

Standardisation Policy and Procedure

1 Definition

‘Standardisation is a process to ensure that the assessment criteria for a qualification, unit or component are applied consistently by assessors, moderators and verifiers’¹

Regulatory bodies require that ‘the awarding body must have procedures in place to ensure its own staff and/or associates are competent in and/or have access to appropriate training and guidance on:
.....the systems used to ensure consistency of standards across options, centres and time.’

2 Audience

2.1 The intended audience for this document is:

- Quality Assurance Managers in recognised centres
- Access to HE Co-ordinators
Approved Internal Verifiers (AIV)
Agored Cymru staff
- Agored Cymru appointed External Verifiers
- Qualifications Regulators.

2.2 The policy and procedure will apply to:

- Access to Higher Education qualifications
- QCF approved qualifications (NOCN or Agored Cymru)
- CQFW units
- Agored Cymru ‘locally approved’ units.

3 Introduction

3.1 Confirmation of the consistent application of assessment to ensure learner achievement is a key priority for all awarding bodies and approved centres. Development of a robust standardisation process, which can be applied both regionally and nationally in Wales, will provide the evidence of consistent practice.

4 Policy

¹ The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2004)

4.1 Agored Cymru will ensure standards are consistent across all centres by planning and delivering a comprehensive annual programme of standardisation events that enable Internal and External Verifiers to compare outcomes of assessment. The standardisation events will allow Agored Cymru to:

- compare and confirm standards across different types of provision e.g. Further Education, Schools and Voluntary Organisations
- compare and confirm standards where different types of assessment are used to evidence the achievement of a unit e.g. question and answer, oral presentation, e portfolio etc
- compare and confirm standards where units are offered in English and Welsh
- identify and share good practice
- identify issues to be addressed either by amendments to qualification assessment or to units within qualifications
- compare and confirm standards applied by Internal and External Verifiers
- compare and confirm standards over time.

4.2 Attendance at standardisation events will be a condition of centre approval, monitored through the annual quality review process with each centre. In addition the confirmation of 'direct claim status' for a centre will be linked to the contribution of internal verifiers to the standardisation process.

4.3 Renewal of External Verifier contracts will be dependent on contribution to relevant standardisation events.

4.4 Outcomes of standardisation events will be circulated and published within the network of Agored Cymru approved centres and will be used to inform future qualification development activity.

Guidance for implementation

5 Planning the standardisation events

5.1 The Standardisation calendar will be produced as part of a two year rolling programme. The programme will be developed to respond to:

- the need to ensure the standards of common units across a range of qualifications
- the requirements for Agored Cymru qualifications
- external partnership requirements (for example NOCN's requirements for the continued use of NOCN Qualifications)
- the volume of uptake of particular sectors/levels
- the need to standardise across centres, within regions, between regions and between EVs
- significant changes to areas of provision such as the introduction of grading to AHE

- the need to compare standards across English and Welsh samples of assessment material where units are offered in both languages
- the need to ensure standardisation of quality across sectors e.g. FE/Schools.

5.2 The number of units to be considered at each event will differ according to the focus on the type of provision e.g. Agored Cymru Qualifications, Access to HE, NOCN Qualifications and 'free standing' units. However it is likely that between 6 and 8 units, including at least two mandatory units, will be considered at each event, with every effort being made to include every unit within a qualification in the process over a three year period. If significant issues are raised in relation to particular units these will be included in the process more frequently until issues are successfully resolved. The number of units may change according to the specific requirements of a particular qualification and will cover an appropriate balance of mandatory and optional units.

5.3 Until the grading of level 3 Access to HE units is well established, all sectors/subject areas will be standardised each year, with the expectation that all centres and EVs will attend the relevant events in the region.

5.4 The two year programme will be presented to QSRC and AHEC committees for approval each year before being published as an annual calendar on the Agored Cymru website by 1st June and circulated to centres and external verifiers.

6 Attendance at standardisation events

6.1 It is vital the agreements reached and information shared at standardisation events are disseminated effectively in order to support the quality improvement processes for all centres, not just those who have attended the events. Standardisation events will be chaired by an appropriate Agored Cymru representative who will introduce the event, provide a short update on the sector / qualifications developments or changes and ensure that the necessary reports are produced. They will be attended by:

A Chair of the meeting who will have significant subject specialist experience and who will have received training in running standardisation events. A Lead External Verifier will be appointed for each Agored Cymru Qualification. Wherever possible it will be the responsibility of the Lead External Verifier to Chair the standardisation events for the qualification.

External Verifiers (EV) who will a) have an overview of the different units used within the sector and b) have the opportunity to share and apply the information gained at standardisation events with a wide range and number of centres

Internal Verifiers (IV) who will have an overview of and influence over, assessment decisions and processes within their organisation. The internal verifiers are in an ideal position to gather from, and cascade information to assessors within their own organisation.

6.2 Where centres are delivering sectors/units included in the standardisation calendar they will be expected to ensure that their IVs attend events and bring with them appropriate material that will contribute to the process. Attendance at standardisation events will be an essential element of CPD for EVs and IVs and will contribute towards the retention of Approved Internal Verifier status and recognised centre status. (see section 10)

7 Content of meetings

7.1 A standard agenda will be used at the events which will allow the group to discuss and compare information to:

- confirm decisions they may have made regarding assessment during the year
- consider standards across a range of different types of evidence e.g. e portfolios, essays, short answer questions, tutor observation sheets etc confirm the validity of evidence
- confirm the volume/appropriateness of evidence identify units that should be subject to review
- confirm decisions regarding grading of assessments for AHE provision
- consider assessment tasks included in qualifications to ensure they are fit for purpose and continue to meet sector standards
- ensure consistent approaches to assessment decisions identify and share good practice
- confirm grading decisions where appropriate
- confirm standards across time by examining materials and outcomes from previous standardisation events.

7.2 The Chair of the meeting will work with the External Verifiers and Internal Verifiers to ensure that standardisation samples fairly reflect the units and levels delivered by the centres, including good practice by centres. Standardisation planning will take account of the requirements for Welsh speakers, standardisation between English and Welsh and how that might be covered if no Welsh speaker is available (via translated materials). Material to be considered at the events will be collected by External Verifiers who will collect samples of assessed work for mandatory (or commonly used) units, and by Internal Verifiers, who will collect samples of internally verified assessment materials for optional/specific units. Specific units to be included in the standardisation event will be identified initially using a number of criteria:

- units where issues have been raised by IVs, EVs, assessors, Regulators, SSCs etc including those where queries have been raised about the unit content
- popularity of units

- e-portfolios
- use of units across different centres
delivery of units in both English and Welsh
- comparison of levels, where subjects are covered by units at more than one level in a qualification.

7.3 Agored Cymru will endeavour to ensure all units included in qualifications are covered over a three year period.

7.4 All material presented must have been through the internal verification process. This will include:

- copies of completed assessments (where possible this should be anonymous)
- feedback to the learner from the Assessor
feedback from the Internal Verifier to the Assessor
- records of corrective action feed-back from assessor to IV
- assessment tasks from qualifications
a copy of the relevant unit.

7.5 Initially all participants at the meeting will focus on the examination of a small group of samples, this will allow the group to consider and confirm standards for the levels. Once the standard has been confirmed the participants will work in pairs (or small groups) to consider examples of assessed work, recording evidence of good practice and identifying issues for further discussion. The group will then reconvene to discuss common issues identified, additional guidance required for IVs and EVs, and any amendments required to the unit or assessment process and methods, and to disseminate good practice.

8 Dissemination of information

8.1 The Chair of the meeting will produce a written report on the standardisation event. This will include an evaluation of the event taking account of the views of the attendees. These reports will form the basis of the dissemination and ensure consistent reporting and will be e-mailed to all attendees.

8.2 The outcomes of the meetings will be collated and the reports disseminated via:

- IVs cascading knowledge to assessors in centres
- EVs during their centre visits the
Agored Cymru website subject
based bulletins
- inclusion in the Agored Cymru annual quality improvement plan.

9 Sharing information across regions and across time

9.1 Due to the geographic issues facing centres in Wales it is likely that the majority of standardisation events will need to be replicated in North and South Wales. Wherever possible the same Chair will be appointed for both these meetings to ensure consistency of approach. Where this arrangement is not possible the Chairs will discuss and agree content/focus of the meeting and one collated report will be produced for circulation.

9.2 An annual training event will be held for Chairs of standardisation meetings to allow discussion and agreement of any subject specific priorities for the coming year, as well as allowing an opportunity for Agored Cymru to highlight any changes to procedures and generic issues that need to be addressed and/or good practice identified. These events will also offer the opportunity to utilise retained materials to compare standards over time.

10 Direct Claim Status for Centres

10.1 It is important to link the continued recognition of Approved Internal Verifier (AIV) status to participation in the standardisation process. In order to maintain AIV status and to continue to use Direct Claim Status for a sector, an organisation must ensure that the AIV attends at least one appropriate sector standardisation event every 2 years. In addition a further requirement to attend a generic IV training event once every 2 years will ensure that IVs are aware of changes in procedures or emphasis.

10.2 Booking for events will be managed electronically, thus allowing the easy monitoring and review of attendance. Details of attendance will be included in the Annual Centre Review process, allowing early identification of issues relating to participation in standardisation events and reports.

11 Retention of assessed evidence

11.1 The material considered at standardisation events will be scanned and retained by Agored Cymru for the life of the qualification or for 5 years for non qualification based standardisation. The material retained will allow a comparison of standards over time as well as across regions. Representative samples from the standardisation activity will be selected by the Chair and passed to the administration team to be catalogued. In future years the scanned materials will be considered alongside 'new' assessed material brought to the events to allow a comparison of standards over time.

11.2 These arrangements will ensure far greater consistency of standards between EVs, between IVs and therefore across centres.

12 Related topics

Access to Fair Assessment policy
Unit Writing specifications
Level Descriptors

13 Policy responsibility and review

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AnnualStandardisationProcess -
PrioritoStandardisation

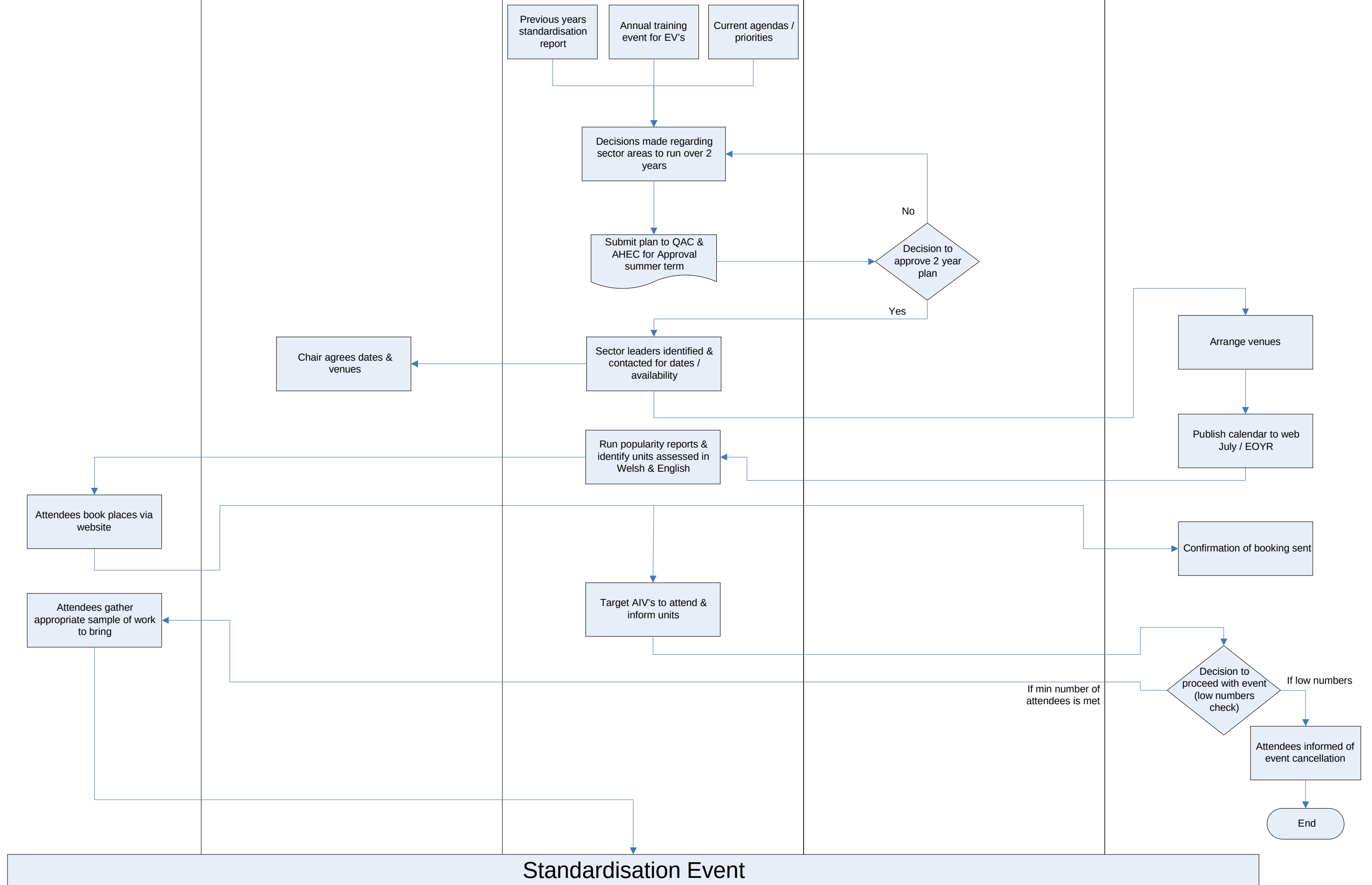
Centres

Chair

Quality

Governance

CorporateServices



AnnualStandardisationProcess - PostStandardisation

