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Guide to CPCAB's External Verification Sampling visits/Sampling Activities 2026 – 2027



This guidance document is designed to support centres in preparing for External Verification sampling visits.

Contents

Page

1. CPCAB External Verification	<u>3</u>
2. External Verification Sampling Activities including visits	<u>4</u>
3. External Verification for Parent, Satellite and Online Delivery Centres	<u>5</u>
4. When a Centre is Not Sampling Visit-Ready	<u>6</u>
5. Requirements for External Verification Sampling visits per qualification	<u>8</u>
6. External Verification Visits and Sampling Activities Guidance	<u>9</u>
7. Sampling requirements	<u>10</u>
8. Internal Quality Assurance (IQA)	<u>12</u>
9. Centre Responsibilities to Support the Sampling Activity and Visit	<u>14</u>
10. The External Verification Sampling Report	<u>15</u>
11. Centre Status Ratings	<u>16</u>
12. Annual Practising Certificate (APC)	<u>18</u>

Appendices

Appendix 1: Pre-Sampling visit Questions and Guidance	<u>19</u>
Appendix 2: Candidate Feedback Form	<u>28</u>

1. CPCAB External Verification

As an Awarding Organisation (AO), we are required by our regulators to have a **Centre Assessment Standards Scrutiny (CASS) Strategy** in place. This strategy sets out how we monitor and scrutinise the assessment decisions made by centres on our behalf, ensuring qualifications are delivered, assessed and quality assured consistently across all approved centres.

External Verification is a key part of this strategy. It enables us to demonstrate that robust processes and monitoring arrangements are in place to maintain the validity, reliability and consistency of assessment decisions. Through CASS, we monitor the accuracy of internal assessment, the effectiveness of assessment practice and the robustness of Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) processes, while ensuring those involved in teaching, assessing and quality assuring qualifications are appropriately trained and working to the required standards.

Most CPCAB qualifications on the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) are subject to External Verification. Our External Verifiers (EVs) are experienced counsellors, trainers and quality assurance professionals who work collaboratively with centres, providing guidance, support and developmental feedback whilst acting as a key link between centres and CPCAB.

External Verification is both a quality assurance and developmental process. It supports centres in maintaining high standards of delivery and assessment, identifying and sharing good practice, strengthening quality assurance processes, and ensuring candidates receive a fair, consistent and high-quality learning experience.

Why is External Verification Important?

External Verification helps safeguard the integrity and credibility of CPCAB qualifications by ensuring that:

- Candidates have met all required Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria.
- Minimum assessment requirements have been achieved.
- Assessment decisions are accurate, valid and consistent.
- Tutors are applying assessment criteria appropriately at the correct qualification level.
- Internal Quality Assurance processes are effective and robust.
- Qualification standards are maintained consistently across all centres.

By ensuring candidates are assessed against the same national standards, External Verification helps maintain confidence in CPCAB qualifications among candidates, centres, employers, professional bodies and the wider public.

Supporting Centres Through Quality Assurance

External Verification is designed to be supportive and developmental. Through sampling visits and reporting, EVs provide:

- Constructive feedback on assessment and quality assurance practice.
- Guidance on meeting qualification requirements.
- Opportunities to develop and enhance assessment processes.
- Recognition and sharing of good practice.
- Support in maintaining compliance with CPCAB requirements.

We recognise that effective quality assurance is achieved through partnership. Our EVs work collaboratively with centres to support continuous improvement while ensuring qualification standards remain secure and candidates receive a safe, fair and consistent assessment experience.

2. External Verification Sampling Activities including Visits

Your assigned External Verifier for the academic year will contact you once you have registered your first group(s) to arrange the sampling activity. The External Verification sampling activities include:

- Correspondence with centres
- Reviewing registrations
- Arranging what sampling is required
- Visiting the centre
- Providing feedback via an External Verifier Sampling report

The visit will either be in person or online, depending on the method of delivery at your centre. Your EV will liaise with you and discuss the best option. There may be times when your EV will request an online visit even if you are delivering in person. This could be for several reasons, which could include the time it would take them to travel to your centre. We always endeavour to allocate you an EV within your region, but this isn't always possible. We are committed to working relationally with you, and your EV will support you through the process.

For most centres, two EV sampling activities are required per academic year, apart from centres only delivering ICSK-L2, where only one sampling activity is required. The scheduling of these sampling activities and visits is determined by the centre's registration timeline. Typically for most centres:

- The **first EV sampling activity** will be conducted between **1st October and 31st March**.
- The **second EV sampling activity** will be conducted between **1st April and 31st August**.

This schedule ensures appropriate monitoring and support throughout the academic year. Centres are expected to accommodate these sampling activities, including the visit. To ensure the visit is productive and can be completed within the scheduled timeframe, centres are expected to be **visit-ready**, see [part 4](#). This includes ensuring that tutor-assessed candidate work, assessment records, IQA documentation, tutor information and any requested evidence are available and accessible at the time of the visit. Delays caused by unavailable evidence may result in additional actions or a further sampling activity and/or visit being required.

Centres should maintain regular communication with their allocated EV and respond promptly to requests for information, sampling requirements and visit arrangements. Early communication helps both the centre and EV plan effectively and supports a positive verification experience.

The focus of all External Verification sampling activities and visits will remain consistent regardless of when centre delivery commenced or the curriculum cycle within the centre. In addition to monitoring compliance with qualification requirements, EV visits provide an opportunity to discuss good practice, share solutions to common challenges and support continuous quality improvement within the centre.

Each visit and sampling activity will support centres in meeting all requirements and will include a review of **all tutor assessment across all levels they teach** and associated IQA processes. Where actions are identified, centres are expected to address these within the agreed timescale and provide evidence of completion where requested. Progress against previous actions will be reviewed during subsequent visits.

During each visit (in person or online), your EV assesses the centre's systems of internal assessment and internal quality assurance processes, including internal moderation as a whole; this is outlined in more detail in [Part 8](#). This includes reviewing a sample of candidate work and the tutor feedback given, as well as ensuring assessments are meeting the national standards.

There are no additional fees to centres for these sampling activities and visits and they are included within the candidate registration fee. However, a fee will be issued if your centre registers fewer than the minimum numbers for candidate registrations per academic year. This is to cover the administrative and quality assurance costs of awarding a qualification.

In some circumstances, additional quality assurance activity may be required. This could include a further chargeable External Verification sampling activity and/or visit, an additional support visit, targeted sampling activity, or intervention by a member of the CPCAB Quality Assurance team where further assurance or support is needed.

Please see the [Fees Document](#) for further information.

3. External Verification for Parent, Satellite and Online Delivery Centres

Where centres deliver CPCAB qualifications across multiple locations or through online delivery, External Verification arrangements may vary depending on factors such as centre size, registration numbers, delivery models, staffing structures and the range of qualifications being offered.

For approval and regulatory purposes, CPCAB recognises the **parent centre** as the approved centre, with any additional delivery locations classed as **satellite centres**. While satellite centres generally operate under the policies, procedures and quality assurance arrangements of the parent centre, CPCAB may determine different sampling arrangements to ensure appropriate scrutiny across all provision.

At the start of each academic year, we will review registration data and determine the most effective External Verification approach for the centre. This may involve sampling by **centre site, qualification, delivery method** (face-to-face, blended or online), or a combination of these approaches. For larger centres with multiple sites, qualifications or high registration volumes, additional sampling activities or visits may be required to ensure sufficient oversight of assessment and quality assurance practice.

The key requirement is that **all tutors are sampled for every qualification level they teach and assess**. External Verification arrangements will therefore be planned to ensure that all delivery is appropriately reviewed, regardless of where or how teaching takes place.

For example:

- where a parent centre has several satellite centres, the External Verifier may carry out the sampling activity and visit at one or more sites separately if this provides the most effective way of sampling the required tutors, qualifications and candidates.
- where a centre delivers qualifications online, sampling activities and visits may be per qualification level to review candidate work, assessment practice and quality assurance processes.

Alternatively, evidence from multiple sites or delivery models may be reviewed as part of a single sampling activity and visit. These arrangements will be communicated to centres as early as possible and will be informed by registration patterns, qualification delivery and previous sampling activities and visits.

There are no additional fees to a centre if CPCAB's External Verification arrangements include additional sampling activities and visits due to centre size or delivery model. A separate EV report will be produced for each sampling activity and visit undertaken.

Additional Quality Assurance sampling activities and visits may also be arranged at CPCAB's discretion where further assurance is required. Alternatively, centres may request and fund an additional support or verification sampling activity and/or visit.

Please refer to the [Fees Document](#) for further information.

To support effective External Verification, centres should ensure that:

- All tutors are informed of planned CPCAB External Verification sampling activity and visits and have an opportunity to engage with the EV where appropriate.
- Candidate portfolios and associated assessment records from parent centres, satellite centres and online cohorts are available for sampling.
- Relevant Internal Quality Assurance records and centre documentation can be accessed by the EV.
- Appropriate arrangements are in place to enable sampling of **all tutors across all qualification levels** delivered by the centre.
- Where delivery is online or blended, centres can provide secure access to the systems and evidence required for verification.

This flexible approach enables CPCAB to maintain effective oversight of assessment standards while recognising the diverse ways in which centres deliver qualifications.

4. When a Centre is not Sampling Visit-Ready

To enable External Verification to be completed successfully, centres must ensure that all requested evidence, records, systems and relevant staff are available at the agreed time of the sampling activity and visit.

A centre may be considered **not sampling visit-ready** where, for example:

- The centre is resistant to arranging a visit date with the EV
- Candidate portfolios or sampled evidence are unavailable.

- Assessment or Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) records cannot be accessed.
- Relevant tutors, IQAs or centre staff are unavailable.
- Online systems, portfolio platforms or electronic records cannot be accessed by the EV.
- Requested documentation has not been provided within the agreed timescales.

If the EV is unable to obtain sufficient evidence to complete the verification activity, the sampling activity and visit may be recorded as **unsuccessful** and additional quality assurance actions may be required. These may include:

- A Quality Assurance Compliance Action being issued.
- Deadlines being set for the submission of missing evidence.
- Additional sampling, remote reviews or follow-up visits being required.
- Enhanced monitoring of the centre.
- Additional quality assurance activity where necessary.

Please see CPCAB's [Sanctions Policy](#) and [Fees Document](#).

Please note that where verification activities, including the visit, cannot be completed because the required evidence is unavailable, CPCAB will assess the nature and level of risk and determine whether a temporary restriction on certification is required. A restriction will be applied where the circumstances meet the mandatory thresholds in CPCAB's CASS procedures and will remain in place until sufficient assurance has been obtained.

Centres are therefore strongly encouraged to ensure they are fully prepared for each External Verification sampling activity and visit and to maintain regular communication with their EV regarding any issues that may affect the availability of evidence, systems or staff.

Our aim is always to work collaboratively with centres to resolve any issues as quickly as possible. If you anticipate difficulties in being ready for a sampling activity and/or visit, please contact your EV at the earliest opportunity so that appropriate support and arrangements can be considered.

5. Requirements for External Verification Sampling visits per qualification

Qualification	Sampling visit Requirements	Sample requirements per qualification
USM-L2 ELSK-L2	No External Verification sampling or visits take place for these qualifications as candidate work goes through Independent Verification by CPCAB.	N/A
ICSK-L2	Any centres delivering ICSK-L2 ONLY are required to have one mandatory annual External Verification sampling activity and visit at some point in the academic year.	Candidate portfolios: Your EV will select the names of the candidates' work they wish to review. <i>If your EV has randomly requested samples of candidate work of the same ability (e.g. 4 very strong portfolios) then please liaise with your EV to ensure the sample reflects all abilities.</i> Please note: If there are any areas of concern, your EV can request further candidate work to review in addition to the samples provided, so please ensure these can be made readily available to your EV.
CSK-L2 CST-L3 CAST-L3 LCS-L3 TC-L4 LC-L4 CYP-L5 PC-L5 CBT-L5 TCSU-L6	Any centres delivering these qualifications are required to have two mandatory annual External Verification sampling activities and visits. Typically for most centres: • The first EV sampling activity will be conducted between 1st October and 31st March. • The second EV sampling activity will be conducted between 1st April and 31st August. sampling visit	Candidate portfolios. Your EV will select the names of candidates whose portfolios they wish to review from each registered group. <i>If your EV has randomly requested samples of candidate work of the same ability (e.g. 4 very strong portfolios) then please liaise with your EV to ensure the sample reflects all abilities.</i> Please note: If there are any areas of concern identified during the sampling activity, your EV can request further candidate work to review in addition to the samples provided, so please ensure these can be made readily available to your EV.
If you have received online delivery approval from us and your sampling activity and visit is online, you will be expected to be able to provide access to candidate portfolios at least two weeks before the visit .		

6. External Verification Visits and Sampling Activities Guidance

You **must ensure** details and documentary evidence for all registered candidates, qualifications and groups are available at request. Therefore, to ensure you are **visit-ready and can meet the sampling activity requirements**, please collate portfolios of work and evidence of learning within the timelines listed below. Your EV will also want to see further qualification documentation, which could include Student Handbooks and Schemes of Work.

When your External Verifier contacts you to arrange the visit, they will provide guidance on the verification process, including details of the candidate work and documentation required for sampling.

- **In-person sampling activities and visits with paper portfolios:** Sampling will normally take place during the visit, and full candidate portfolios and IQA documentation should be made available for the EV to review.
- **Online sampling activities and visits with paper portfolios:** The EV will identify the pieces of candidate work and IQA documentation they wish to sample and will request that these are provided at least **two weeks before the visit**. This allows sufficient time for the EV to complete the sampling activity in advance and provide informed feedback during the sampling visit.
- **Online sampling activities and visits with electronic portfolios:** Centres should provide the EV with access to the relevant online portfolio system at least **two weeks before the visit**. This enables the EV to complete the required sampling activity before the scheduled meeting.

Providing evidence within these timescales helps ensure the verification process runs smoothly and allows sufficient time for sampling to be completed before the visit.

Your EV will also discuss with you who they would like to meet during their visit. This is normally all tutors teaching CPCAB qualifications, centre management, a candidate group, and Internal Quality Assurance staff.

Pre-sampling Visit Questions

Your EV will also send you the EV report template, which contains **pre-sampling visit questions**. To ensure a smooth and productive External Verification process, we ask that centres complete pre-sampling visit questions in advance and return these to your External Verifier two weeks before the sampling activity and visit takes place.

By working through these questions before the sampling activity and visit, you will have the opportunity to highlight any concerns or areas for support. This helps you shape the focus of External Verification in a way that is most meaningful for your centre. This will also help your EV to understand how your centre manages that process, or where any obstacles are being encountered so that support can be offered.

Important: Completion of the **pre-sampling visit questions** is a **mandatory requirement** of the External Verification sampling activity. The information provided helps the EV prepare for the sampling activity and visit, identify areas for discussion and ensure that sampling activities are planned effectively. Centres are therefore expected to complete and return the questionnaire by the requested deadline in advance of the scheduled sampling activity and visit.

7. Sampling requirements

Your EV will want to see evidence of teaching, learning, assessment, feedback and the centre's internal quality assurance processes and documentation. The EV sampling activity and visit is designed to gain a holistic overview of the delivery and assessment standards operating within the centre. These are the key components of assessment evidence we request:

- A sample of evidence that captures **each qualification** delivered within the centre AND
- A sample of evidence that captures **each registered tutor assessing for each qualification level they teach and assess** within the centre AND
- A sample of evidence that shows a **diverse range of candidate ability**

Baseline Sampling

As part of CPCAB's quality assurance arrangements, centres are required to provide a minimum **baseline sample of four candidate portfolios (or samples of work) per tutor, per qualification level**. This enables the External Verifier (EV) to confirm that assessment decisions are accurate, consistent and meet qualification requirements.

- **Selection:** Your EV will select the names of the candidates they wish to review and will ask you to arrange for these samples to be made available for them. The sample should contain evidence that reflects the assessment decisions of each tutor delivering on each registered qualification. This should include constructive, specific, and developmental feedback to the candidate.
- **Multiple Groups:** If the same tutor teaches multiple groups at the same level (e.g., 3 groups of CSK-L2), your EV will wish to see the assessed work of 4 candidates from this tutor. This may be a sample across the qualification level or a single group. Please note: Your EV may wish to review additional samples, so please ensure these can be made readily available for your EV.
- **Multiple Levels:** If the same tutor teaches at different levels, your EV will need samples from 4 candidates at each level.
- **Large Groups:** Your EV might ask for more than 4 samples for large groups. They may wish to select some additional portfolios or pieces of evidence and go beyond the minimum requirements of 4 samples. If this is requested, your EV will liaise with you.
- **Cross-Section of Ability:** Your EV will prefer to see a mix of abilities (weak, strong, borderline) for each qualification. If the selected candidates do not meet this, discuss this with your EV. Flexibility in sampling is allowed due to the diversity of centres.

- **Sampling Requirements:** If you use an e-portfolio system, please ensure that candidate samples are provided to your EV at least 2 weeks before the sampling visit. This is particularly important if your sampling visit is online, as it allows the EV time to sample the work and provide feedback during their sampling visit.

Other documents your EV will request

- Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) documentation – See [Part 8](#) for more detailed information
- The centre's processes for checking entry requirements have been met, or the recognition of prior learning (RPL) for TC-L4 year 2 candidates (where appropriate). They will also wish to review the centre's provision and the recording of any reasonable adjustments arranged for internal assessment. Please ensure this evidence is provided for them.
- The EV may request to see copies of schemes of work, CPD records and any centre policies, particularly if these have been updated recently.

Additional Sampling

In most cases, this baseline sample will provide sufficient assurance. However, there may be occasions when the EV or CPCAB requires additional sampling activity.

Widening the Sample Before a Sampling Visit

In some circumstances, CPCAB may request a larger sample before the sampling activity and visit takes place. This is typically where previous quality assurance activities have identified increased risk, for example:

- Previous incorrect marking or incorrect results.
- Active sanctions or compliance concerns.
- Ongoing maladministration or malpractice investigations.
- Candidate complaints relating to assessment.
- Significant changes to staffing or delivery.
- Previous concerns regarding assessment consistency.

Where additional sampling is required, centres will be informed in advance and provided with details of the additional candidate work required.

Widening the Sample During a Sampling Visit

Your EV may decide to widen the sample during the sampling activity and visit if concerns arise that mean the baseline sample no longer provides sufficient assurance. Examples may include:

- Inconsistent assessment decisions between tutors.
- Concerns about the accuracy of marking.
- Missing or insufficient assessment evidence.
- Limited developmental feedback to candidates.
- Large cohorts or fast-track delivery models.

- Evidence suggesting assessment decisions may not be consistent across the cohort.

Where this occurs, the EV may request additional candidate work, assessment records or portfolios to gain a fuller understanding of assessment practice.

Re-Sampling or Additional Sampling After a Sampling visit

Following review of the EV report, CPCAB may require further sampling activity if additional assurance is needed. This may involve:

- Re-sampling the same candidate work previously reviewed.
- Sampling additional candidates.
- Reviewing further evidence from a tutor, qualification level or wider provision.

This is undertaken where there is a need to confirm the accuracy and consistency of assessment decisions, ensure previous actions have been addressed, or protect candidates from the risk of incorrect results.

Where re-sampling or additional sampling is required, CPCAB will issue a formal **Quality Assurance Compliance Action** setting out the evidence required, the applicable deadline and any further sampling activity. CPCAB will assess the associated risks and determine whether certification must be temporarily restricted. Any restriction will remain in place until CPCAB is satisfied that assessment decisions are valid, fair, consistent and meet qualification requirements.

Please note: Where sampling identifies concerns about assessment decisions, additional quality assurance actions may also be required to support the centre in addressing any identified concerns.

Centre Responsibilities

Centres should ensure that requested candidate work, assessment records and IQA documentation can be made available promptly if additional sampling is required.

8. Internal Quality Assurance (IQA)

As part of the External Verification process, your EV will review the effectiveness of your centre's Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) arrangements. Robust IQA is a key requirement of CPCAB's Centre Assessment Standards Scrutiny Strategy (CASS) and plays a vital role in ensuring that assessment decisions are valid, reliable, fair and consistent.

Internal Moderation (IM)

Your EV will request evidence of **Internal Moderation (IM)** for each tutor delivering a qualification.

Internal Moderation is the process by which an appropriately qualified Internal Moderator reviews tutor assessment decisions to ensure that:

- Assessment decisions are accurate, fair and consistent.
- Qualification requirements are being applied correctly.
- Assessment decisions are made at the appropriate qualification level.
- Candidates are receiving accurate, constructive and developmental feedback.
- Assessment standards are being applied consistently across groups and tutors.

Certain qualifications have specific moderation requirements, including qualifications where Internal Moderation is required for every candidate group. Centres should refer to the [CPCAB IQA Policy](#) for qualification-specific requirements and minimum moderation expectations.

Internal Verification (IV)

Your EV will also request evidence that **Internal Verification (IV)** has taken place for each qualification delivered by the centre.

Internal Verification provides oversight of the quality of qualification delivery and assessment processes within the centre. It is normally completed at least annually for each qualification and helps ensure that:

- Qualification requirements are being met.
- Assessment processes are robust and effective.
- Internal Moderation arrangements are operating appropriately.
- Tutors and assessors are supported to maintain consistent national standards.
- Centre policies and quality assurance procedures are being followed.

Centres should refer to the [CPCAB IQA Policy](#) for qualification-specific requirements and minimum internal verification expectations.

Why is IQA Important?

Effective IQA assures that assessment decisions can be trusted and that candidates are being assessed fairly and consistently. It is also an important safeguard for candidates, helping to identify and address issues before certification is claimed.

Where IQA arrangements are absent, incomplete or ineffective, there may be an increased risk of:

- Inconsistent assessment decisions.
- Candidates receiving incorrect results.
- Qualification requirements not being fully met.
- Delays to certification.

If IQA Requirements Are Not Met

If your EV identifies that required Internal Moderation or Internal Verification activity has not taken place, or that the evidence provided is insufficient, this will be recorded within the EV report and may result in a **CPCAB Quality Assurance Compliance Action** being issued.

Depending on the nature and severity of the concern, CPCAB may require:

- Additional IQA evidence to be submitted.
- Further sampling of candidate work.
- Additional support from the CPCAB CQP for Quality Assurance.
- Enhanced monitoring of the centre.
- Restrictions on certification until sufficient assurance has been obtained.

Where concerns can be resolved within agreed timescales, CPCAB will work collaboratively with centres to provide guidance and support. However, centres are reminded that completion of **IQA activity is a mandatory requirement** and forms part of the centre's ongoing compliance with CPCAB approval requirements.

9. Centre Responsibilities to Support the Sampling Activity and Visit

To support a smooth, efficient and collaborative External Verification (EV) process, Centres are asked to ensure the following arrangements are in place before the sampling activity and visit. These preparations will help your External Verifier conduct the review effectively and minimise any delays during the verification process.

Centre responsibilities:

- Ensure all documentation requested is available for the sampling activity and visit.
- Ensure that the pre-visit questionnaire has been completed within the deadline submitted.
- For in-person visits, please provide a suitable room to provide enough working space for your EV to speak with staff and look at candidate evidence comfortably.
- If the sampling activity and visit are online, please ensure access to candidate portfolios and other requested documentation, including IQA evidence, is provided to your EV **at least 2 weeks** before the online visit.
- To notify and arrange availability of centre management staff, centre coordinators, any staff involved in the internal quality procedures, tutors, assessors and candidates to meet with your EV during the visit. If for any reason a candidate group is not available for both types of visits, candidate evaluations will need to be completed from the group the EV would have selected to meet. Please see [Appendix 2](#) for a blank proforma you may wish to use.
- Ensure any actions from the previous sampling activity and visit have been reviewed and implemented.

- Work collaboratively with your EV following feedback if an action plan needs drafting to address any areas of development or immediate actions to meet all CPCAB qualification and quality assurance requirements.
- For any candidates registered before **September 1st 2024**, confirm with your EV if you have any candidates that are still required to resit the External Assessment (EA).

10. The External Verification Sampling Report

Following the completion of the External Verification (EV) sampling activity, including the visit, your EV will complete an **External Verifier Sampling Report**. This report incorporates the information provided by the centre within the pre-sampling visit questionnaire and records the outcomes of the sampling activity, including strengths, areas of good practice, observations, actions and recommendations.

The report is an important part of CPCAB's quality assurance framework and is designed to support centres in maintaining and continuously improving the quality of delivery, assessment and Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) practices. As well as recognising good practice within the centre. The report provides constructive feedback and guidance where improvements may be required.

Where concerns are identified, the report will clearly outline any actions required and the rationale for these. This may include situations where:

- Assessment practice requires further development or clarification.
- Internal Quality Assurance requirements have not been fully met.
- Baseline sampling requirements have not been achieved.
- Additional evidence or sampling is required to provide sufficient assurance.
- Risks have been identified that may affect assessment validity, qualification standards or candidate outcomes.

Where additional support or corrective action is required, CPCAB will work collaboratively with centres to help address identified concerns. Depending on the level of risk identified, further quality assurance activity may be required, such as additional sampling, the submission of further evidence, enhanced monitoring, certification restriction or support from a member of the Quality Assurance team.

The report is structured around the key quality assurance requirements that centres must meet and provides evidence of how these standards have been reviewed during the EV sampling activity. It also includes an update on any actions identified during previous sampling activities and visits, where applicable.

All EV reports are subject to a quality assurance review by CPCAB before being issued to centres. This helps ensure consistency, accuracy and fairness across all reports. Where significant concerns are identified, or where we believe additional support would be beneficial, the appropriate CPCAB team will contact your centre directly to discuss the findings and agree any next steps. The CPCAB Quality Assurance Team will then assign a centre status rating – see below.

11. Centre Status Ratings

At CPCAB, we are committed to working in partnership with our centres to support high-quality delivery and positive outcomes for learners. As part of this commitment, we are introducing Centre Status Ratings to provide clear, consistent feedback on how centres are meeting approval requirements, recognise effective practice and identify where additional support may be helpful. Our aim is to ensure centres understand how their quality assurance activity is viewed and feel supported to uphold high standards.

From **September 2026**, CPCAB will begin sharing the **CPCAB-issued Centre Status Rating** with all approved centres.

This reflects our commitment to providing centres with clear, transparent feedback about their current approval status and helping them understand where practice is effective and where further support may be beneficial.

By sharing Centre Status Ratings, we aim to:

- **acknowledge and celebrate** good practice where centres are delivering and assessing our qualifications effectively; and
- **support continuous improvement** by identifying where additional guidance or reassurance may be helpful.

Where support needs are identified, this may include follow-up from your **assigned Counselling Qualifications Professional (CQP)** centre support or support from the **Quality Assurance (QA) team**. Our intention is always to provide constructive and proportionate support, tailored to the needs of each centre.

Where a centre receives a **higher status rating**, this indicates that some areas need timely attention. In these situations, we will work closely with the centre to agree on the next steps, with a shared focus on maintaining the **quality and integrity of our qualifications** and ensuring a positive experience for learners.

Centre status ratings are reviewed throughout the year and may increase or decrease depending on centre engagement, evidence produced, and the outcome of quality assurance activity.

Centre Status Ratings

The Centre Status Ratings are defined as follows:

- **1 – Meeting requirements**
The centre is meeting approval requirements and may be well placed to share examples of good practice.
- **2 – Additional support or remedial action is required**
Some areas for improvement have been identified. Targeted support and/or remedial activity will be agreed to help the centre address these and maintain the required standards
- **3 – Priority support required**
Areas requiring prompt action have been identified. CPCAB will work closely with the centre to agree appropriate actions and provide additional quality assurance support to address these and maintain the quality of provision. Centre Status Ratings are reviewed throughout the year and may increase or decrease depending on quality assurance evidence, improvements made by the centre and the outcome of subsequent quality assurance activity.

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Our Approach

The sharing of Centre Status Ratings forms part of CPCAB's **collaborative and transparent quality assurance approach**. It enables CPCAB to:

- put appropriate support in place as early as possible;
- work proactively and constructively with centres and
- maintain open, professional, and trusting working relationships.

Process

Following receipt of the **External Verifier (EV) sampling report**, the **CPCAB Quality Assurance (QA) team** reviews the report alongside other relevant quality assurance information before confirming the Centre Status Rating.

- Once confirmed by CPCAB's Quality Assurance Team, the Centre Status Rating will be recorded in the appropriate section of the final EV report issued to the centre.
- Please note that the **Centre Status Rating is determined by CPCAB**, through review of EV activity, centre engagement and IQA evidence, and wider assurance information, and **is not assigned by the External Verifier**.

- Centres will receive updated status information following EV activity or where significant quality assurance concerns or improvements are identified.

We encourage you to contact the CPCAB Quality Assurance Team on verification@cpcab.co.uk if you have any questions regarding your centre status rating.

12. Annual Practising Certificate (APC)

When you gain centre recognition with us you receive initial approval to run for one year. If the External Verification sampling activities, visits and the EV sampling report at the end of the year are satisfactory and you have declared an Annual Centre Declaration of Compliance on the CPCAB portal, you will receive an Annual Practising Certificate (APC) for the following year. However, if the EV sampling report identifies major problems, the APC can be withheld until these problems have been rectified. We will offer appropriate support.

Appendix 1: Pre-Sampling visit Questions and Guidance

Across the following pages is an example of the pre-sampling visit questions centres are required to complete and send to your EV before the planned sampling activity and visit.

***Please note that this does not include all areas of the sampling report.**

3.1 Candidate registration		
	Please select	Centre description/comments
Are all groups running at the centre registered on the CPCAB Portal?	Yes/No/In-progress	You have 6 weeks to register your group(s), please ensure the portal is regularly updated.
Is/are the tutor(s) registered to the group the one(s) teaching it?	Yes/No	Please ensure that the tutors named on the portal are the ones actually teaching; update the portal promptly when tutors have changed.
Has the centre informed CPCAB of any tutor changes? (e.g. new tutors, tutors leaving)	Yes/No/NA	If you need to make any changes, please ensure that you contact and update contact@cpcab.co.uk . This is incredibly <u>important</u> to ensure CPCAB holds the correct details for each group. This could be classed as maladministration if the tutors' teaching and assessing do not match what has been listed on the CPCAB portal. See above.
Is the centre following the guidelines on checking candidates meet CPCAB entry requirements?	Yes/No	Check the CPCAB Entry Requirements and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy located here for further information
Are centre staff implementing the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) (TC-L4 year 2 only)?	Yes/No/NA	
Are there any problems with the registration process?	Yes/No	
		Please ensure that you update your EV if you have experienced any issues with registration so we can ensure we can provide any support needed.

3.2 Programme delivery		
	Please select	Centre description/comments
Is there a candidate handbook available for each qualification?	Yes/No	A candidate handbook for each qualification should include details such as an overview of the qualification, the qualification structure, what coursework will be expected from them and how they will be assessed through Internal processes. Your EV may ask to see a copy during the sampling visit.
Are tutors and candidates aware of all the qualification(s) requirements (e.g. client hours, group training supervision, personal therapy)?	Yes/No	This would be outlined in the candidate handbook, including Additional Qualification requirements, such as the number of client hours required, counselling clinical supervision, group training supervision, personal therapy etc.
Are teaching hours meeting the required GLH of the qualification(s), whether in-person, blended or online?	Yes/No	Tutors and centre staff should understand the difference between GLH (Guided Learning Hours) and TQT (Total Qualification Time) and what each constitutes. GLH is the actual number of hours where a tutor is present in real time, and this will need to be confirmed with the EV. If there has been a pause in teaching resulting in any shortfall, you will need to provide a rationale to CPCAB for how the GLH will eventually be achieved.
Are centre staff and all tutors who are working in an online/blended format aware of, and working within, CPCAB's Quality Framework for Online Delivery ?	Yes/No	If any teaching hours are delivered online (as approved with CPCAB), centre staff will need to be aware of and working according to the CPCAB's Quality Framework for Online Delivery . Further details are also available in the application for online delivery.
Is there an up-to-date scheme of work for each qualification?	Yes/No/In-progress	As a tutor, your centre should be providing an up-to-date scheme of work, which might include an outline of what will be covered, and in which lessons, together with references to learning outcomes for each lesson and how candidates will be assessed. There might also be a list of resources and activities to be used in the lessons, as well as guidance on the most appropriate teaching methods for covering certain areas.
Are tutors and candidates aware of the portfolio and assessment evidence requirements?	Yes/No	
Are systems in place to record and monitor candidate attendance?	Yes/No	E.g. college attendance systems, manual registers. Please be aware of the centre's minimum attendance requirements.

Is the appropriateness of placements being evaluated and monitored? (Levels 4-6 only)	Yes/No/NA	The EV may ask how you monitor student placements and if there are any issues, how these might be resolved between the student, the agency, and the centre (for example, the use of a 3 or 4-way agreement is considered best practice).
Are there arrangements in place to support candidates (tutorials, learning support)?	Yes/No	Are tutorials held every term or on an ad-hoc basis? Are reasonable adjustments provided for candidates with additional support needs?
What plans and resources do you have in place for supporting deferred candidates who have not yet met the qualification requirements (e.g. placement hours)? Please refer to Supporting Deferred Candidates - CPCAB	E.g. candidates can have up to a maximum of one year after the end of their course to complete outstanding client hours. It is advisable that tutors and candidates stay in contact during this time and that realistic deadlines are agreed.	

3.3 Internal assessment		
	Please select	Centre description/comments
Have tutors met CPCAB standardisation requirements?	Yes/No/In-progress	Standardisation of tutors is mandatory and forms part of your centre application and annual declaration of compliance. Please see our terms and conditions for centres and tutors. For those tutors who are not required to attend in a particular year, your EV will ask to see evidence that cascade training has taken place by an attending tutor. We have a proforma you may wish to use to capture this evidence on our website available here.
Are tutors and candidates aware of and working to the minimum assessment requirements for each qualification?	Yes/No	As part of the sampling visit, the EV will be checking that both tutors and their candidates are working at the minimum level appropriate for each qualification.
Are tutors assessing to the right level for each qualification?	Yes/No	The assessing will also need to be at the appropriate level for the qualification being taught. Internal Quality Assurance practices will be looked at by the EV to ensure activities are taking place to ensure consistency and standardisation across tutors where applicable (see the IQA section below).
Are there any concerns with the understanding of the internal assessment process? (By tutors and candidates). Do centre staff understand the application of Reasonable Adjustments in internal assessment?	Yes/No Yes/No	For example, are candidates/tutors aware of the minimum amount of evidence required per criterion? Please see CPCAB's Policy
Is the process for contraindications understood and where contraindications have been identified, is there a clear action plan to address these?	Yes/No	For example, have tutorials taken place and been documented to support candidates on areas of concern? Has further assessed work been assigned to the candidate. Please refer also to the example completion statement in the tutor guides.
Are Candidate Learning Records (CLRs) complete, and where necessary, completion statements signed?	Yes/No/In-progress	Candidate Learning Records (CLRs) - by "complete" we mean that there are the correct number of pieces of evidence for each criterion (usually 2) there is evidence for all three types of coursework (i.e. documents, tutor observation and testimony) and completion statements have been signed by both the tutor and candidate. If there are any contraindications present, there are clear follow-up actions proposed.

Are clear processes in place for uploading accurate Internal Assessment results to the CPCAB Portal?	Yes/No	
Does the evidence provided for the external verification sample include all registered tutors from the centre and each qualification level taught?	Yes/No	

3.4 Internal Quality Assurance (IQA)	
	Centre description/comments
How is Internal Moderation carried out and how is it recorded?	The person with overall responsibility for Internal Moderation may or may not be the same as the person responsible for Internal Verification. The CPCAB's IQA Policy includes example proformas for an IM sampling grid and moderation report. The Internal Moderator is expected to have recognised teaching/assessment qualifications or their equivalent and needs to be qualified in the subject area they are internally moderating.
How is Internal Verification/IQA carried out and how is it recorded?	The EV will want to know who is also responsible for Internal Verification/Internal Quality Assurance and how this is done within the centre. Again, the CPCAB's IQA Policy is available to help.
Are centre staff aware of and working to the requirements of CPCAB's IQA Policy ?	Please refer to the IQA policy
Are centre IM/IV records up to date and being provided to the EV as part of this sampling activity?	It is important that IQA evidence is shared with the EV during the sampling visit. Please refer to Part 8

3.5 Centre management		
	Please select	Centre description/comments
Are candidates aware of the centre appeals and complaints procedures?	Yes/No	We encourage centres to ensure that candidates have access to a copy of the centre complaints and appeals policies and that these are easily accessible
Are there any current appeals or complaints?	Yes/No	Your EV will ask if there are any current appeals or complaints at the centre. It is important that CPCAB are advised to enable us to provide support and review should this be escalated. The EV is not there to get directly involved with complaints and appeals and does not have a role within the centre appeals or complaints processes. Please see our policy for Internal Assessment Appeals and Complaints Guidance for Centres.
Have there been any issues with malpractice/maladministration?	Yes/No	Please see our policy for Malpractice/Maladministration so you are fully aware of the difference.
Have any changes been made to centre policies since they were last submitted to CPCAB?	Yes/No	This might include changes to the appeals and complaints procedures. Anything that might be relevant to the annual declaration. Anything that might affect candidates and an updated copy will need to be submitted to CPCAB for approval.
Are candidate placements being established, monitored and documented appropriately? E.g. use of multi-party contracts, up-to-date logs, cause for concern meetings.	Yes/No/NA	Your EV might discuss this with you, making reference to the 3 or 4-way agreement, that should be signed by the candidate, agency, college tutor and agency supervisor. Perhaps think about how previous concerns raised by candidates were resolved.
Is the centre aware of the CPCAB conflict of interest policy and have any conflicts been declared to CPCAB?	Yes/No	Please see CPCAB's Conflict of Interest Policy
Are candidate recruitment processes effective and sustaining an ample flow of new candidates?	Yes/No/ Somewhat	
Are candidate retention and achievement rates within the centres expected levels?	Yes/No	For example, is the centre tracking onward progression of candidates via end of course questionnaires. Please see the candidate feedback form that can be used or adapted as an example in appendix 1 .

Is candidate progression being monitored and demonstrating successful onward progress to education, or employment?	Yes/No	
Are tutor recruitment and retention successful and providing sufficient resource for courses to flourish?	Yes/No	
Are tutor support arrangements, inductions and team communication appropriate to ensure team cohesion and address concerns?	Yes/No/In-progress	
Does the centre have an up-to-date contingency plan covering unexpected events, tutor absence, etc to ensure learner needs are protected?	Yes/No	

3.7 For TC-L4 BACP Approved Practitioner Qualification (APQ) only		
	Please select	Centre description/comments
Have there been changes to the tutor team since the course began?	Yes/No	The EV will want to know if any new tutors have replaced those indicated at registration and it is important CPCAB are kept up to date with any changes throughout the course. It is also important to ensure that current and replacement tutors meet the qualification requirements regarding BACP membership
Are all tutors current members of BACP?	Yes/No	The qualification requires all students to be members of BACP. It is good practice for centres to keep records.
Are candidates applying for and maintaining BACP Student membership throughout their qualification?	Yes/No/In-progress	The qualification requires candidates to have blended delivery and a blended (hybrid) placement which includes both in-person and online counselling. This might be provided in one or more placement agencies. We are interested to understand whether this presents any challenges or opportunities. For example, sourcing suitable agencies, managing candidate's placement workloads etc.
Does the centre keep records of students' BACP membership numbers?	Yes/No	
Does the centre offer blended delivery for the BACP APQ?	Yes/No	
Does the centre ensure all requirements specific to the BACP APQ are met, for example: - BACP placement supervision ratio - incorporating the BACP ethical framework into delivery - incorporating OPT Core competencies into delivery	Yes/No	Centres should be aware of the BACP placement supervision ratio. The EV will want to know that the centre is aware of this ratio and understand how this is being monitored at the centre. The EV will want to see examples of candidates' work demonstrating where tutors have been teaching the BACP Ethical Framework and OPT Core competencies. The EV could also discuss with tutors how they embed these frameworks
Does the centre prepare candidates well for the BACP Certificate of Proficiency (CoP) requirements?	Yes/No/In-progress	
Does the centre support candidates in their blended placements and ensure these are tracked correctly?	Yes/No/In-progress	

Does the centre and its candidates gain added value from the BACP APQ?	Yes/No/ Somewhat	The person facilitating the BACP CoP may not be the course tutor/s. The EV will want to refer to the CoP guidance document and be satisfied that the centre staff understand CoP processes for booking, including ensuring that BACP are given notice of numbers as requested. The EV will want to ensure that centre staff understand the processes for submitting CoP results.
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APPENDIX 2

Candidate Feedback Form

Dear Candidate,

We hope you have enjoyed your training. It would help us if you could spare a few minutes to complete this form. You can include your name and centre details if you like or keep your feedback confidential. Your comments will help us to continue to introduce improvements to our qualifications.

Name of the qualification						
Date you started						
Date your course will finish						
Today's date						
1. In the questions below, please tick the box that best matches your experience of the qualification.	Definitely agree	Slightly agree	Not sure	Slightly disagree	Definitely disagree	Doesn't apply
The title of the qualification reflected the content accurately						
The purpose of the qualification was clear and accurate						
The demands of the qualification were what I expected						
The learning time of the qualification was appropriate						
The knowledge and skills covered were appropriate for the stated purpose						
The learning outcomes and assessment criteria were clear and understandable						
The assessment arrangements allowed me to demonstrate my knowledge and skills						
The qualification was flexible enough to accommodate my learning style and individual needs						
The qualification support documents were sufficient and appropriate						
The qualification allowed me to achieve my objectives						
I have enjoyed my study						
Any other comments about the qualification						

In questions 2 and 3, please tick all boxes that apply to you.

2. What was your motivation for undertaking this qualification?

Please tick all that apply	✓
Knowledge and skills for an existing job or role	
Gain new employment	
Progress to a higher level of training or learning	
Qualify as a professional counsellor	
As part of continuing professional development	

3. Where do you intend to progress once you have completed this qualification?

1	Employment as a Counsellor (FT, PT or Self Employed)	7	Further Study in HE (Non-Counselling related subjects)
2	Employment within Allied Professions (FT, PT or Self Employed)	8	Voluntary Work – Counselling Sector
3	Employment in Non-Allied Professions Sector (FT, PT or Self Employed)	9	Voluntary Work – Allied Professions*
4	Further Study in FE (Counselling related subjects)	10	Voluntary Work – Non-Counselling/Allied Professions
5	Further Study in HE (Counselling related subjects)	11	Not in employment
6	Further Study in FE (Non-Counselling related subjects)	12	Unknown

*Examples of allied professions (not an exhaustive list):

- Advice and advocacy support
- Befriender role
- Care worker
- Childline administrator
- Contact centre advisor
- Customer facing role
- Customer relations advisor
- Customer service representative/ advisor/ officer
- Family support worker
- Healthcare professionals
- Helpline operator
- Home care assistant
- Housing support worker
- Mentoring and support worker
- Promotion in current role
- Public services, including probation, substance misuse agencies and criminal justice sector
- Roles in health and social care
- Welfare and advice worker
- Youth worker

4. If there is anything else you'd like to add, please put your comments here (you can use another sheet of paper if you like)

General comments

5. You don't have to fill in these boxes but if you do, we won't reveal your identity to anyone outside of the CPCAB quality assurance team.

Your name	
Name of your centre	

Thank you for your help. Please give this form back to your tutor, who will send it directly to the CPCAB External Verifier.