



# Consortium Quality Assurance Policy

---

## Aims

The consortium takes pride in the quality of our courses and regulated qualifications which we will be delivering under a grant scheme from the Department for Education (DfE). To do this we must have a thorough method of verifying both the quality of training and the assessment of learners. This policy aims to establish the mechanisms for this quality assurance and is monitored by the Quality Assurance Officer within the Consortium Lead organisation.

All staff and Consortium Members involved in the delivery of our courses in any form should be aware of this policy and work to its aims. This should be read in conjunction with the Quality Assurance Procedure. Delivery is performed by all Consortium Members, assessments are all undertaken by the Consortium Lead alone.

## Quality Assurance Officer

The Quality Assurance Officer works for the Consortium Lead, they are responsible for monitoring the quality of the performance (delivery and assessment) of the consortium. In undertaking the Quality Assurance activities, they complete a Monitoring Log of all activities, which includes any actions that need to be undertaken as a result, in addition to the Verification of Achievement Record when verifying assessments. This log is monitored by the CEO and the Governing Body.

## The Internal Verifier

The Internal Verifier for the company verifies the assessments undertaken by our own assessors.

## Consortium Member Checks

To comply with the requirements of delivering regulated qualifications, in addition to ensuring quality assurance of delivery, Consortium Members are background checked. This includes (in line with Ofqual requirements) data protection investigations, equalities legislation investigations, Ofqual findings and OfSTED (if relevant) outcomes. Consortium Members are also required to sign a Service Level Agreement, which includes a requirement to conform to consortium policies and procedures (including quality assurance). Consortium Members not meeting these requirements will be unable to be a part of the consortium.

## Trainer Checks

Prospective trainers are put forward by Consortium Members as suitable high quality trainers with relevant experience. They complete a Trainer Application Form, which includes a self-report on their trainer qualification/training, a statement relating to whether they have had any qualification delivery

adverse findings made against them and a 500-word pen portrait. This pen portrait is assessed against the DfE criteria by the CEO:

- Understanding of the diversity of educational settings
- Engaging with senior education staff with different backgrounds, skills and experience and who have differing views of mental health
- Supporting senior education leaders to foster cultural and organisational change

If they feel there is insufficient evidence of these bullet points, then feedback will be given to the Consortium Member to allow the Trainer to resubmit their application. If this cannot be evidenced to a suitable level, then the Consortium Lead will decline the application. These pen portraits are then subject to the DfE quality assurance process and can be declined as part of that.

In addition, we expect part of the courses to be delivered by a Subject Matter Expert. This is identified on the Trainer Application Form as someone who have knowledge of:

- evidence-based strategies for "managing their own mental health and develop their own coping strategies"
- thresholds to statutory services
- different interventions that may be offered
- different professionals/services (difference between different professionals)
- range of mental health difficulties relevant to the setting and factors/events etc that can affect them
- tools used to assess mental health difficulties

Professionals, such as Educational Psychologist, Clinical Psychologist or Therapists will have this experience level as part of their professional qualification. They are still required to evidence the DfE criteria for trainers in addition to their Subject Matter Expertise.

All Trainers are then subject to background checks (in line with Ofqual requirements) of data protection investigations, equalities legislation investigations, Ofqual findings and OfSTED (if relevant) outcomes.

## **Material familiarisation**

To support high levels of fidelity across the consortium, all approved trainers will be required to attend familiarisation sessions on using the materials. They are unable to deliver on a course if they have not attended these sessions. The sessions are aimed at familiarising the Trainers with the course materials, the activities on the course and the outcomes of each activity.

Course materials developed by the consortium consist of:

- Facilitator's Guide – featuring topic, activity details, images of relevant slides used, suggested timings and activity outcome;
- PowerPoint Slides;
- Learner's Handbook – a handbook for the learner to work through on the course and also record their reflections and action plans for each module;
- Online audits – a before and after skills self-audit and a setting audit based on the PHE principles;
- Downloadable resources – materials referred to in activities on the course, such as a stress risk assessment, resource quality assessment tool or even a simple role description;

- Portfolio and Portfolio Guidance – a reflective portfolio to evidence applying the learning in their work, acts as the assessment of the qualification.

Trainers are able to adapt an activity or add relevant information to meet the needs of the cohort of learners they are working with, however the outcomes of each activity must be met.

These familiarisation sessions are delivered by the Consortium Lead and also act as another level of quality assurance of Trainers. As part of the sessions, Trainers are expected to reflect on how they would adapt activities to meet learner needs and how they would deliver the sessions. This enables the Consortium Lead to assess their competency and identify any concerns around Trainers first-hand.

## Data Monitoring

Participants in the programme complete a before and after skills self-audit based on the DfE specification of training materials. These are completed by learners both before and after the course via the [mentalhealthlead.com](http://mentalhealthlead.com) website. This data is used to inform training content, but is also used to monitor immediate impact of the course by the Consortium Lead.

Following completion of the course, the learner completes a feedback form on the website based on the DfE feedback requirements. This data is used to inform future delivery and content improvements as part of the continuous review cycle, but is also used to monitor immediate impact of the course by the Consortium Lead. Compiled data is also reported the DfE in accordance with their requirements.

Data is extracted by the Admin Officer into spreadsheets. The Quality Assurance Officer then uses this compiled data to report on Consortium Member, Trainer, cohort and course-level impacts. Summary data is reported to Consortium Members and the Governing Body. More detailed data can be used to identify risks and trigger a change in the Trainer/Consortium Member rating (see below) and related actions.

## Monitoring of Training Delivery

It is recommended (unless there is a very small cohort) that all courses are delivered by two trainers. Aside from facilitating the support and activities, this acts as an inherent quality assurance tool. Trainers with concerns are able to discuss them with either the Consortium Member, or the Consortium Lead, in the latter case the Consortium Lead's Whistleblowing Policy would apply.

The Quality Assurance Officer will establish a schedule for observing the delivery of courses by the consortium and consortium trainers. It is expected that every trainer in the consortium will be observed at least once over 3 years, although this may be increased or triggered depending on factors, such as number of courses offered, quality of learner feedback and number of trainers.

There may be occasions, for example where data (learner feedback scores, learner audits, assessments) or feedback suggest it is necessary, or if a complaint is made, that a trainer is additionally observed by the Quality Assurance Officer or the CEO.

These observations always provide written feedback to the trainer (copied to the Consortium Member) and may also include an action plan with time-related targets in the case of quality concerns. These will be linked to a rating as described below. In the case of serious deficiencies then the Quality Assurance Officer and the CEO can jointly agree to terminate the trainer's authority to deliver training or the Consortium Member's.

## **Pre-course Assessment Verification**

Assessments for courses are developed with standardised assessment information and marking criteria to enable consistency amongst our assessors. Information about the assessment process for all courses is shared at the start and signposts people to both the Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration policies.

The consortium support Reasonable Adjustments for Assessments due to factors like disability, personal circumstances or external forces. The Trainer will work with the Learner to identify the need as part of the delivery of the course. They liaise with the Quality Assurance Officer to ensure that the assessment remains fair and valid. For further details, please refer to the Reasonable Adjustments for Assessment Policy.

During the assessment process, there is a clear procedure in place to enable assessors to be able to give individual feedback to Learners.

## **Internal Verification of Assessments**

Assessors use the Marking Descriptors to assign marks to Learners for each of the assessment points. These are cross-referenced to the Unit criteria in the case of regulated qualifications. Assessments for qualifications are verified by our Quality Assurance Manager at a ratio of 20% (or 5 Learners) from a cohort. For new assessors 100% of the first two cohorts are assessed.

## **Standardisation and Moderation of Assessments**

On a rotation basis, assessors will joint assess assignments (normally via video or phone link) to ensure that assessors are confident in their ability to uniformly assess Learners. They are paired by the Internal Verifier and the assessors complete the Verification of Achievement Record jointly, noting any discrepancies.

Annual monitoring events between internal trainers and the Internal Verifier are undertaken to ensure consistency across the assessors. Assessors and verifiers will attend any awarding body standardisation events.

## **Consortium Member Conformance**

As part of the due diligence and registration process Consortium Members agree to abide by the policies and procedures of the Consortium in relation to the courses delivered as part of the contract, failure to comply to these can result in remedial action, including the possibility of deregistration.

## **Consortium Member/Assessor/Trainer rating**

Most of the time Consortium Members, assessors and trainers are rated green and the above timescales apply. However, there may be times, for example in the event of a less than excellent observation, or concerns are identified in feedback or data, that Consortium Members, assessors or trainers are rated amber or red by the Quality Assurance Officer (with input from the Internal Verifier as appropriate). Depending on the nature of the concern, an investigation may need to be carried out in accordance with the Consortium Lead's policy to understand the context of the feedback or complaint. Trainers may be suspended from delivery to protect both themselves and the consortium if necessary.

A change in rating level will trigger a response:

- **Amber rating** – implies that increased monitoring or additional training is happening with the expectation that standards will improve in 3 months (or 3 courses, whichever is longer). This will require conformance with a written action plan provided by the Quality Assurance Officer or CEO and agreed with the Trainer. The Consortium Member may be involved in this conversation, however the action plan is an agreement directly between the Trainer and the Quality Assurance Officer or CEO. Assuming improvement is made they will then return to Green rating. These are reported to the Governing Body by the Quality Assurance Officer.
- **Red rating** – implies that immediate actions are required to avoid sanctions or termination of contract or trainer registration. Improvement is required in 2-4 weeks or the next course, whichever is longer. This will require conformance with a written action plan provided by the Quality Assurance Officer or CEO and agreed with the Trainer. The Consortium Member is likely to be involved in this conversation, however the action plan is an agreement directly between the Trainer and the Quality Assurance Officer or CEO. Assuming improvement is made they will then return to Amber rating to ensure the improvement is embedded. These are reported to the CEO and the Governing Body by the Quality Assurance Officer. In the case of serious deficiencies then the Quality Assurance Officer and the CEO can jointly agree to terminate the trainer's authority to deliver training or the Consortium Member's.

Monitoring is reported to the Governing Body on a quarterly basis as standard. In the event improvement is not made, then the Quality Assurance Officer will liaise with the CEO to decide on appropriate action. The Consortium Member may be involved in the conversation, however the final decision rests with the Consortium Lead. The CEO will liaise/inform the DfE, Awarding Body and/or Governing Body as required.

There may be some concerns that could be raised that could potentially lead to an Adverse Effect. An Adverse Effect is defined as an event that:

- Gives rise to prejudice to Learners or potential Learners; or
- Adversely affects
  - The ability of the awarding organisation to undertake the development, delivery or award of qualifications in accordance with its Conditions of Recognition;
  - The standards of qualifications which the awarding organisation makes available or proposes to make available; or
  - Public confidence in qualifications.

If a potential Adverse Effect is identified, then the Adverse Effect Procedure will be instigated.

## Programme Review

It is an expectation that each of our courses are reviewed every three months. The Programme Review Evidence Proforma is used to collate evidence and feedback relating to the course/qualification by the Quality Assurance Officer. Refer to the Programme Review Procedure.

This Procedure may also be instigated on an *ad hoc* basis by very minor feedback (e.g. small wording changes) or major feedback (e.g. there is a risk that this will affect multiple learners).

## **Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations**

Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations involve adaptations to the formal assessment of the qualification. These are submitted to Open Awards as the awarding body and subject to their quality assurance processes.

## **Review**

This policy will be reviewed biannually.

July 2021