



Guidelines For External Authenticators

Created: August 2020

Last updated: April 2025

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Key Points for External Authenticators

- Indicate the awards that you authenticated and the student sample you selected
- Comment and confirm on the fair and consistent assessment of students
- Include comments on the extent to which assessment decisions are consistent with national standards
- Identify good practice
- Comment on areas for improvement within the assessment process
- Provide sufficient and clear information to the centre in relation to grade changes
- Provide clear and comprehensive information in your EA report for Tipperary ETB's Results Approval Panel to:
 - o enable them to sign-off on and approve the results,
and/or
 - o provide sufficient details to easily identify any issues related to the results and make recommendations for corrective actions.

Section 1: The Arrangements for the EA Event

- a) **Sufficient time:** you should be satisfied that sufficient time is available to complete the authentication work when contacted by Tipperary ETB.
- b) **Special requirements because of evidence format:** you should ensure you have the necessary IT/ICT skills and access to particular software or platforms to authenticate electronic evidence.
- c) **Confirming arrangements:** once arrangements are agreed with the QA staff, you should contact each centre closer to the time to directly confirm arrangements eg time of arrival, opening meeting etc.
- d) **Changing arrangements:** if you need to change agreed arrangements made, you should contact the QA staff and/or the centre **as soon as possible** to confirm revised arrangements. You should not rely on one centre to contact another on their behalf, in the cases of multi-centre visits.
- e) **EA paperwork pack:** you can expect to receive the payment and service paperwork in advance of your authentication. Think about completing the payroll and commencement forms ahead of the authentication, as you need to include your banking and other personal details.
- f) **Meeting on arrival:** on arrival at the centre, a centre-designated person will meet you to highlight key duties of the EA role and confirm the volume of work, the expected duration of the visit, arrange the exit meeting and supply contact information and arrangements for internal assessors. A centre designate will be available to you for the day.
- g) **Declaring conflict of interest:** you should declare any conflicts that might question the integrity of the assessment process, upon initial contact made by QA staff, or as early as it becomes apparent to you.

Section 2: Documentation and Files

- a) All relevant assessment **documentation will be available in the centre**. This may be presented as an 'Assessor Pack'. It is not normally forwarded to the EA prior to the visit. Documents and files include:
 - Sampling Strategy
 - Assessment Plan
 - Copy of module descriptor used
 - Copy of all assessment instruments ie assessment briefs and marking schemes/sheets
 - Copy of sample solutions
 - Results Sheets: Authentication Reports by Learner Group by Minor Award Results Sheets or F12 Course Summary Assessment Sheets and Results Approval Forms
 - Internal Verification Reports
 - Students' portfolios with Learner Marking Sheets
 - Digital portfolios or assessment files.
 - If you require any further documentation, please request this in advance of the authentication.
- b) The **material** to be authenticated **is typically organised by programme**, then by student surname in alphabetical order according to surnames on the results sheets.

Section 3: EA Signatures

- a) The **EA must sign the following** documents:
 - i. The EA **Contract / Service Agreement** Form
 - ii. The **results sheets**:
 - Authentication Report by Learner Group by Minor Award Results sheet(s) for *each* class group being moderated. Where there is more than one Results sheet, the EA must sign each sheet relating to that class group
 - The F12 Course Summary Assessment Sheet and Results Approval Forms
 - iii. The **Internal Verification Report** for the class group and component being moderated by the EA
 - iv. The **External Authentication Report** – the receipt of the EA Report by email will constitute an electronic signature
 - v. The Centre's EA **Sign-In and Out Record**

Section 4: Moderating the Assessment Results

- a) **Use centre's equipment**: use any laptops or devices provided by the centre.
- b) **Apply the sampling strategy**: follow Tipperary ETB's EA Sampling Strategy.
- c) **Indicate the sample**: specify the sample you authenticated.
- d) **Grade Changes**: Where a student's mark is borderline between grades, do **not to automatically upgrade or downgrade**. First, verify that there is evidence showing the assessor has reviewed the borderline mark (eg assessor sheet included or confirmation through the IV process¹). If you cannot find assessor confirmation, contact the centre designate to check if this review has occurred. If confirmation is still not found, see can you speak directly with the assessor to discuss; then make the final recommendation about the grade, based on QA processes.
- e) **Missing evidence**: follow the general guideline that "no evidence = no marks". However, the EA should confirm with the relevant personnel whether the evidence is/is not available before proceeding.

If you find that evidence is missing, see if you can locate evidence of the achievement of the relevant learning outcomes in or across other modules.
- f) **QA procedures not followed**: you should highlight any findings to the Centre, particularly, incomplete internal verification reports/process and ask for IV to be completed while you work on other portfolios.
- g) **Significant irregularities or serious Issues**: you should bring these issues to the attention of the centre and/or QA staff, as appropriate. Do not recommend results for approval if you believe the integrity of the assessment process has been significantly compromised, even if the student is not at fault. Clearly document the issue in the EA Report.
- h) **Changes to student marks**: you only need to adjust a student's marks to facilitate a grade change. Record the moderated mark on the results sheet just inside the new grade band (eg for a reduction from grade D to M, change the mark to 79). For all other calculation errors, note the error in the EA report.

¹ Note: as part of Tipperary ETB's IV process, the internal verifier must look for evidence that the assessor has reviewed the grade against QQI's Grading Criteria.

- i) **Following moderation:** Once assessment material and documentation has been viewed, you are asked to return all the documentation and portfolios. Do not take copies or photos of work presented.

Section 5: Feedback

- a) **Exit meeting:** before completing the external authentication, meet with the centre to highlight any key findings, including grade changes or issues found. Ensure this feedback is included in the written report.
- b) **Verbal feedback to assessors:** provide verbal feedback to assessors and other relevant staff if requested by the centre. This is especially beneficial for new assessors, in cases of grade changes, or when issues in student marking are identified.
- c) **Feedback to Tipperary ETB:** from time to time, Tipperary ETB's Results Approval Panel (RAP) or our QA staff may need to contact you if a query or issue arises during the meeting.

Section 6: The EA Report and it's Submission

- a) **Use the Tipperary ETB's EA Report template:** This will be supplied in advance but is also located on the [website](#).
- b) **Send** the draft EA report to the centre for a factual accuracy check. Submit the final EA report to the relevant QA staff within **2 working days** of completing the authentication.
- c) **Report content:** must include information on:
- examples of **good practice**
 - **issues** found
 - **areas for improvement** and make recommendations, where possible.
 - the application of **fair and consistent assessment** in the report
 - the to adherence to **national standards**

Complete all sections of the report.

- d) **Quality of commentary:** your comments should be **comprehensive, constructive, and clear** and **based on fact**. You must be able to support all statements and/or recommendations made against assessment and/or quality assurance procedures or guidelines.

Note: Tipperary ETB does not look for EAs to comment on **evidence of student feedback or teaching and learning** so please refrain from doing this.

- e) **Rationale for Grade Changes:** Where you recommend a **grade change**, include your rationale and not just the assertion that the grade needs to be changed. Also, please note grade changes you found that occurred due to tots and transfer errors.
- f) **References to Students:** **Do not refer to student's names** in your report, **use the initials of the student only**, if you need to. (Similar for tutor names).
- g) **Separate Reports:** If you work across a number of centres, produce a **separate EA report, per centre or location**.

- h) **Matching Entries:** Ensure for **every module moderated** that there is a **matching entry in the EA report**.

Section 7: GDPR/Report Retention

- a) You are obliged to **adhere to Tipperary ETB's Data Protection procedures** during the course of your work. If you are doing remote authentication, you will be asked to sign a declaration of understanding/compliance – which you will receive as part of the paperwork pack in advance. Report any breach, or suspected breach, immediately to the FET centre or the QA staff.
- b) You should **not retain the EA report** on file once the authentication work and associated follow-up activity has been concluded. Please delete.

Section 8: EA Support Contact Information

- a) **Contact** details for the Quality Office in the ETB: QualityOffice@tipperaryetb.ie.
- b) **Contact** details for the Quality Office in Training Services: qatrainingervices@tipperaryetb.ie.
- c) As a registered member of ETBI's Directory, there is also a (Further Education Support Service) **FESS advisory service** for EAs available. (See your EA Moodle space for supporting EAs).

Section 9: EA Payment Information

Note: this section does not apply to external authenticators who authenticate on community and contracted training programmes. Payment is processed via the 2nd Providers payroll system and centres will advise EAs of any documentation required for payments.

a) **Registration of EA on Tipperary ETB's Payroll System**

A new EA must complete the **Commencement Form** to register for payment and return to Tipperary ETB's QA staff. The QA staff will submit all documentation to HR Payroll on behalf of the EA.

Setting up an EA as an employee in Tipperary ETB can take up to one week. Timely set up by Tipperary ETB is subject to accurate completion of the Commencement Form.

Once you are set up on the payroll system, you will receive a notification of your employee number.

b) **Submitting Claims and Requesting Payments**

You must complete the **Claim Form for External Authenticators**. This form must record the days worked (not hours) along with other travel and subsistence expenses claimed.

Return to the QA staff. The QA staff will verify the claim and submit all documentation to HR and payroll on your behalf.

c) **Rates**

Rates for payment are as per Department guidelines - the current daily rate is €325.00. There are no part-thereof payments. Report writing is included in the daily rate.

Rates for travel claims - the motor rates per kilometer are paid in line with Band 1 of the relevant Department Circular. Travel time is regarded as being outside of direct work hours.

Current Motor Travel Rates per kilometer

	Engine Capacity up to 1200cc	Engine Capacity 1201cc to 1500cc	Engine Capacity 1501cc and over
Band 1	41.80 cent	43.40 cent	51.82 cent

You must submit a copy of your Vehicle Registration Certificate (log book) to claim the higher rate of travel for engine capacity above 1200cc.

d) **Rates for subsistence are in line with the relevant Department Circular:**

Overnight allowance	€205.53
Subsistence for 5 hours but less than 10 hours	€19.25
Subsistence for 10 hours or more	€46.17

Overnight allowances cannot typically be claimed for a journey within 100km of the EA's home.

Tolls, carparking, public transport and other expenses claims must be accompanied by receipt.

The above are treated as taxable pay.

e) **Receiving Payment**

All payments will be paid through EFT. You will have provided bank details on the Commencement Form.

Claims will be **paid fortnightly** and on the next available pay run following receipt of correctly completed documentation. Failure to adhere to the correct procedures will result in a delay of your payment.

f) **Queries**

For queries about relating to the authentication service contact the FET QA Office directly.

If you have a query on payroll/travel payments received, contact payrollqueries@tipperaryetb.ie, or phone 052 612 1067 and ask for the payroll department.

For queries in relation to access or viewing of pay slips contact ETB payroll help-desk at: etbpayrollhelpdesk@esbs.gov.ie