Assessment, Internal and External Quality Assurance Policy

How we assess learners fairly and check the quality of our assessment, internally and through VQA.

Awarding organisation	VQA
Approved by	Christine Jamieson, Head of Centre
Date approved	November 2026
Next review	November 2027

Assessment, Internal and External Quality Assurance Policy

Centre	Maximize Education Ltd, 9 Telford Court, Loansdean, Morpeth, NE61 2DB
Awarding organisation	VQA, formerly TQUK (Functional Skills English and maths, Levels 1 and 2)
Head of Centre	Christine Jamieson, CEO
Centre Contact and Exams Officer	Joe Briddon, General Manager
Lead Internal Quality Assurer	An experienced English tutor, holding or working towards a recognised IQA qualification
Date approved	November 2026
Next review	November 2027, or sooner if VQA guidance changes

1. Introduction

Maximize Education is committed to fair assessment for every learner. All assessment and internal quality assurance is carried out in line with VQA's requirements.

We deliver VQA Functional Skills English and maths at Levels 1 and 2. English reading, English writing and maths are marked by VQA. The English Speaking, Listening and Communicating assessment is assessed by our own staff as pass or fail, so it is the main focus of our internal quality assurance.

Maximize Education will:

- Offer qualifications that give every learner the chance to reach their full potential by the most suitable route
- Make sure assessment is fair, consistent, clear and free from discrimination
- Carry out all internal assessments, and mock tests used to prepare for external tests, fairly and in line with VQA's requirements
- Run all externally marked tests in line with the JCQ Instructions for conducting Functional Skills assessments, as VQA requires, including approved reasonable adjustments

Assessment is used to help learners build their knowledge and skills. Tutors check understanding to plan their teaching, without creating unnecessary pressure on learners or staff.

2. Purpose

This policy makes sure assessment and internal quality assurance are of a consistent standard, and explains how we meet VQA's external quality assurance requirements.

3. Scope

This policy covers all VQA qualifications delivered at Maximize Education. Where VQA's requirements go further than this policy, VQA's requirements apply.

4. Definitions

Summative assessment	An assessment that counts towards a qualification.
Formative assessment	An assessment that does not count towards the qualification but shows a learner's current knowledge and skills, such as a mock test.

Assessor	The member of staff who conducts and assesses the Speaking, Listening and Communicating assessment.
Internal Quality Assurer (IQA)	A member of staff who checks assessors' decisions are accurate, fair and consistent.
Lead Internal Quality Assurer (Lead IQA)	The person who leads internal quality assurance and standardisation.
External Quality Assurer (EQA)	A person appointed by VQA to check the centre's assessment and quality assurance. This is VQA's external quality assurance.
Learner Assessment Record (SLC)	VQA's form for recording a learner's Speaking, Listening and Communicating result.
Centre Risk Assessment (CRA)	VQA's review of the centre's systems and records, carried out by the EQA.
Awarding organisation	An organisation approved to award qualifications. For us, this is VQA.

5. Roles and responsibilities

Head of Centre (Christine Jamieson)

- Has overall responsibility for assessment and quality assurance at the centre
- Makes sure staff have the skills, experience and training for their role (see section 6)
- Deals with any disagreement between an assessor and an Internal Quality Assurer
- Approves any action plan required by VQA

Centre Contact (Joe Briddon)

- Is VQA's main contact for quality assurance. Any contact with VQA about quality goes through the Centre Contact
- Makes sure assessors and Internal Quality Assurers are added to our VQA centre profile and approved before they work on VQA qualifications
- Checks that standardisation, internal quality assurance and assessment records are completed
- Arranges External Quality Assurance activity, including the Centre Risk Assessment
- Receives EQA reports and makes sure any actions are completed by their deadlines
- Checks VQA approval is in place before any new qualification or level is offered

Exams Officer (Joe Briddon)

- Registers learners with VQA before any assessment is booked, and books externally marked tests on VQA's online system
- Manages external tests and results in line with the JCQ Instructions for conducting Functional Skills assessments and VQA's requirements
- Keeps exam papers, test logins and learner records secure
- Submits results and receives certificates

Lead Internal Quality Assurer (an experienced English tutor)

- Leads standardisation with all assessors and Internal Quality Assurers
- Writes the internal quality assurance plan and sampling plan
- Checks Speaking, Listening and Communicating tasks before they are sent to VQA for approval
- Keeps internal quality assurance records and prepares the sample for the EQA

- Tells the Centre Contact about any staffing changes, so our VQA centre profile can be updated

Internal Quality Assurers

- Check a sample of assessment decisions for accuracy, fairness and consistency
- Give assessors written feedback, including action to take if a decision is wrong
- Never quality assure their own assessments

In a small centre, the Lead Internal Quality Assurer may also act as the Internal Quality Assurer. The assessor and Internal Quality Assurer for the same piece of work must always be different people.

Assessors and tutors

- Follow the assessment plan and VQA's assessment conditions. During Speaking, Listening and Communicating, the assessor only facilitates and observes, and does not take an active part
- Do not invigilate externally marked tests, or receive, store, move or prepare test materials. VQA does not allow Functional Skills tutors to do this
- Make sure approved reasonable adjustments are in place
- Assess each learner individually and complete the Learner Assessment Record (SLC) accurately
- Give learners timely, constructive feedback
- Check that work is the learner's own
- Explain assessment arrangements and how to appeal at the start of the course
- Take part in standardisation and internal quality assurance

Invigilators

- Are trained, and are not Functional Skills tutors
- Run externally marked tests in line with the JCQ Instructions for conducting Functional Skills assessments
- Check each learner's identity before the test, using the types of ID that VQA accepts

6. Staff requirements

In line with VQA's qualification specification:

- **Tutors** hold a recognised teaching qualification, are occupationally competent in the subject, or have achieved the qualification at Level 2.
- **Assessors** are suitably experienced and approved by VQA. As best practice, they hold an assessor qualification such as TAQA, A1 or D32/D33, or the Level 3 Award in Education and Training.
- **Internal Quality Assurers** hold, or are working towards, a recognised IQA qualification, such as D34, V1 or the Internal Verifier Award.

7. Qualification approval

Before offering a new qualification or level, the Centre Contact checks VQA approval is in place and arranges any new approval. The Head of Centre agrees the change, and approval must be confirmed before delivery starts.

8. Assessment

All assessment follows VQA's qualification specification and Speaking, Listening and Communicating guidance.

1. The assessor writes the Speaking, Listening and Communicating tasks, or adapts VQA's exemplar tasks. Each assessment includes one presentation and one discussion, lasting 20 to 30 minutes in total. Tasks are replaced regularly.
2. The Lead Internal Quality Assurer checks the tasks. The Centre Contact then sends them to VQA for approval at least 4 weeks before any assessment takes place. Approved tasks are not changed in any way that affects their meaning or difficulty.
3. Learners are registered with VQA before any assessment is scheduled. They are told how they will be assessed, and how to appeal, during induction and before their first assessment.
4. Assessments are carried out under formal conditions. They are video recorded, with each learner introducing themselves and staying visible throughout. Recordings are saved as MP4 or AVI files where possible.
5. Any change to assessment dates is agreed with the Lead Internal Quality Assurer and shared with learners.
6. After the assessment, the assessor gives feedback and records the result on the Learner Assessment Record (SLC).

Externally marked tests in English reading, English writing and maths are booked on VQA's online system and run in centre under the JCQ Instructions for conducting Functional Skills assessments and our Malpractice and Maladministration Policy.

9. Keeping learner work and records

Assessment records, recordings, Learner Assessment Records (SLC) and all quality assurance records are stored securely for at least 3 years from the end of the year in which they were created, and until all of the following are complete:

- External Quality Assurance sampling, including any further sampling by VQA
- Certificates have been claimed and issued
- Any review, appeal or malpractice investigation

Records are then securely destroyed in line with data protection law.

10. Reasonable adjustments and special consideration

We follow VQA's Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy, so that learners with a disability, learning difficulty or temporary injury can show what they know without being given an unfair advantage.

- Some adjustments, such as a separate room, are decided by the centre. For Functional Skills, the centre can also agree up to 25% extra time, but must tell VQA on its 25% Extra Time form.
- Other adjustments, such as more than 25% extra time, supervised rest breaks, a reader or scribe, and most assistive aids, need VQA's approval. We apply on VQA's Reasonable Adjustment form before the test is booked.
- Special consideration is applied for on VQA's form at least 15 working days before the test, or within 5 working days after it.

- All forms are sent to VQA at operations@tquk.org, with supporting evidence, one form per learner.
- Every adjustment made is recorded and kept on file for internal and external quality assurance.

The full process is set out in our Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy. Learners who disagree with a centre decision can appeal under our Exam Complaints and Internal Appeals Policy.

11. Conflicts of interest

Staff must declare any conflict of interest relating to an assessment, such as assessing a relative or close friend. Conflicts are declared, recorded and managed under our Conflicts of Interest Policy (Exams).

12. Internal quality assurance

Internal quality assurance is how we check the quality of our assessment. It makes sure that learners' evidence is:

- **Valid:** it meets VQA's assessment criteria
- **Authentic:** it was produced by the learner
- **Reliable:** it accurately reflects the learner's level
- **Current:** it shows what the learner can do now
- **Sufficient:** there is enough evidence to meet all the criteria

It also makes sure decisions are consistent across assessors, no learner is disadvantaged, and assessors are supported to improve.

Sampling

- Assessors assess 100% of learners.
- The Lead Internal Quality Assurer reviews 100% of the first 10 learners on each qualification (Level 1 and Level 2), as VQA requires.
- After that, at least 10% of learners across all levels are observed, with a written report, every 12 months. The sample covers every assessor, as evenly as possible, plus any higher-risk decisions, such as new assessors or borderline results.
- All checks and feedback are recorded on the internal quality assurance forms.

If an assessor disagrees with an Internal Quality Assurer's decision, the Head of Centre considers it and makes the final decision.

13. Standardisation

Standardisation makes sure all staff interpret VQA's requirements the same way, so every learner is assessed to the same standard.

- All assessors and Internal Quality Assurers complete standardisation led by the Lead Internal Quality Assurer.
- The Lead Internal Quality Assurer holds at least 2 standardisation meetings a year, which all assessors and Internal Quality Assurers attend.
- We take part in national standardisation whenever VQA asks.
- Records of all standardisation activity are kept and made available to the EQA.

Activities include reviewing recorded assessments and assessment decisions, agreeing how forms are completed, and observing each other's assessments. Our Standardisation Procedure sets out the process.

14. External quality assurance

VQA checks our assessment and quality assurance through its External Quality Assurance. This may be a visit or a remote review.

1. Our allocated EQA contacts the Centre Contact to arrange a Centre Risk Assessment, which is valid for up to 12 months. It checks our internal quality assurance arrangements, including records, standardisation and feedback.
2. As a newly recognised centre, all our certificate claims are sampled by VQA before certificates are issued.
3. The EQA observes, or has access to, the Speaking, Listening and Communicating assessments of our first 10 learners. After that, the number of recordings sampled is agreed with the EQA in advance.
4. The Lead Internal Quality Assurer prepares the sample, including recordings, Learner Assessment Records (SLC), standardisation records, tasks, and internal quality assurance records and feedback.
5. The Centre Contact shares the EQA report with the Head of Centre and staff, and makes sure any actions are completed by their deadlines.

If the EQA finds incorrect assessment, they set actions with deadlines, and results or certificates may be amended or withdrawn. VQA rates each centre's risk, which affects how much it samples. More serious issues are dealt with under VQA's Sanctions Policy, which can include removing direct claims status, approval for a qualification, or centre recognition. If this happens, the Head of Centre and Centre Contact agree an action plan.

15. Submitting results and certificates

- Speaking, Listening and Communicating results are submitted to VQA after internal quality assurance. A second member of staff checks results before they are submitted.
- Results for externally marked tests come directly from VQA.
- The Exams Officer receives certificates and tells each learner when they are ready. Learners are encouraged to check their results are correct.
- Unclaimed certificates are kept securely for at least 12 months.

16. Authenticity and use of AI

All work assessed must be the learner's own. Externally marked tests are taken under invigilated conditions, and Speaking, Listening and Communicating is assessed live and recorded, with the learner visible. Learners sign declarations of authentication where required.

Using AI or another person's work and presenting it as their own is malpractice. Learners are shown how to acknowledge any sources they use in preparation work, including AI tools.

17. Appeals

Learners can appeal an assessment decision made by Maximize Education under our Exam Complaints and Internal Appeals Policy, which covers centre-assessed results, enquiries about results and reasonable adjustments. The decision at the end of that process is final within the centre.

Where a test is marked by VQA, we will explain how to apply to VQA under its Appeals Policy. If a learner is still unhappy after following both our process and VQA's, they can raise it with the regulator, Ofqual.

18. Malpractice

We do not tolerate malpractice by learners or staff. Suspected malpractice is reported to VQA immediately and investigated under our Malpractice and Maladministration Policy.

19. Review and approval

The Head of Centre reviews this policy every year, or sooner if VQA guidance changes, and shares it with all staff.

	Name	**Date**
Reviewed by		
Approved by Head of Centre	Christine Jamieson	
Signed		
Next review		November 2027

References

- VQA, Functional Skills Qualification in English at Levels 1 and 2, qualification specification
- VQA, Functional Skills Speaking, Listening and Communicating Handbook, v1.0
- VQA, EQA Strategy including Centre Assessment Standards Scrutiny (CASS) Strategy (QA.P.11)
- VQA, Sanctions Policy
- VQA, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy (O.P.9)
- JCQ, Instructions for conducting Functional Skills assessments (English and mathematics), 2025 to 2026