

Improve

food & drink sector skills council

Assessment Strategy for Improve Proficiency Qualifications IPQs

- **accredited within the
Qualifications and Credit
Framework (QCF)**
- **approved by Improve**

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Assessment Strategy

Section 1

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this assessment strategy is to set out the quality assurance arrangements for the assessment and verification of Proficiency Qualifications for the food and drink sector. Information is provided about the experience, qualifications and occupational competence requirements for those involved in the process. It also details the evidence requirements and conditions of assessment necessary to achieve the Proficiency Qualifications. This strategy will be useful in informing learners, employers, assessors, verifiers and Awarding Organisations alike.

1.2 Scope

This assessment strategy covers Proficiency Qualifications which are accredited within the Qualifications and Credit Framework and approved by Improve¹. The Qualifications are approved for use in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

In Scotland, Improve approves Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs), which are accredited for use in the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework. A separate (SVQ) Assessment Strategy document is available for competency-based qualifications for the food and drink sector in Scotland.

All Proficiency Qualifications for the food and drink sector, which are approved by Improve and subject to the use of the Improve logo for this family of qualifications, are covered by this assessment strategy. Those Proficiency Qualifications which have additional regulatory or specialist assessment requirements are identified and dealt with in specific sections of this strategy.

1.3 Features

Of Proficiency Qualifications

Proficiency Qualifications in food and drink are designed for use in the food and drink sector. They cover the food supply chain from the availability and processing of raw materials through storage, transportation, wholesaling,

¹ Improve is the Sector Skills Council for the Food and Drink Sector. For details visit www.improvetd.co.uk

manufacturing and processing, logistics and presentational processing in retail environments.

They are competency-based qualifications designed for use in the workplace and first developed in 2008. Their purpose is to raise skills levels and performance across the workforce.

They ensure that individuals develop the skills and knowledge, which are exactly those needed to perform reliably and consistently at work. The knowledge content of the qualifications is designed to support and suit individual's needs. It will support those who require the basics, but will also develop those who require significantly more detailed knowledge and understanding.

This flexible approach to designing Proficiency Qualifications allows employers and individuals to select those competences which are critical to performance at work, and also to support progression in employment. This way it is possible to develop the workforce and produce the technicians and managers of tomorrow. With such a key focus on the development and recognition of competence at work, these qualifications are ideal to use within workplace training and assessment systems. They will be essential to upskilling, driving up performance and increasing productivity across the food and drink sector.

Of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF)

All qualifications accredited on the Qualification and Credit Framework are made up of units of assessment which are allocated a credit value. This credit value is based on the average amount of time taken to complete the learning and assessment required by each unit. The calculation is based on notional learning hours; 10 notional learning hours = 1 credit. Units with differing credit values are therefore a feature of qualifications, reflecting the varying learning and assessment requirements of units.

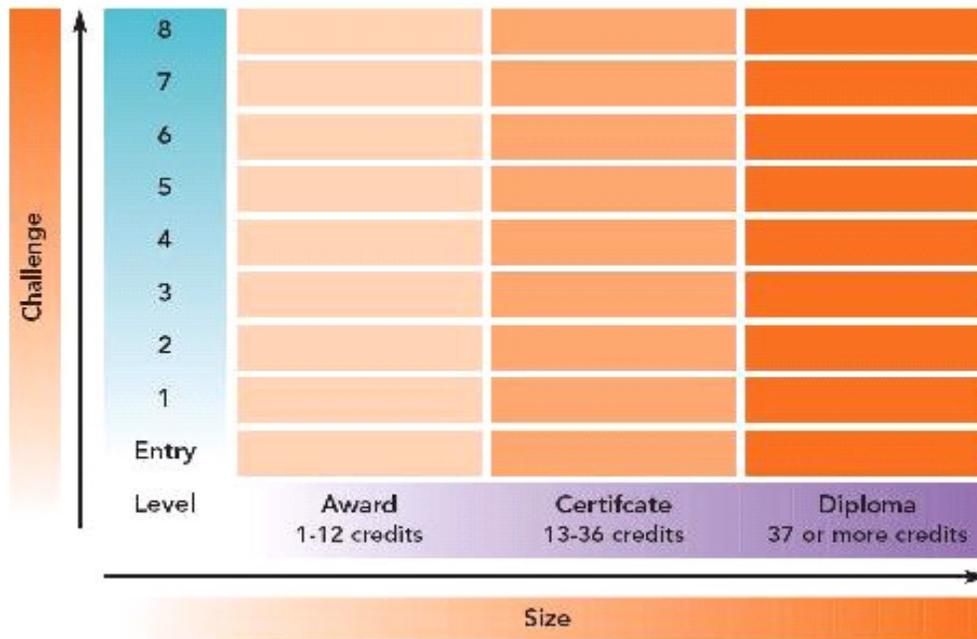
Credits become the common currency between qualifications and are accumulated in different sized qualifications. These are:

- Award 1 - 12 credits
- Certificate 13 - 36 credits
- Diploma 37+ credits

Each unit of assessment is also allocated a level which reflects the degree of challenge of each unit.

The units of assessment detail the learning outcomes and assessment criteria which a candidate can accumulate, and combine together within a qualification of the appropriate size and level to meet their individual and employer needs.

The Qualifications and Credit Framework



For further details about the QCF, visit the Ofqual website www.ofqual.gov.uk

1.4 Equality of Opportunity and Diversity

Improve is committed to developing and implementing high quality qualifications for the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) which comply with all current relevant legislation and Ofqual regulations. For further details of how we work to ensure equality of opportunity and diversity, please refer to our Equality and Diversity Policy.

Awarding Organisation policy, procedures and guidance will detail the equality of opportunity and diversity implications for assessors and verifiers.

Section 2

2.1 Working with Awarding Organisations

An effective working relationship between Improve and Awarding Organisations, whose markets relate to the food and drink sector, is central to the successful delivery of Improve's Sector Qualifications Strategy (SQS). Improve will continue to work closely with Awarding Organisations through its Awarding Organisation Forum, and to develop this forum, to ensure that the SQS can be effectively implemented, through the SQS Action Plan.

In addition to engagement and technical activity at a forum level, individual memoranda of understanding and/or action plans are agreed with each Awarding Organisation to drive forward a range of operational and development activity.

Improve respects the individuality and confidentiality of each Awarding Organisation offering qualifications to the sector and the market place in which they are offered. Improve understands the need for differentiation in types and levels of service provided by Awarding Organisations to meet wide-ranging conditions across the sector, its labour market and potential sector entrants.

2.2 External quality control of assessment

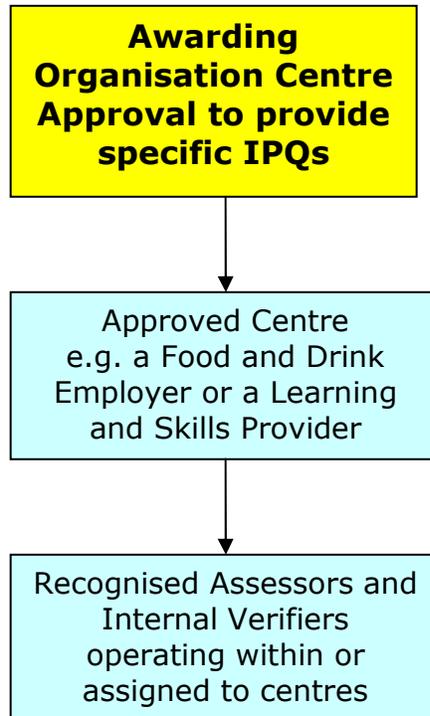
The sector view is that it is important for external quality control to be achieved through an effective external verifier sampling process combined with an annual approved centre risk rating system. Primarily, external quality control is aimed at improving internal verification and assessment practice, and the effective exchange of information between centres, Awarding Organisations and Improve.

External quality control will be achieved through these requirements:

- Each year all external verifiers will complete the recommended number of days of Continuing Professional Development (CPD), comprised of training or other developmental activities relevant to the food and drink sector and approved by the Awarding Organisation. Training should include relevant updating in respect of changes to legislation and regulations impacting on the sector, standardisation activities and good practice developments in assessment and verification. Improve will be invited by Awarding Organisations to observe and/or provide relevant input to CPD activity as appropriate.
- Awarding Organisations will operate a risk rating system that is applied to each active approved centre. Details of the risk rating system should be provided as part of the submission for accreditation of the qualification to the relevant qualifications regulatory authority. The Awarding Organisations will carry out risk assessment and risk rate each approved centre for food and drink Proficiency Qualifications. External verification activity, and in particular the scope and rigour of sampling, is required to reflect the risk rating status of each centre.
- Improve, through its Standards and Qualifications Development team, will maintain ongoing dialogue with Awarding Organisations to monitor practices, consider issues and gain feedback, which impact on qualifications design and the use of units of assessment.

2.3 Approval of centres to offer Proficiency Qualifications

Approval procedures and quality assurance systems are developed by Awarding Organisations. Awarding Organisations will approve and quality assure provision of Proficiency Qualifications within centres. This allows assessment and verification services to be tailored to the professional needs of centres in the best interests of candidates.



Section 3

3.1 Approved Centres

Approved Centres who are learning and skills providers deliver training and assessment services to learners and their employers in and around the workplace. Providers usually employ or contract with assessors, who often work peripatetically, to visit learners in their workplace at pre-arranged or contracted times.

For some employers, there may be business and operational advantages to becoming a centre to deliver Proficiency Qualifications and obtaining centre approval from an Awarding Organisation. This involves setting up and maintaining the quality systems and controls required by Awarding Organisations to offer Proficiency Qualifications within the company. Employers deliver training and assessment services to learners employed in their workplace. They use assessors (sometimes referred to as in-house assessors as they are company employees) to assess learner employees. However, they may also contract out externally with assessors who work peripatetically, to visit learners in their workplace at contracted times.

Units of assessment completed by learners and assessment practice are subject to internal verification through an agreed and planned sampling process. This is carried out by a centre's internal verifiers, who may be employed or under contract, to quality assure the assessment processes and practice.

3.2 Occupational competence of assessors

The role of an assessor is a demanding and complex one, requiring a high degree of both interpersonal and organisational skills. They are required to make accurate and objective decisions as to whether the learner's performance meets the assessment requirements laid out in units of assessment.

For assessments to be considered valid, the assessor must meet the following requirements. Any assessments carried out by personnel who do not meet these requirements will be deemed a contribution to workplace testimony.

Assessors are required to:

- Provide current evidence of competence, knowledge and understanding in the areas to be assessed, to the satisfaction of the Awarding Organisation. This will normally be achieved through demonstrating competence in the roles which are to be assessed, which may be recorded in company

training records. Alternatively, this can be demonstrated by relevant experience and continuing professional development which may include the achievement of qualifications relevant to the areas being assessed.

- Demonstrate competent practice in workplace assessment methods. They do not need to hold the assessor unit qualification A1, but must demonstrate understanding of the principles and practices of the assessment process. This may in part be demonstrated for example, by the outcomes of formal training in assessment techniques for company based training systems or qualifications, or for auditing against quality criteria for an externally audited quality standard. Assessors with previous unit achievement of A1, D32 and/or D33 satisfy requirements, provided evidence of continuous professional development has updated workplace assessment practice. Recognition of assessors in this way is only valid between a centre and an Awarding Organisation in respect of specific qualifications, and is not transferable to other bodies or qualifications.
- Demonstrate their continuing professional development to ensure they are up to date with work practices in their sector area of expertise and developments in the Proficiency Qualifications they assess.
- Have a full and current understanding of the units of assessment and requirements of the qualifications being assessed.
- Operate safely as an assessor in a food environment, therefore it is strongly recommended that a relevant food safety/hygiene qualification is achieved.

Assessors 'in training' who are not fully recognised as competent by Awarding Organisations may carry out assessment practice. For the period in training and working towards recognition, the assessor must have assessment activity monitored and signed off (countersigned) by a fully recognised and competent assessor. The 'in training' period should be limited to twelve months and have clear development goals set for achieving recognition and competence.

3.3 Occupational competence of internal verifiers

Approved centres appoint internal verifiers and their role is to ensure consistency and quality of assessment within the centre. The internal verifier will monitor assessment activities and provide feedback to assessors, co-ordinate standardisation and provide guidance to assessors.

For assessments and verification to be considered valid, the internal verifier must meet the following requirements:

- Demonstrate sufficient and current understanding of the qualifications to be internally verified, and know how they are applied in the sector area(s) concerned, to the satisfaction of the Awarding Organisation. Relevant knowledge and understanding of the workplace areas to be sampled during verification is required. Relevant experience of working in or with the sector area(s) is preferable.
- Demonstrate competent practice in internal verification and assessment. They do not need to hold the unit qualification V1 but must be able to understand the principles and practices of internal verification. This may in part be demonstrated for example, by the outcomes of formal training in assessment and verification techniques for company based training systems or qualifications, or for auditing against quality criteria for an externally audited quality standard. Verifiers with previous unit achievement of V1 or D34 satisfy requirements, provided evidence of continuous professional development has updated verification practice. Recognition of internal verifiers in this way is only valid between a centre and an Awarding Organisation in respect of specific qualifications, and is not transferable to other bodies or qualifications.
- Demonstrate their continuing professional development to ensure they are up to date with work practices in their sector and developments in the qualifications they verify.
- Know where and when to access specialist sector advice, where additional specialist or technical knowledge relating to assessment and verification decisions is concerned.
- Operate safely as an internal verifier in a food environment, therefore it is strongly recommended that a relevant food safety/hygiene qualification is achieved.

Internal verifiers 'in training' who are not fully recognised as competent by Awarding Organisations may carry out verification practice. For the period in training and working towards recognition, the assessor must have verification activity monitored and signed off (countersigned) by a fully recognised and competent internal verifier. The 'in training' period should be limited to twelve months and have clear development goals set for achieving recognition and competence.

Section 4

4.1 Assessment evidence

Proficiency Qualifications are specifically designed to be assessed in the workplace therefore workplace performance evidence is essential for all units of assessment. The Proficiency Qualifications contain three types of units of assessment.

1. Occupational skills units must be assessed through observation in the workplace. Assessment requirements and guidance are outlined on each unit.
2. Occupational knowledge units must be assessed through questioning methods relevant to the needs of the learner on or off-the job. It is important to follow the assessment requirements and guidance outlined on each unit.
3. Underpinning knowledge units must be assessed through questioning methods relevant to the needs of the learner on or off-the-job. It is important to follow the assessment requirements and guidance outlined on each unit.

The use of employer's training and assessment process and records in the workplace are strongly encouraged, where this supports evidence of competent learner performance. This is particularly significant where such evidence is audited as part of external quality standards relevant to the food and drink sector. Learner records of assessment and verification activity will in this case reflect employer systems and records.

Where employer's assessment processes or records are insufficiently rigorous to generate credible evidence of learner performance, then formal assessment processes must be implemented to confirm learner's competence and this evidence captured in portfolio based records of assessment and verification.

4.2 Workplace testimony

Workplace personnel may contribute to the assessment process by providing workplace testimony. Those providing the testimony must be familiar with the activity being carried out and able to make a judgement that the task has been completed to organisational procedures and to the required standard. The person providing the testimony is not in a position to decide if the learner is competent overall, they are only able to judge the specific instance they observe. The overall decision regarding competence of the learner will be made by the assessor and may be subject to verification.

4.3 The use of simulation for providing evidence

The use of simulation to replace normal working practice is not acceptable.

The only exception to this rule is for units of assessment which address rare conditions or emergency situations which might endanger learner safety. These exceptions are clearly defined in the assessment guidance in the relevant unit of assessment. In such cases this will require the agreement of the external verifier.

When simulations are used they must be designed to mirror the same activity, as it would be carried out in the workplace and include:

- The number and sequence of actions needed to complete the activity
- The number and complexity of factors needed to complete the activity
- The urgency with which the activity must be completed and
- Achievement of an outcome(s) in the same time constraints that might apply in the workplace

Simulation cannot be used to provide the sole evidence for any one complete unit of assessment

4.4 Recognition of prior learning and experience

Evidence from past achievement may be included as evidence within assessment methods for Proficiency Qualifications.

Evidence of knowledge and understanding can be presented as supplementary evidence, provided it is a measurable assessed outcome of learning which links to outcomes detailed in the units of assessment and confirms current competence.

Assessors should make best use of all the assessment methods available to them in ensuring the most reliable and effective use is made of claims of prior learning and experience which relate to the individual learner's circumstances.

All learners, presenting evidence from past achievements, must also be able to demonstrate current competence.

Section 5

5.1 The role of external verifiers

Awarding Organisations appoint external verifiers to perform a number of quality assurance tasks on their behalf. They visit centres to monitor the assessment and verification processes and sample learners work to ensure that standards are maintained and are compliant with Awarding Organisation procedures. External verifiers also have a developmental role in assisting centres to develop best practice and to provide information on new qualifications and developments in assessment and verification.

External Verifiers are required to:

- Demonstrate sufficient and current understanding of the areas within the sector being externally verified.
- Demonstrate sufficient and current understanding of the Proficiency Qualifications to be externally verified, and know how they are applied in the sector, to the satisfaction of the Awarding Organisation.
- Achieve the relevant unit qualification for external verification, V2 Conduct external quality assurance of the assessment process, within one year of commencing work as a verifier for an active centre. Verifiers with previous unit achievement of D35 satisfy requirements, provided evidence of continuous professional development has updated external verification practice
- Complete a minimum of two days Continuing Professional Development (CPD) each year, composed of training or other developmental activities relevant to the food and drink sector and approved by the Awarding Organisation.
- Have good report writing, auditing and communication skills to the satisfaction of the Awarding Organisation
- Know where and when to access specialist sector advice, where additional specialist knowledge relating to assessment and verification decisions is concerned.

Annex 1

1.1 The Proficiency Qualification in Achieving Food Manufacturing Excellence (AFME)

The Proficiency Qualification in Achieving Food Manufacturing Excellence has additional assessment and verification requirements to those set out in sections 1 – 5 of this strategy. The qualification is aimed at developing, confirming competence and sustaining a mix of skills which will support lean, improvement and change management practice in food and drink manufacturing across the sector. These skills are vitally important to the future economic success of the sector. The skills are critical to driving improvements in food manufacturing and processing from both a technical as well as practical perspective, and more importantly sustaining these improvements. It is also critical because the mix of skills is based upon empowerment, company cultural development and visionary leadership and management.

With such a significant range of competences set out, employers feel that it is important to fully define the types of assessment and verification requirements for this qualification, which will make a positive difference to their operations through skills, in this business critical area.

1.2 Occupational competence of assessors for AFME

The requirements below are in addition to those set out in section 3 of this assessment strategy;

Assessors are required to:

- Have experience in the implementation, application and sustainability of lean and/or improvement skills practice in relevant manufacturing, processing or logistics roles in the food and drink sector, where there have been measurable and beneficial productivity gains to companies.
- Demonstrate achievement in learning and/or competence in lean and improvement skill practice in the food and drink sector to the satisfaction of the Awarding Organisation. Examples may include; green/black belt 6 sigma courses, Proficiency Qualification in Achieving Food Manufacturing Excellence, N/SVQ in Business Improvement Techniques at an appropriate level.
- Have a sound underpinning achievement in the application of mathematics and communication in order to demonstrate competence in using and articulating the mathematical requirements of improvement techniques.

- Assessors who cannot demonstrate that they are working directly and currently in the food and drink sector in a leading edge lean management and implementation role are required to undertake at least one annual update and refresher training session, which covers implementation of improvement techniques. The session should be provided by an approved centre and agreed by the external verifier.
- Assessors who cannot demonstrate that they are working directly and currently in the food and drink sector in a leading edge change management/implementation role are required to undertake at least one annual update and refresher training session, which covers leadership, management, workplace cultural development and sustainability of lean and improvement practice. The session should be provided by an approved centre and agreed by the external verifier.

These annual update and refresher training sessions will ensure that both lean improvement techniques **and** leadership, management, workplace cultural development and sustainability of lean and improvement practice in the food and drink sector are

- assessed using best practice in the workplace
- reflecting the means by which techniques are currently implemented and sustained in the workplace
- reflecting the means by which workforce development supports and sustains the improvement culture in the workplace
- supporting effective and measurable improvement and productivity gains in the workplace.

1.3 Occupational competence of internal verifiers for AFME

- Internal verifiers who cannot demonstrate that they are working directly and currently in the food and drink sector in a leading edge lean management and implementation role are required to undertake at least one annual update and refresher training session, which covers implementation of improvement techniques. The session should be provided by an approved centre and agreed by the external verifier.
- Internal verifiers who cannot demonstrate that they are working directly and currently in the food and drink sector in a leading edge change management/implementation role are required to undertake at least one annual update and refresher training session, which covers leadership, management, workplace cultural development and sustainability of lean and improvement practice. The session should be provided by an approved centre and agreed by the external verifier.

These annual update and refresher training sessions will ensure that both lean improvement techniques **and** leadership, management, workplace

cultural development and sustainability of lean and improvement practice in the food and drink sector are

- verified using best practice in the workplace
- reflecting the means by which techniques are currently implemented and sustained in the workplace
- reflecting the means by which workforce development supports and sustains the improvement culture in the workplace
- supporting effective and measurable improvement and productivity gains in the workplace.

1.4 Occupational competence of external verifiers for AFME

External verifiers must meet the requirements set out in section 5 of this assessment strategy. In addition;

- External verifiers who cannot demonstrate that they are working directly and currently in the food and drink sector in a leading edge lean management and implementation role are required to undertake at least one annual update and refresher training session, which covers implementation of improvement techniques. The session should be provided by the Awarding Organisation.
- External verifiers who cannot demonstrate that they are working directly and currently in the food and drink sector in a leading edge change management/implementation role are required to undertake at least one annual update and refresher training session, which covers leadership, management, workplace cultural development and sustainability of lean and improvement practice. The session should be provided by the Awarding Organisation.

These annual update and refresher training sessions will ensure that both lean improvement techniques **and** leadership, management, workplace cultural development and sustainability of lean and improvement practice in the food and drink sector are

- verified using best practice in the workplace
- reflecting the means by which techniques are currently implemented and sustained in the workplace
- reflecting the means by which workforce development supports and sustains the improvement culture in the workplace
- supporting effective and measurable improvement and productivity gains in the workplace.

Annex 2

1.1 The Level 2 Award in Proficient Poultry Meat Inspection

This Proficiency Qualification has additional assessment and verification requirements to those set out in sections 1 – 5 of this strategy.

From January 2009 Plant Inspection Assistants (PIAs), who carry out post-mortem inspection of poultry and who are not previously qualified, need to achieve this Proficiency Qualification to comply with regulation and discharge their responsibilities effectively. PIAs suitably qualified before January 2009 will not be required to achieve this qualification, unless an employer deems this necessary in the interest of updating skills and personal development.

This qualification assesses the proficiency of PIAs to carry out poultry post-mortem checks and comply with food safety management procedures, and will confirm their understanding of what is required to do the job. The qualification can be achieved in respect of post-mortem inspection of one of four specific types of bird; broilers & hens, ducks & geese, non-hunted game birds or turkeys.

1.2 The Role of Poultry Processing Company Staff

Wherever possible, assessment and verification should be conducted by supervisors, managers or other suitably experienced staff employed by poultry processing companies and carried out in the workplace.

Where the capacity or capability of the company is not geared to conduct assessment and verification to the required standards, then external services can be used to provide the quality assurance roles of the qualification. Such assessors and verifiers are referred to as 'peripatetic'.

However, the qualification cannot be awarded without the involvement of relevant company personnel managing or otherwise involved with the PIA. Company personnel must contribute to confirming the competence of the PIA, by providing observations, witness testimonies or other supplementary evidence to support assessment decisions in the workplace. External verifiers will be required to check this provision within the sampling plan for external verification.

1.3 Occupational competence of assessors

The requirements below are in addition to those set out in section 3 of this assessment strategy;

Assessors are required to:

- Provide current evidence of competence and understanding in the post-mortem inspection of poultry, to the satisfaction of the Awarding Organisation. This may be achieved through employment, experience and/or continuing professional development which may include the achievement of vocational qualifications relevant to poultry meat inspection.

1.4 Occupational competence of internal verifiers

The requirements below are in addition to those set out in section 3 of this assessment strategy;

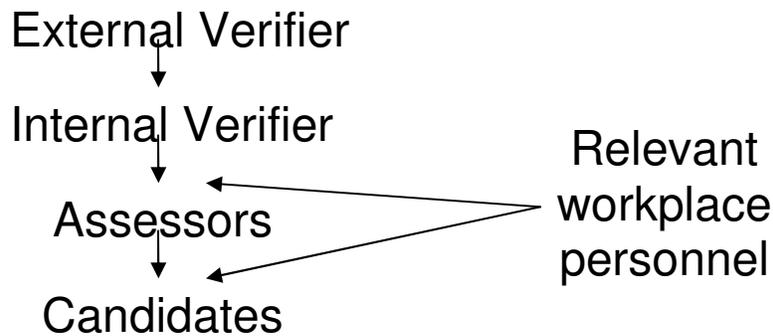
Internal verifiers are required to:

- Demonstrate sufficient and current understanding of post-mortem inspection of poultry to be internally verified, and know how they are applied in the PIA role, to the satisfaction of the Awarding Organisation.

1.5 Flexibility of the quality assurance arrangements

A. Centres operating with more than 15 registered learners at any one time, or centres operating with 3 or more assessors

These centres must operate to the quality assurance arrangements described in the assessment strategy and summarised in the diagram below;



B. Centres operating with less than 15 registered learners at any one time and operating with a maximum of 2 assessors

The functions of the External and Internal Verifier can be merged into a single External Moderators role to reflect the potential reduction in quality risks presented by the centre, to reduce beaurocracy and enable effective quality assurance. The requirements and occupational expertise of these external moderators must be that required for both external and internal verifiers combined. If quality risks are reported as high in a centre operating to this model then Awarding Organisations may consider insisting that such centres revert to using the full quality assurance requirements (above in A) until such times as a centre improves its risk rating.

