that there is standardisation between Internal Quality Assurers
- Supporting Training Providers with overall quality assurance and internal processes and procedures
- Providing feedback to the allocated Internal Quality Assurer on effectiveness of internal quality processes
- Ensuring that any action that iPET Network require is carried out, within the agreed timescales.

EQAs are required to sample before any certificate requests are approved. The percentage of sampling is determined by the following:

EQAs Level of support	Sampling requirements
Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10% Sampling of the total qualification units • Minimum of 1 formal assessment per Candidate (where applicable) • 1 x Candidate interview per year • 1 x IQA Direct observation of formal assessment per year
Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25% Sampling of the total qualification units • Minimum of 1 formal assessment per Candidate (where applicable) • 2 x Candidate interview per year • 1 x IQA Direct observation of formal assessment per year
High <i>(A minimum of the first 5 candidates certificated for new Tutors and qualifications)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50 % Sampling of the total qualification units • Minimum of 1 formal assessment per Candidate (where applicable) • 3 x Candidate interview per year • 1 x IQA Direct observation of formal assessment per year

Risk ratings are applied to the Qualification and Tutor. The EQA must always sample according to the highest risk rating e.g. The Tutor is low risk but the qualification is deemed high risk therefore the EQA must sample 50%.

Qualification sampling – Where qualifications are high risk, there may be additional mandatory sampling processes in place.

Cohort sampling - The EQA must sample the applicable percentage according to the risk rating of the tutor or qualification. A cohort is defined as the certificate claims per qualification within each calendar month or within each sampling period. The EQA must sample a minimum of 2 Candidates per cohort, regardless of their risk rating.

Risk Ratings will be reviewed based on on-going EQA sampling or if any concerns are raised by the IQA. Where concerns are raised the Risk Rating will be reviewed immediately.

Each Training Provider must be monitored by the External Quality Assurer through scheduled audit meetings and sampling of candidate portfolios, this will depend on the Tutor and Qualification risk rating. Rolling sampling is carried out by the EQA team for all Training Providers. This means that Candidate certificate requests are consistently being sampled and processed for certification which provides on going auditing and support for the assessment and quality assurance practices.

For best practice, External Quality Assurers will be rotated every 12 months (where possible) to ensure the robust quality, defined by iPET Network is upheld and any concerns are picked up promptly. It allows Training Providers to receive fair assessments of their practices and to ensure that any discrepancies are flagged regarding the EQA auditing process.

EQA audits will be reviewed each year for performance assessment and to review internal Malpractice and Maladministration risks by a suitable person.

The reports will be scrutinised specifically for:

- consistency across the EQAs findings
- what has been flagged as areas of concern
- action plans are in place
- whether findings have been reported to the Responsible Officer as Malpractice / Maladministration
- appropriate risk rating / sanctions been applied following the audit

iPET Network's Quality Manager will schedule the rotation process for all External Quality Assurers.

Following this review, the Directors feel that Malpractice/Maladministration has been overlooked or decisions have been without valid evidence and without following iPET Network's procedures this will result in a performance disciplinary for the EQA. Their working practices will be suspended until the Employment Law disciplinary process has been followed. The Malpractice/Maladministration procedure will also be followed, and the concerns will be reported to the Regulatory Body.

See External Quality Assurers Audit Report Form for full sampling criteria.

External Quality Assurers (EQAs) will complete an EQA Audit Report Form as part of their audits, which is shared with the Training Provider. Where required, this will include an action plan, along with an agreed timescale within which the actions must be completed. The External Quality Assurer's recommendations will determine the appropriate Qualification and Tutor Risk Status.

Training Providers must meet these actions as agreed. Failure to do so will result in the risk status rating increasing to the next level. If a Tutor is currently on risk rating and fails to meet the requirements of an action plan, within the timescales specified by iPET Network, this may lead to the withdrawal of qualification and/or Training Provider approval.

If a Training Provider has previously rectified non-compliance issues in response to action plans but displays the same non-compliance issues again later, this will be considered when considering whether to apply a higher Qualification Approval Risk Status.

Where there are significant faults in the management of either a qualification or the Training Provider as a whole, iPET Network reserve the right to withdraw qualifications and/or Training Provider approval in accordance with the requirements detailed in this document and the iPET Network Training Provider Manual.

Examples of such faults include:

- consistently failing to adhere to this document
- not completing actions while on a high-risk rating status
- malpractice, including inaccurate submissions/statements
- inappropriate use of the iPET Network brand.

iPET Network may also take into consideration any sanctions applied by another Awarding Organisation and reserve the right to withhold or withdraw qualification and/or Training Provider approval based upon this.

iPET Network Standardisation

The Responsible Officer and/or Directors of iPET Network will hold at least one annual standardisation for External Quality Assurers to review their practices, procedures and to also standardise on their decisions to report suspected Malpractice/Maladministration, this will identify and reduce the risk of malpractice within iPET Network's quality processes. The review will be held annually for all External Quality Assurers. This provides the opportunity for iPET Network to communicate with Training Providers Students, Tutors, Internal Quality Assurers and Training Provider Managers who are involved in the quality process. The purpose of the review is to:

- Detect any Malpractice/Maladministration
- Standardise quality
- Development of the organisation and its Training Providers

EQAs will be reviewed each year for performance assessment and to review internal Malpractice and Maladministration risks by a suitable person.

The reports will be scrutinised specifically for:

- consistency across the EQAs findings
- what has been flagged as areas of concern
- action plans are in place
- whether findings have been reported to the Responsible Officer as Malpractice / Maladministration
- appropriate risk rating / sanctions been applied following the audit

iPET Network ensures there is transparency demonstrated within its external processes and practices to reduce the risk of Malpractice/Maladministration. The findings of this process will allow the Responsible Officer and the Directors of iPET Network to regulate the operation of External Quality Assurers.

Dealing with Malpractice and Maladministration

iPET Network are committed to providing high quality qualifications which are assessed and awarded consistently, accurately and fairly. To this end everyone involved in the implementation, assessment and internal quality assurance of iPET Network qualifications and/or assessments is required to demonstrate honesty and integrity.

Malpractice is defined by iPET Network as an act or an instance of improper practice and includes maladministration. Malpractice is any activity, practice or omission which is either wilfully negligent or deliberately contravenes regulations and requirements and compromises one or more of the following:

- internal or external assessment process
- integrity of a qualification
- validity of a result or certificate
- reputation and credibility of iPET Network

Maladministration is defined as any activity, practice or omission which results in Training Provider or candidate non-compliance with administrative regulations and requirements. For example: persistent mistakes or poor administration within a Training Provider resulting in the failure to keep appropriate candidate assessment records.

Should a Training Provider discover or suspect Malpractice or Maladministration, they are required to report it to info@ipetnetwork.co.uk using the Malpractice and Maladministration Report Form on www.ipetnetwork.co.uk. Failure to do so may affect a Training Provider's qualification approval risk rating status.

Where Malpractice or Maladministration is suspected in a Training Provider, or a partner organisation involved in administering or assessing a qualification, iPET Network may:

- immediately suspend the Training Provider from registering candidates and/or making claims for certification
- investigate whether the safeguards at the Training Provider are up to the standard required to guarantee valid claims

Regardless of the circumstances or the people involved, iPET Network will investigate all allegations or suspicions of Malpractice/Maladministration in examinations and assessment to protect the integrity of qualifications and to be fair to Training Providers and candidates.

All information which iPET Network deems necessary in order to investigate and resolve an allegation of malpractice must be provided by the Training Provider.

Failure to report suspected Malpractice/Maladministration and/or cooperate with follow-up activity may lead to awards not being made, certificates not being issued, future entries and/or registrations not being accepted or withdrawal of qualification and/or Training Provider approval.

For further information on malpractice and how to report it, please refer to the iPET Network document Malpractice and Maladministration Policy and Procedure (including Sanctions).

Document Control

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Date of Correction	Version Number	Correction Reason
01/08/2020	2	Minor grammatical updates
06/09/2021	3	Clarifying IQA requirements for Training Providers and control measures for unqualified IQA's.
13/01/2022	4	Annual policy review
28/06/2022	5	Review following CASS update
19/06/2023	6	Policy review and QA strategy update
11/11/2023	7	Update following review during self assessment
09/05/2024	8	Updated to remove reference to Training Provider risk rating / high risk qual sampling requirements

