SQA's Customised Awards: options for recognising assessor and verifier competence

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Introduction

This guidance has been developed for centres offering SQA's Customised Awards. It outlines the possible recognition routes available for those assessing and/or internally verifying Customised Awards in their particular centre.

For Customised Awards, centres are no longer confined to one recognition route for recognising the competence of their assessors/verifiers. In an alternative route, Customised Awards assessors/verifiers (CA assessors/verifiers) can confirm recognition as long as centres can prove they are working to national and centre-defined standards of assessment and internal verification through a system of monitoring against agreed codes of practice.

There are many benefits to centres and CA assessor/verifiers in formally recognising competence through the achievement of nationally recognised qualifications. There are also benefits to be gained by working to a defined code of practice.

This guidance outlines the benefits of following either route and also provides practical information and guidance on their implementation.

Note: This guidance is not applicable to the assessment and internal verification of qualifications other than SQA Customised Awards. Therefore, for clarification, all references to assessors and verifiers within this guide relate only to assessors and verifiers of the Customised Award. Within the guide they are referred to as 'Customised Award assessors and verifiers', or 'CA assessors/verifiers'.

Glossary

Customised Awards	Qualifications developed by centres, based on the specific requirements of the organisation (referred to as the 'centre'), quality assured and certificated by SQA
Recognition routes	Methods used to recognise the competence of CA assessors and verifiers when they are assessing/verifying their centre's Customised Awards
Customised Award assessor (CA Assessor)	Person who assesses Customised Awards
Customised Award verifier (CA Verifier)	Person who internally verifies Customised Awards
Customised Award monitor (CA monitor)	Person who monitors assessor/verifier practice relating to the Customised Award code of practice
Customised Award checker (CA checker)	Person who checks that monitoring assessor/verifier practice is being followed relating to the Customised Award code of practice
Assessor-candidate	An unqualified assessor who is undergoing a nationally recognised assessor qualification

Recognising assessor/verifier competence

SQA's Customised Awards section helps centres to develop awards that are particular to their organisation. The award(s) allow each centre to define its operational standards in qualification terms — allowing staff and learners to be assessed against those standards and gain award certification.

During this process, Customised Awards (CA) centres are required to show that their CA assessors/verifiers are working to National Occupational Standards (NOS) in assessment and internal verification. This guidance covers the routes CA centres can choose to show that their CA assessors/verifiers are working to those national standards.

Assessors and verifiers **must** achieve nationally recognised assessor/verifier qualifications to assess and verify nationally recognised vocational qualifications, like SVQs. Assessors and verifiers do **not** need to achieve nationally recognised assessor/verifier qualifications to assess and verify Customised Awards, however, but it remains an option.

For Customised Awards, the heart of award development focuses on the needs, culture and qualification requirements of the single organisation (centre) offering the Customised Award(s). In this respect, SQA believes that centres offering Customised Awards should be able to choose from more than one recognition route, allowing them to select the option that best suits their specific requirements.

Recognition routes

'Recognition route' is the term used in this guidance to describe the method used to recognise the competence of CA assessors and verifiers when they are assessing/verifying their centre's Customised Awards. There are two routes, both of which are based on the Learning and Development NOS in assessment (L9) and internal verification (L11):

- Route 1: assessors and verifiers gaining nationally recognised assessor/verifier qualifications based on the NOS. Please refer to the SQA published document Choosing Appropriate Assessor and Verifier Qualifications for a list of nationally recognised qualifications
- Route 2: using codes of practice based on the NOS to enable structured monitoring of assessor/verifier practice

It is not the role of SQA's Customised Awards section to stipulate the route that should be undertaken. Your designated Customised Awards Project Officer will be able to refer any technical questions to SQA's Learning and Development specialists, if further guidance is required.

Route 1: Gaining nationally recognised assessor/verifier qualifications

This recognition route is the more appropriate for those centres that wish their CA assessors/verifiers to gain a nationally recognised qualification for the skills and knowledge they have acquired and deployed.

This is the most commonly selected route. Benefits to the centre including the benchmarking of staff competence against national standards in assessment/verification. Centres may also find this route helps them to identify individual or systems issues and to improve quality.

If this route is chosen, each CA assessor/verifier is entered as a candidate with SQA for one of the assessor/verifier qualifications, and is therefore required to gather evidence.

Many CA assessors/verifiers feel positively motivated by undertaking this type of qualification as it confirms that their performance not only meets company standards, but is also nationally recognised and therefore transferable should they seek alternative employment in the future.

Evidence gathered in relation to nationally recognised assessor/verifier qualifications is similar to that required for the Customised Award codes of practice, in that it involves the monitoring of CA assessor/verifier practice. Learners and assessors are required to gather, reference, assess and verify evidence so that it can be presented in a portfolio for SQA external verification.

Nationally recognised qualification options for CA assessors/verifiers

For a list of qualification options, please refer to the SQA published document Choosing Appropriate Assessor and Verifier Qualifications. To help choose the right option, the centre should consider:

- the environment within which the CA assessor/verifier operates
- whether the qualification route is right for the centre

The environment within which the CA assessor/verifier operates

For Customised Awards, choosing assessor/verifier qualifications remains largely the same as it does for mainstream qualifications, in that the CA assessor/verifier qualifications should suit the type of assessment being conducted. In this respect, everyone benefits. CA assessors/verifiers benefit from doing a qualification that mirrors their normal work (making the qualification wholly appropriate). The centre benefits because the qualification chosen reinforces a standard of assessment and verification practice that is relevant to whatever is being assessed.

Nationally recognised assessor/verifier qualifications offered by SQA fall into two main categories:

- Workplace
- Non-workplace

It is not the role of SQA's Customised Awards section to prescribe the type of assessor/verifier qualifications that should be undertaken. Nevertheless, there are some points a centre needs to consider in order to choose wisely.

Depending on those chosen, the workplace assessor/verifier qualifications will either be SVQ units (regulated by SQA Accreditation) or QCF (Qualifications and Credit Framework) units (regulated by OFQUAL). This means that anyone undertaking these units must meet specific learning and development assessment strategy requirements. These strategies stipulate that:

- Workplace assessor/verifier qualifications **must** be achieved through assessing candidates/learners in their workplace, and assessment **must** be based on standards requiring occupational competence.
- Non-workplace qualifications are best suited to those who are being assessed in environments other than the candidate's/learner's workplace. Those environments could include training rooms, classrooms, training centres, and workshops.

The qualification route — is it right for the Customised Awards being offered by the centre?

Centres should also consider if their CA assessors/verifiers are in a position to achieve the chosen assessor/verifier qualifications, based on the centre's assessment/verification procedures and practices and the Customised Awards to be assessed.

To meet assessment strategy and unit requirements, workplace assessor/verifier qualifications which assess candidates in their place of work (L&D9D/9DI and L&D11) require assessor-candidates to show that they routinely use four methods of assessment. Three of these must be:

- observation
- product inspection
- questioning

Assessor-candidates must also be able to provide recorded evidence of assessment planning and standardisation, extracted from regular centre assessment practice. If the centre does not require its CA assessors/verifiers to formally record these types of activities, then the codes of practice recognition route may suit the centre's purposes better.

Route 2: Using a NOS-based code of practice for assessment and internal verification

Centres are likely to find this route beneficial if they wish to recognise the competence of their CA assessors/verifiers whilst also using the same recording system to prove they continually maintain quality in assessment and verification.

One of the benefits of this route is that CA assessor/verifiers do not have to gather evidence and present it in a portfolio, as they would for many formally recognised qualifications. They will, however, still have to show that they meet the standards set out in the codes of practice on an ongoing basis.

How can a centre be approved to use codes of practice?

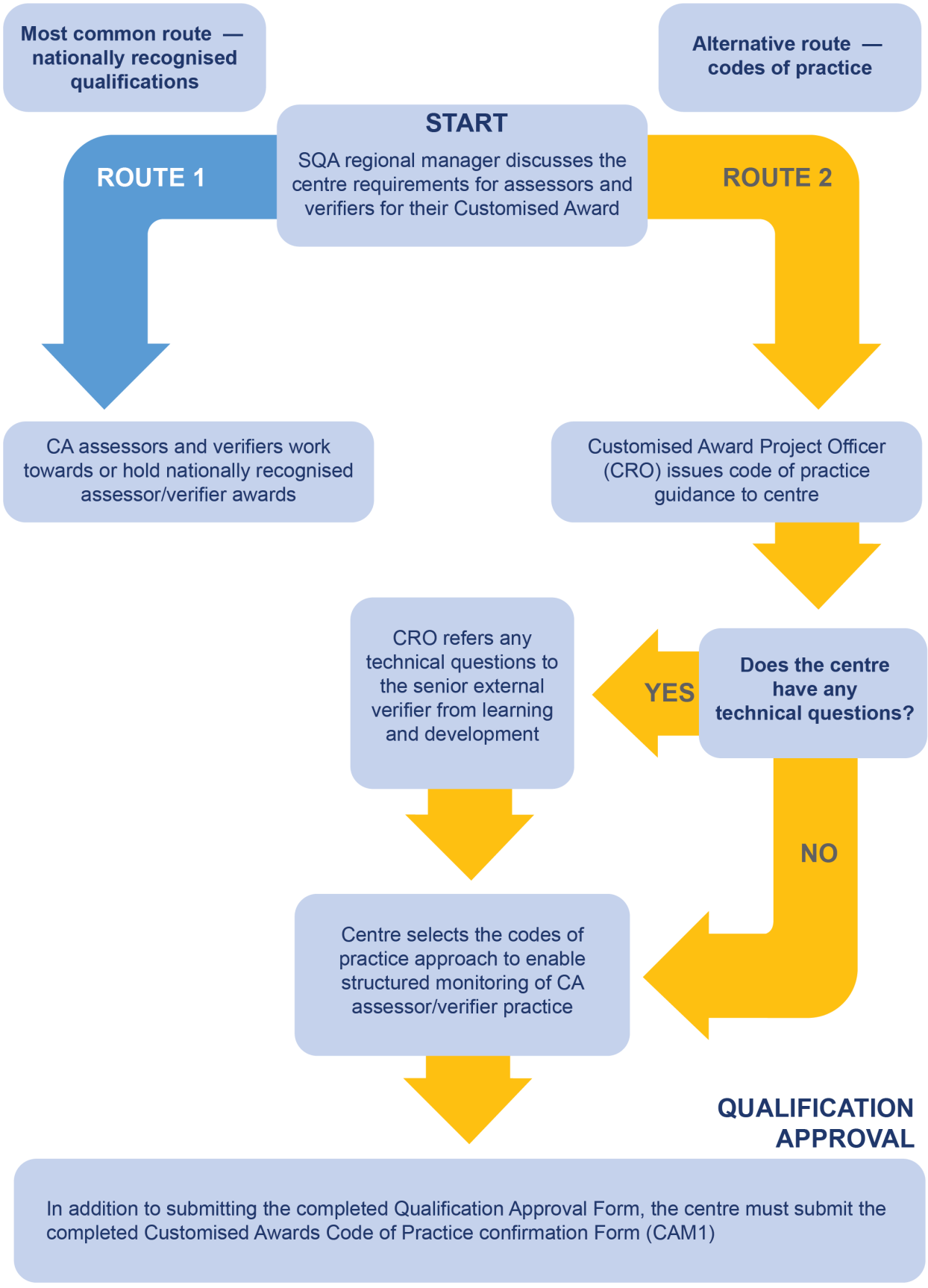
On request, SQA will provide the centre offering Customised Awards with Codes of Practice Monitoring Records templates (see CAM2 and CAM3 in Appendices 2 and 3), which are based on the current NOS. Please also note the completed example of the Code of Practice Monitoring Record for Assessment Form in Appendix 4.

If the centre chooses to use the codes of practice route, it is expected that discussions will first of all be held with relevant centre staff to agree that this is the best approach, and secondly to ascertain if there is any development work required in relation to the centre's assessment and verification procedures and practices before the codes of practice can be put into operation. This will ensure the requirements of the codes are capable of being met.

Centres should submit a completed version of Customised Awards Code of Practice Monitoring of Assessor/Verifier Practice Confirmation Form (see CAM1 in Appendix 1) to SQA for approval along with their initial qualification approval application. In addition, centres should confirm that they will use CAM2 and CAM3 template forms.

Note: the centre (either the head of centre or SQA co-ordinator) must sign a declaration at the application stage (see Appendix 1) confirming they understand that the codes of practice are only acceptable as a recognition option for SQA Customised Awards. This declaration is also included in the codes of practice templates.

Figure 1: Overview of the code of practice confirmation process



How do the codes of practice work?

Centres are required to use the codes of practice monitoring records on an ongoing basis, to prove that assessment and verification procedures and practice are being continually quality checked (see Figures 2 and 3).

The CA monitor could be another, more experienced assessor or verifier (with two years' experience), or someone with a quality assurance remit, such as the centre co-ordinator. When applying for approval, please confirm the names of the assigned monitors in your centre in the CAM1 form (Appendix 1).

The CA monitor will meet with the CA assessor or CA internal verifier to observe them carrying out assessment and/or verification practice. They will discuss their practice, which will be supported with documented evidence, including completed induction forms and candidate assessment records (see Figures 2 and 3).

A formal record of the CA monitor's observation or the evidence reviewed will be captured in the centre's CAM2 and/or CAM3 form for each CA assessor/verifier.

The feedback given as a result of monitoring process should confirm compliance with the codes of practice. Where applicable, it will help identify any individual or systemic development needed to maintain and improve the quality of assessment and internal verification being delivered.

Note: Although it is a not mandatory requirement for the CA assessor and verifier to gather evidence in a portfolio format for the CA monitor to review, it is important to note that any supporting evidence, such as forms (including induction checklists) or records (including candidate assessment forms/assessor checklists) used as evidence in the monitoring process, should be clearly referenced in the monitoring records and stored by the centre where they can be viewed.

Figure 2: Code of practice process — monitoring CA assessor competence

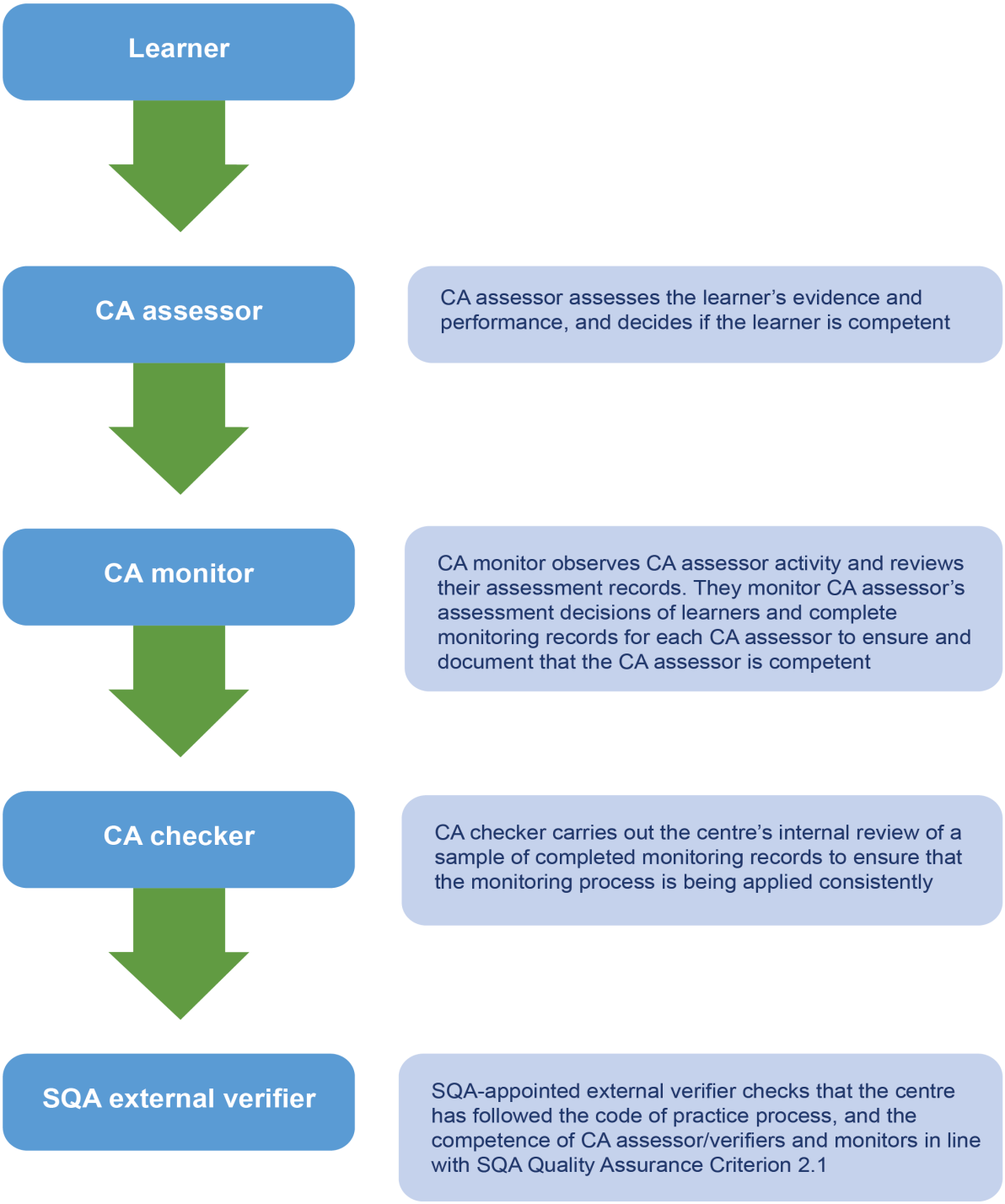
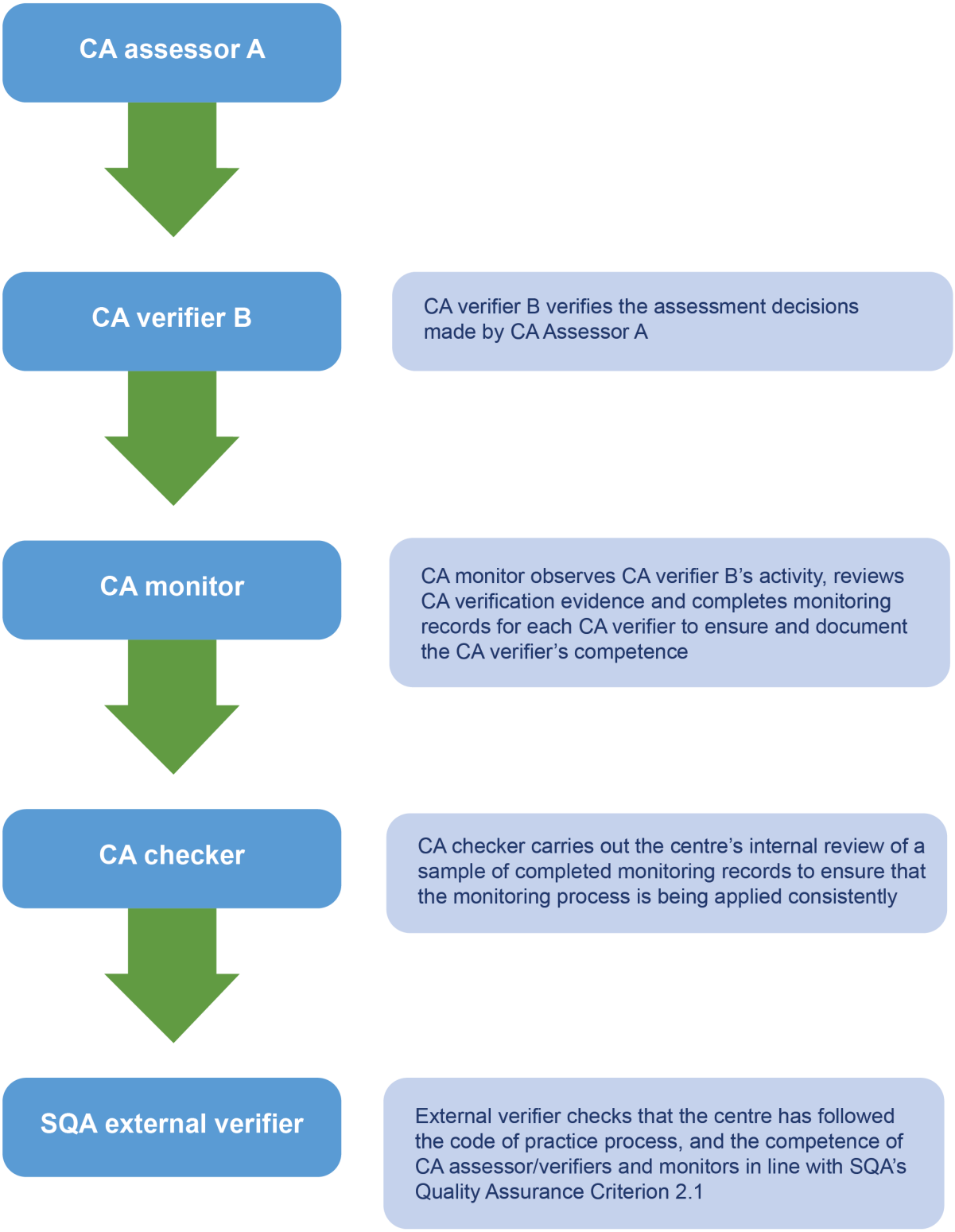


Figure 3: Code of practice process — monitoring CA verifier competence



The CA checker should review a sample of completed Customised Awards Code of Practice Monitoring Records for Assessment/Verification (CAM2 and CAM3 forms) to verify the CA monitor's decisions, whilst monitoring the CA assessor/verifier. If the CA checker is satisfied, they each sign a completed Customised Awards Code of Practice Monitoring Record Form selected from the sample. The CA checker needs to be independent of the monitoring activity being undertaken, and can be another CA monitor. The size of the sample selected by the CA checker should be risk-based and could depend on a number of factors such as:

- a CA monitor is new to the code of practice process
- a CA monitor has required development
- the Customised Award has not been delivered before
- there has been a change to assessment methods

As part of their visit, the SQA external verifier should check that the centre has followed the code of practice process, and that evidence exists of the CA assessor/verifiers' and monitors' competence in line with SQA's Quality Assurance Criterion 2.1.

The external verifier will request to review a sample of the completed CAM2 and CAM3 forms to ensure that the process is being followed and that the CA assessor and verifiers are competent.

Once they have met the code of practice requirements, some centres may wish to offer their CA assessor/verifiers an opportunity to gain a nationally recognised assessor or verifier qualification.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Customised Awards Code of Practice Monitoring of Assessor/Verifier Practice Confirmation Form (CAM1)

Centre Name:	
Centre Number (if applicable)	

Section A Customised Award Details

Customised Group Award Code	Customised Group Award Title

Section B Customised Award Assessors/Internal Verifiers/Monitors/Checker

Please confirm who is going to be involved in the Codes of Practice to enable structured monitoring of assessor/verifier practice at your centre. The names of the CA assessor(s) and CA internal verifier(s) should be provided in the Qualification Approval Application Form.

Name of CA Monitor and/or CA Checker	Confirmation of 2 years assessor/IV experience or assessment/internal verification	Please provide details of qualifications and experience in relation to assessment/internal verification

Section C Confirmation of use of Recording forms in the code of practice monitoring

Please confirm that your centre intends to use the following recording forms below to record Code of Practice monitoring of assessor/verifier practice

	Please confirm
Customised Awards Code of Practice Monitoring Record for Assessment template (CAM2 form)	
Customised Award Code of Practice Monitoring Record for Internal Verification template (CAM3 form)	

Section D Declaration

By completing this declaration, you confirm that you understand that the Codes of Practice are only acceptable as a recognition option for SQA Customised Awards only.	
Signature:	
Name (please print):	
Position (please print) (Head of Centre or SQA Co-ordinator):	
Date:	

SQA will use the personal information provided here for submission purposes only. It will not be used or disclosed in any manner incompatible with that purpose. All the details you complete in this form will be treated as private and confidential by SQA.

Appendix 2: Customised Awards Code of Practice Monitoring Record for Assessment Template (CAM2)

A) Preparing to assess

What you must be able to do: ♦ Ensure learners understand the purpose, requirements and processes of assessments.	**Monitoring record comments**
What you must know: ♦ The key concepts and principles of assessment and quality assurance. ♦ The range of information that should be made available to learners. **Range of information**: Centre could refer to its induction materials, learner contracts, assessment guidance etc. ♦ The current criteria against which assessments are made and the current regulations relating to their assessment. **Current criteria**: Centre could make reference to its Customised Award(s) and any associated regulatory requirements.	

B) Planning to assess

What you must be able to do: ♦ Plan assessment to meet requirements and learners needs. **Plan assessment**: *Centre could refer to its specific planning procedures and documentation*. ♦ Identify and collect evidence that is valid, authentic and sufficient.	**Monitoring record comments**
What you must know: ♦ Guidelines for assessment planning as appropriate to own area of responsibility. ♦ How to involve learners in the planning of assessments. ♦ How assessment arrangements can be adapted to meet the needs of individual learners. ♦ The uses, benefits and drawback of the different assessment methods, including use of simulation and those that involve technology. **Assessment methods**: *Centre could list the assessment methods that assessors will use to assess the Customised Award(s) and any guidance relating to those methods.*	

C) Carrying out assessment

What you must be able to do:	Monitoring record comments
♦ Use valid, fair, reliable and safe assessment methods. ♦ Make assessment decisions against specified criteria. ♦ Provide feedback to learners that affirm achievement and identifies any additional requirements. **Providing feedback**: *Centre could refer to the documentation to be used for recording assessor feedback.*	
What you must know: ♦ The types of risks that may be involved in assessment and how to manage these. ♦ Issues relating to equality, diversity and how to address issues. ♦ Assessment decisions made against specified criteria are valid, reliable and fair. **Assessment decisions**: Centre could state where guidance can be accessed relating to validity, reliability, fairness and authenticity. ♦ Evidence is authentic, current and sufficient and what to do if there is doubt. ♦ Factors to consider when providing feedback to learners.	

D) Maintaining records of assessment practice

What you must be able to do:	Monitoring record comments
♦ Maintain required records of the assessment process, outcomes and learner progress. **Maintaining required records**: *Centre could refer to the specific records to be used to record assessment decisions and learner progress.* ♦ Work with others to ensure the standardisation of assessment practice and outcomes.	
What you must know: ♦ Standardisation processes and how to contribute to these. ♦ **Standardisation**: Centre could refer to the processes that assessors should follow in order to ensure consistency. ♦ How to co-operate and work effectively with others in the assessment process. ♦ The relevant procedures when there are disputes concerning assessment.	

What you must know (continued):	
♦ **Disputes**: Centre could refer to its procedure for dealing with disputes relating to assessment. ♦ The value and purpose of continuing professional development for assessment practitioners. ♦ How to record and store assessment decisions, who they should be available to, and data protection and confidentiality guidelines that should be followed.	

Summary feedback to CA assessor:

Next agreed monitoring date:

I understand that the Codes of Practice are only acceptable as a recognition option for SQA Customised Awards.

Signature of CA assessor and date:

Signature CA monitor and date:

Signature of CA checker and date:

Appendix 3: Customised Award Code of Practice Monitoring Record for Internal Verification Template (CAM3)

A) Preparing to verify

What you must be able to do: ♦ Prepare monitoring activities according to requirements of own role. ♦ Determine whether assessment processes and systems operate according to quality requirements.	**Monitoring record comments**
What you must know: ♦ The current quality requirements for assessment processes and systems in your area of responsibility. **Quality requirements for assessment processes**: *Centre could make reference to its assessment processes and procedures.* ♦ The key concepts and principles of assessment and quality assurance. ♦ The role of the assessor and internal verifier and relevant requirements of these roles. **Role of the assessor and internal verifier**: *Centre could make reference to its assessor and verifier role descriptors.* ♦ The uses, benefits and drawbacks of different assessment methods. **Assessment methods**: Centre could list the assessment methods that assessors will use to assess the Customised Award(s) and any guidance relating to those methods.	

B) Planning to verify

What you must be able to do: ♦ Plan monitoring activities according to requirements of own role. **Plan monitoring activities**: Centre could refer to its specific internal verification planning procedures and documentation. ♦ Check that assessors meet the requirements for their role.	**Monitoring record comments**
What you must know: ♦ The agreed procedures for preparing, planning for and carrying out assessment. **Agreed procedures**: *Centre could refer to, for example, its assessment procedures, assessment manual, etc.*	

C) Carrying out verification

What you must be able to do:	Monitoring record comments
♦ Check assessments are prepared for, planned and carried out according to agreed procedures. ♦ Check assessment methods are safe, fair, valid and reliable. **Assessment methods**: Centre could state where guidance can be accessed relating to validity, reliability, fairness and safety in assessment. ♦ Check that assessment decisions are consistent in only using specified criteria. ♦ Provide assessors with feedback, advice and support to help them maintain and improve their assessment practice. **Assessor feedback**: *Centre could refer to processes and documentation to be used for recording assessor feedback, advice and support.*	
What you must know: ♦ Techniques for sampling evidence and assessment practice. ♦ The criteria for judging the quality of the assessment process. ♦ How to follow agreed procedures for preparing, planning, carrying out and recording monitoring activity. **Agreed procedures**: Centre could refer to its processes and documentation for monitoring which could be, for example, in a Quality Assurance Manual. ♦ How to ensure the health and safety of the learner is maintained during assessment. ♦ The types of feedback, support and advice that assessors need and how to meet needs. ♦ Issues related to equality, diversity and, if relevant, bilingualism that may affect quality assurance, and how to address these.	

D) Maintaining records of verification practice

What you must be able to do:	Monitoring record comments
♦ Compare assessor decisions to ensure they are consistent. ♦ Work with others to ensure the standardisation of assessment practice/outcomes. **Consistency and standardisation**: Centre could refer to the processes that assessors should follow in order to ensure consistency.	

♦ Follow agreed procedures when there are significant concerns about the quality of assessment. **Concerns**: *Centre could refer to its procedure for dealing with concerns relating to assessment.* ♦ Follow agreed procedures for the recording, storing, reporting and confidentiality of information.	
What you must know: ♦ Standardisation processes and how to co-ordinate and contribute to these. ♦ How to co-operate and work effectively with others in the assessment process. ♦ The relevant procedures when there are concerns or disputes about the quality of assessment and how to use them. ♦ The requirements for information management, data protection and confidentiality in relation to assessment and quality assurance. ♦ The value and purpose of continuing professional development.	

Summary feedback to CA verifier:

Next agreed monitoring date:

I understand that the Codes of Practice are only acceptable as a recognition option for SQA Customised Awards.

Signature of CA verifier and date:

Signature of CA monitor and date:

Signature of CA checker and date:

Appendix 4: Example of a completed Code of Practice Monitoring Record for Assessment Form (CAM2)

Appex Engineering Co Ltd

A) Preparing to assess

What you must be able to do:	**Monitoring record comments**
♦ Ensure learners understand the purpose, requirements and processes of assessments.	I reviewed signed induction checklists. I saw two inductions being delivered by the assessor. They were informative and interesting and covered centre requirements. I interviewed five learners — they all had signed Learners Contracts, and understood broadly how they would be assessed.
What you must know: ♦ The key concepts and principles of assessment and quality assurance. ♦ The range of information that should be made available to learners. **Refer to:** **Company Induction Checklist** **Learner Contract** **Assessor Manual** ♦ The current criteria against which assessments are made and the current regulations relating to their assessment. **Refer to:** **Appex Engineering Certificate (Criteria and Evidence Requirements)**	

B) Planning to assess

What you must be able to do:	**Monitoring record comments**
♦ Plan assessment to meet requirements and learners' needs. **Refer to:** **Template Action/Assessment Plan (A1)** ♦ Identify and collect evidence that is valid, authentic and sufficient.	I observed reviews taking place for three learners during which their progress to date was discussed and future agreed actions recorded. Individuals' needs were discussed. Agreed plans took account of scheduled work allocations and work activities. Observation and product inspection planned for work that would be performed routinely.
What you must know: ♦ Guidelines for assessment planning as appropriate to own area of responsibility. ♦ How to involve learners in the planning of assessments. ♦ How assessment arrangements can be adapted to meet the needs of individual learners. ♦ The uses, benefits and drawback of the different assessment methods, including use of simulation and those that involve technology.	

Refer to: **Assessment methods in Assessor Manual (observation, product evidence, witness testimony and questioning)** **SQA's Assessment Guidance.**	Witness testimony will be used for specialist areas of work —when on shift with supervisors.

C) Carrying out assessment

What you must be able to do: ♦ Use valid, fair, reliable and safe assessment methods. ♦ Make assessment decisions against specified criteria. ♦ Provide feedback to learners that affirm achievement and identifies any additional requirements. **Refer to:** **Feedback template and guidance in Assessor Manual (page 6).**	**Monitoring record comments** I observed different aspects of assessment: planning — 6 June observations — 20 June feedback — 5 July On 20th, I dual-observed one assessment and agreed with Alex's assessment decision which took account of required tolerances during the calibration of signal generators. Feedback to learners was exceptionally well constructed and recorded. Learner interviews backed-up the value they received from this process.
What you must know: ♦ The types of risks that may be involved in assessment and how to manage these. ♦ Issues relating to equality, diversity and how to address these issues. ♦ Assessment decisions made against specified criteria are valid, reliable and fair. **Refer to:** **Assessor Manual (page 10) covering assessment principles (validity and reliability etc, and making assessor decisions (page 12).** ♦ Evidence is authentic, current and sufficient and what to do if there is doubt. ♦ Factors to consider when providing feedback to learners.	

D) Maintaining records of assessment practice

What you must be able to do: ♦ Maintain required records of the assessment process, outcomes and learner progress. **Refer to:** **Assessment recording templates and progress review forms in Administration section of Assessor Manual.** ♦ Work with others to ensure the standardisation of assessment practice and outcomes.	**Monitoring record comments** Assessment records are dated, signed and show clear decisions being made in relation to our Customised Award Certificate.

What you must know: ♦ Standardisation processes and how to contribute to these. **Refer to:** **Standardisation guidance in Assessor Manual (page 14).** ♦ How to co-operate and work effectively with others in the assessment process. ♦ The relevant procedures when there are disputes concerning assessment. **Refer to:** **Centre policy and procedure for dealing with disputes and complaints.** ♦ The value and purpose of continuing professional development for assessment practitioners. ♦ How to record and store assessment decisions, who they should be available to, and data protection and confidentiality guidelines that should be followed.	Alex provides comprehensive feedback to his learners and ensures this is recorded. He contributes well during standardisation meetings (refer to minutes file) — and recently offered to revise the Observation Checklists for machine operations — which has been well received.

Summary feedback to CA assessor:

Your assessment decisions are sound Alex. I reviewed evidence spanning 30 modules in total, interviewed five learners and observed various aspects of the assessment process.

August 2020 — As discussed, there is only one small area for improvement required and that is in relation to recording Health and Safety Assessment. During our last standardisation meeting it was agreed that risk assessment reference numbers would feature in the evidence for each module where relevant — please can you ensure you incorporate this into your practice?

I understand that the Codes of Practice are only acceptable as a recognition option for SQA Customised Awards.

Signature of CA assessor and date:
Alex Harvey 04/08/20

Signature of CA monitor and date:
John McRae 04/08/20

Next agreed monitoring date: *07/03/21*

Signature of CA checker and date: