

# BTEC Programmes Centre Handbook for International Centres 2006/7

Quality Assurance and Certification  
of International Centres



## Introduction

1. This handbook is first published September 2006 for use during the period September 2006 to August 2007. An updated edition will then be issued.
2. The purpose of the book is to provide a short overview of what international centres need to do to gain and retain clearance to certificate their approved BTEC programmes. It covers:
  - the operation of external verification and quality assurance
  - a short guide to programme administration and delivery.
3. This document addresses the actions that centres need to take to operate programmes effectively and identifies the key problems that centres may experience. Where there are detailed policy or implementation guides, then centres are referred to the relevant documents.
4. Centres should maintain regular contact with their regional office to ensure that they have all the information they need in order to operate their programmes effectively.

## Running Approved Programmes

5. Centres can only run BTEC programmes if they hold approval from Edexcel. This handbook is for approved centres. Centres interested in gaining approval should check the website ([www.edexcel-international.org/home](http://www.edexcel-international.org/home)) for their nearest regional office contact.
6. Centres may only operate the programmes for which they are approved and must only use the units and the programme structure shown on the programme definition. Centres that want to apply for new programmes or who are unsure of the details of the programme for which they are approved should contact their Regional Development Manager (RDM).
7. The programme definition may include specialist or optional units. Centres should only offer units to learners for which they have the necessary teachers, assessors and resources. There must be sufficient resources for all the learners recruited.
8. Centres must ensure that they have the full specification for the approved programme for and that this is made available to all the teachers and assessors on the programme. If the centre does not follow the requirements of the specification, then certification may be affected. Centres should consult the main Edexcel website ([www.edexcel.org.uk](http://www.edexcel.org.uk)) as well as the website given above to check for the specification and any updates.

## Administration of Learners

9. The administration of individual learners on BTEC programmes is very simple. Full instructions are given in the Information Manual, which can be found at <http://www.edexcel-international.org/sfc/colleges/infomanual/btec>. Most administration can be completed electronically using the Edexcel Online website. Approved centres should have been given access to this site. If you have any queries about access to Edexcel Online, contact your Regional Office in the first instance.
10. Centres are required to:
  - register learners with us within 60 days of when they start on the programme of learning giving their full details and an expected date of completion
  - once the learners have completed their programme, report their achievement accurately and claim certification.
11. Certification claims will be honoured if:
  - external verification has been fully completed and a 'Yes' to certification reported
  - there are no serious quality issues
  - there are no outstanding financial issues.
12. International centres should note the following key points:
  - registration is of individual learners and is non-transferable
  - higher fees are charged for late registrations (61-90 days after enrolment the original fee X 1.25, 91-120 days X 1.50, 121+ days after enrolment X 2)
  - the name given at registration will be used for certification; centres must check that the name as given in English is valid for the users of the certificate, for example, in spelling and word order
  - the date of birth must follow the UK date convention of day/month/year and the UK calendar
  - registrations cannot be deleted (fee reimbursed) if learners leave the programme, except if this is within 90 days of enrolment at the centre
  - external verifiers will check that learners on the programme are registered and will not permit certification if there are irregularities, for example work being presented for unregistered learners.

## Financial Administration

13. Edexcel's processes and terms are set out in the standard terms and conditions issued with approval. Centres requiring a copy of the terms and conditions should contact their RDM. Centres' regional contacts are able to confirm agreements on learner fees, payments for verification and for any other services.
14. Invoices are issued immediately after learner registrations are made and at the time that external verification takes place. Centres are expected to pay invoices in line with the terms. Centres that do not pay in full as required will be subject to withdrawal of services, including the provision of external verification. Failure to comply with terms and conditions can result in closure of approval.
15. Centres having any concerns about the accuracy of an invoice should contact their RDM immediately on its receipt.

## Delivery and Staff Development

16. In addition to the unit (course) specification, there are a number of policies that centres are required to observe. Policies are issued at <http://www.edexcel.org.uk/about/policies/centrepolicies>. Relevant current policies include:
- Reasonable adjustments and special considerations
  - Appeals
  - Malpractice
  - Electronic Assessment
  - Distance Assessment
  - Assessment and Grading
  - Accreditation of Prior Learning.
17. Guidance for planning delivery and assessment for international centres is available at [www.edexcel-international.org/sfc/colleges/infomanual/guidance-centres/](http://www.edexcel-international.org/sfc/colleges/infomanual/guidance-centres/) as follows:
- Guide to Assignment Design
  - Guide to Internal Verification
  - Guide to External Verification.
18. Support materials are available for some programmes through either the main Edexcel website or Edexcel Oncourse. In some cases these will need to be adapted for use in a particular country.
19. Centres in their first year of operating BTEC programmes are normally expected to complete a standard package of training to ensure that staff understand the requirements for delivery and assessment. Edexcel will expect the training to be completed promptly and prior to the first visit of the external verifier. The external verifier may check that training has been undertaken and that it is being followed.
20. New members of staff should be given an induction to BTEC programmes to include the use of the specification, requirements of assessment, assessment record keeping, standards and external verification. Training and updating may be requested through the centre's regional contact.
21. The external verifier may check the qualifications and experience of new staff and can decline certification if there is lack of continuity or if staff are not able to deliver the programme according to BTEC requirements and standards.

## External Verification and Quality Assurance

22. All BTEC centres and programmes are subject to quality assurance checks. The main form of quality assurance is through an external verifier. Centres may also be subject to checks through the Regional Office working with staff based centrally in London.
23. In order to prepare for external verification centres should refer to the *Guide to External Verification* (see para 17 above).
24. External verifiers are appointed for their subject expertise and their knowledge of BTEC programmes. Often external verifiers have current or recent experience in delivering programmes in the UK. All external verifiers undergo regular training and their work is monitored by senior staff. Their work and reports are monitored by a Lead Verifier and by Edexcel staff.

25. An external verifier is given a contract to undertake verification of a programme after learners have been registered with Edexcel. The contract will normally involve two visits during an 11-month period, ie 4 visits during the period of operation of a two year programme. Contracts are only issued for one 11-month period each time, but contracts may be renewed. We would expect an external verifier to remain with a programme for up to 4 years where possible. Centres are notified about their external verifier by their Regional Office.
26. Arrangements for external verification visits should be agreed shortly after approval and early in each registration period, as visits have to be booked months before they take place. External verifiers may visit a number of centres in one region on a visit. Centres should confirm with their Regional Office when visits normally take place and should ensure that visits can go ahead when planned. Edexcel cannot undertake to make visits on demand. Centres that cancel visits may incur additional costs and their certification status may be affected.
27. When a centre has had an acceptable EV rating against a BTEC programme for a minimum of two full cycles (ie after 2-4 years depending on level and duration), the number of visits may be reduced. External verification may make use of "distant sampling" - using electronic documents or posted written documents - where necessary. For example, if all materials were not available at the time of a visit, where remedial action is required or if in place of a visit where the number of visits has been reduced.
28. Before a visit each centre should receive a verification plan. The centre should use this and liaise with the Regional Office and/or external verifier to draw up a detailed plan for the day. Each visit will normally involve:
  - reviewing assessment materials (ie assignments briefs, learner work, assessment records)
  - reviewing course documentation (eg policy documents, course review documents)
  - meeting members of teaching staff and other key personnel in the centre
  - meeting learners
  - checking the arrangements for management of the programme and the adequacy of resources (eg library facilities, new teaching staff).
29. On the day of the visit the centre should ensure that the detailed plan is adhered to and that all materials are available for the external verifier to see.
30. At the end of the visit, the external verifier will provide feedback to the centre. The centre should ensure that the Programme Leader and any other key personnel are present. The external verifier will not normally provide a full report on the day, but will summarise the main action points. The external verifier should advise the centre on when the report can be completed after the visit. Reports are provided electronically.
31. An external verifier's report shows the status and quality of the programme, documents the materials reviewed during the visit and guides the centre towards the action required to improve the programme.
32. A programme may be graded A-E. In the first year of operation of a programme, it may be given a status of 'N - not graded' where the external verifier has not reviewed sufficient assessment materials to give a grade. Grades A-B are acceptable grades. Grades C-E indicate that the centre needs to take action in order to reach an acceptable level of operation. Where centres are awarded D or E grades, immediate action is required and the Regional Office may work with the centre to ensure that the action plan is being implemented.

33. A centre may only claim certificates for learners on a programme if that programme has been cleared, ie given 'Yes' for certification. All new programmes are blocked for certification and are only cleared once sufficient sampling has taken place. Sufficient sampling normally involves 4 visits for a programme of two-years duration. After this, centres that continue to have satisfactory grades continue to have clearance to certificate.
34. On each visit the external verifier starts from the last visit report and checks whether required action has been undertaken. If there is any part of the report which the centre does not understand or know how to address, then the centre should contact the external verifier or Regional Office.
35. The work of all external verifiers is regularly monitored. This is to ensure that all external verification is of the highest standard. Centres may be asked by Edexcel to complete a feedback form to show how satisfied they are with their external verifier. Please note that external verifiers are one type of Assessment Associate (AA) used by Edexcel and they may be referred to using this term when being monitored.
36. Very occasionally a centre may be dissatisfied following external verification. If a centre has a complaint against the behaviour of an external verifier or believes that an external verifier has given an incorrect judgement on a programme, then the centre may write to the Qualification Manager, International Qualifications, at Edexcel giving full details.

## Claiming Certification

37. When all external verification and quality assurance is complete and certification clearance given, the centre is responsible for claiming valid certification via Edexcel Online. The full processes are given in the Information Manual.
38. Learners may only be certificated against the programme that they are registered on. A learner may be transferred to another programme before certification using Edexcel Online. Transfers should normally take place prior to external verification in order that the external verifier can check records and clear certification.
39. Where learners do not complete a full programme, centres may claim a Certificate of Unit Credit for those units that have been successfully completed.
40. Centres should enter certification data carefully and should ensure that all data is correct before it is submitted. For example, data must be entered for the correct individual, units and grades (where appropriate). The information submitted will be used for certification. Should there be any errors in certificates then these must be returned to Edexcel with a full explanation. Edexcel may suspend clearance to certificate where valid procedures are not followed.

## Programme End Dates

41. Programmes are approved for a fixed period. Centres should consider 1-2 years in advance of the expiry date what action is required to continue to offer a BTEC programme. Generally published programmes and policies may be updated during the period of approval. Centres may obtain up to date information and advice from the Regional Office or the website.
42. Where a centre no longer wishes to offer a programme, then the centre should notify their Regional Office in writing. The programme can then be expired and arrangements made for the final external verification of any remaining learners.