



الهيئة الوطنية
للمؤهلات وضمان جودة التعليم والتدريب
National Authority for Qualifications &
Quality Assurance of Education & Training

Directorate of Vocational Reviews

Review Handbook

For use in the Review of Providers of
Vocational Education and Training in the
Kingdom of Bahrain

Effective from March 2015 – Cycle 3



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INTRODUCTION

Background to the National Authority for Qualifications and Quality Assurance of Education and Training

The National Authority for Qualifications and Quality Assurance of Education & Training (QQA) was established by the Royal Decree No. 32 of 2008 as an independent national authority governed and supervised by the Cabinet of Ministers of the Kingdom of Bahrain. With the promulgation of the Royal Decree No 83 of 2012, the QQA was renamed the National Authority for Qualifications and Quality Assurance of Education & Training (QQA). The QQA was mandated to ensure that the quality of education and training in Bahrain meets international standards and best practice, and to 'review the quality of the performance of education and training institutions in light of the guiding indicators developed by the Authority' in accordance with the Bahrain's Economic Vision 2030.

The Authority has three main core business, namely: performance review of educational and vocational institutions by the General Directorate of Reviews (GDR), managing the National Qualifications Framework by the General Directorate of National Qualifications Framework (GDQ) and conducting the National Examinations by the Directorate of National Examinations (DNE). The (GDR) composes four directorates: the Directorate of Government School Reviews (DGS), the Directorate of Private School and Kindergarten Reviews (DPS), the Directorate of Vocational Reviews (DVR), and the Directorate of Higher Education Reviews (DHR). The (DGQ) composes the Directorate of National Framework Operations (DFO) and the Directorate of Academic Cooperation and Coordination (DAC).

The Directorate of Vocational Reviews

The Directorate of Vocational Reviews (DVR) is mandated to review and report on the quality of vocational education and training across the Kingdom of Bahrain. Review involves evaluating vocational education and training providers against a set of quality assurance criteria.

The purposes of vocational reviews are to:

- identify strengths and areas for improvement in vocational education and training providers, focusing on the achievement and experience of learners
- promote improvement and a culture of self-evaluation among providers
- ensure public accountability through the conduction of reviews and the publication of the outcomes
- spread best practice.

The Ministry of Labour licenses vocational training providers and the Ministry of Education licenses private, non-compulsory education institutes. Some providers are also

licensed by other ministries such as the Ministry of Social Development. It is intended that the published outcomes of vocational reviews should provide clear information about the quality of performance and outcomes of these institutions to assist the relevant Ministries in arriving at licensing decisions, and guide those requiring vocational education or training in selecting the provider that best meets their needs.

Independent reviews of vocational training have proved to be a catalyst for improvement elsewhere in the world. Through the vocational review programme the QQA aims to ensure that the quality of vocational provision across the Kingdom of Bahrain is at a level required by employers and other relevant stakeholders, and provides the range and degree of knowledge and skills required by a dynamic economy.

Review Principles

The following principles are key to the review process:

A focus on the learner: the learners' experience, achievement and skills development are at the heart of the review process.

Teaching/training and assessment: the review team will thoroughly evaluate how effectively teaching/training and assessment promote learning and lead to improving or maintaining high levels of learner achievement.

Continuous improvement: review is a key driver in helping to improve the effectiveness of the provider's overall process of self-evaluation, action planning, and ongoing development in raising the quality of provision.

Provider involvement: the provider participates in all stages of the review process, through self-evaluation, and, through the nominee, in planning and managing the review, and providing evidence to shape judgements. Review is about 'doing with' not 'doing to'.

Openness and transparency: the review team's emerging judgements and areas for development are shared with the nominee during the review process.

Professional commitment: reviewers will observe a Code of Conduct, in accordance with QQA policies and procedures, evaluating providers objectively and impartially and making judgements that are fair, accurate and consistent.

About the Review Guidance

This guidance is for use by reviewers and providers of vocational education and training. It sets out:

- the approach to review
- the review arrangements and procedures

Terms and Definitions

Term	Meaning
Achievement	A measure which is a combination of learners' attainment and progress, weighted towards the progress learners make from their starting points.
Assessment	The process of evaluating an individual's learning. It involves generating and collecting evidence of a learner's attainment of knowledge, understanding and skills and judging that evidence against defined standards.
Assessor	The person who carries out an assessment activity (see above); usually confined to vocational contexts.
Attainment	The academic or vocational level that a learner reaches, usually measured by the gaining of a recognised, externally accredited and benchmarked qualification.
Award	A qualification which is conferred, granted or given by an awarding body and which records that a learner has acquired a standard of knowledge, skills and competence.
Awarding body	A body which issues awards.
Competence	The proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal or social abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development.
Course/Course of study	A prescribed, structured set of lessons or training sessions that cover a specific range of content and lead to a qualification or certificate.
Extra-Curricular activity	An additional activity which a provider offers to learners outside the prescribed programme of study to provide a wider, more motivating experience for learners.
Formal Learning	Learning that is organised and generally occurs in structured learning environments, whereby the learner's objective is to obtain knowledge, skills and/or competences leading to recognition in a form of a certificate. Typical examples are learning that takes place within schools, training systems or workplace training.
Gifted and Talented Learners	Learners who demonstrate exceptional learning and performance capabilities in one or more of the following domains: intellectual, creative, social or physical.

Informal Learning	Learning that is not organised nor structured and has no set objectives in terms of learning outcomes and which is never intentional from the learner's viewpoint. Typical examples are learning which is gained through work-related, social, family, hobby or leisure activities and experiences.
Institutional Listing	A process by which the GDQ ensures that an institution has established proper formal arrangements to maintain the standards of their national qualifications placed on the NQF.
Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)	Statements that describe significant and essential learning that learners have achieved during a programme, which is defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competences. In other words, learning outcomes identify what the learner will know and be able to do by the end of a unit, course or programme.
Learners	Those individuals who acquire knowledge, understanding, skills and competences through formal, non-formal and informal learning.
Learners' Performance Data (LPD) Workbook	The document completed by providers which provides details of learners' enrolment and performance.
Learners with Special Educational Needs	In the context of the NQF, special needs is where the capacity of a learner to participate in, or benefit from, education is restricted or hindered due to a physical, sensory, mental or learning disability or advantage 'e.g. Gifted and Talented Learners'. This applies to any learner that requires additional support either (i) physically e.g. wheelchair users, learners with restricted movement, visual or hearing impairment, or learners with physical advantage; (ii) intellectually e.g. gifted learners or those with learning difficulties; or (iii) socially and emotionally e.g. learners with attention deficiency hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).
Lifelong Learning	Learning that is undertaken throughout life and improves knowledge, skills and competences within a learner's personal, civic, social and/or employment-related contexts. This can be obtained through formal, non-formal and informal learning.

National Qualifications Framework (NQF)	An instrument for the classification of qualifications according to a set of criteria for specified levels of learning achieved. It integrates and coordinates national qualifications sub-systems and improves quality, transparency, access and progression.
Non-Formal Learning	Organised education and training outside formal education or training systems, which lacks common Formal Learning elements such as: curriculum, syllabus or accreditation. Non-Formal Learning may be assessed but does not typically lead to formal certification. Examples for Non-Formal Learning include: learning and training activities undertaken in the workplace, voluntary sector and through community service programmes.
Programme/Programme of study	Any process by which learners may acquire knowledge, understanding, skills and competences and which includes one or more courses of study or instruction, apprenticeships or training leading to the awarding of a qualification or certificate of completion.
Progress	The relative gain in knowledge, skills or understanding that a learner makes as a result of teaching/training or generally, as an outcome of a course of study.
Progression	The process by which learners may transfer from one programme of education and training to another programme, where each programme is of a higher level than the preceding programme and not necessarily by incremental steps.
Quality assurance	The systems and procedures designed and implemented by an organisation to ensure that its products and services are of a consistent standard and are being continuously improved.
Review Main Questions	A term used to describe a set of criteria of the review framework; the five main questions are learners' achievement, quality of teaching/training and assessment , quality of programmes, support and guidance, and the leadership, management and governance.
Self-Evaluation Form (SEF)	The document completed by a provider which details the evidence and their associated judgements related to the Review Framework Main Questions; it also contains factual information about the provider.

Stakeholders	A person, group, or organisation that is directly or indirectly involved with, or affected by, the services provided by vocational education and training providers, which might refer to employers, representative organisations, national or regional bodies, the local community and/or learners' parents.
Verification of Assessment	The process by which assessment is deemed to be valid, reliable, fit for purpose and consistent with an agreed set of national or awarding body standards or learning outcomes; verification may be internal (i.e. conducted by the providers themselves) or external (conducted by an external agency, usually an awarding body).

Abbreviations

DGS	Directorate of Government Schools
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Review
DNE	Directorate of National Examinations
DPS	Directorate of Private Schools & Kindergartens Reviews
DVR	Directorate of Vocational Review
EF	Evidence Form
GDQ	General Directorate of Qualifications
GDR	General Directorate of Reviews
ILOs	Intended Learning Outcomes
LPD	Learners' Performance Data worksheet
MQ	Main Question
NQF	The National Qualifications Framework
PRB	Pre-Review Briefing document
QQA	National Authority for Qualifications and Quality Assurance of Education & Training
RRJ	Record of Review Judgements
SEF	Self-Evaluation Form

PART ONE

THE REVIEW FRAMEWORK

Introduction

The Review Framework sets out the evaluation requirements to be used in the review of vocational education and training provision in the Kingdom of Bahrain. It lists the Main Questions (shown as 'MQ' in the framework) that reviewers will explore in making their judgements about the quality and effectiveness of the education and training on offer in meeting the learners' needs and abilities, and stakeholders' requirements. The review Framework clarifies the judgements made during the review of a training provider according to QQA policies and procedures and the review criteria. All training providers are requested to follow the same framework and judgements in their self-evaluation.

The framework consists of the following:

- learners' achievement
 - MQ1: how well do learners achieve?
- the quality of provision
 - MQ2: how effective are teaching/training and assessment in promoting learning?
 - MQ3: how well programmes meet the needs and interests of learners and stakeholders?
 - MQ4: how well are learners supported and guided?
- leadership, management and governance
 - MQ5: how effective are leadership, management and governance in raising achievement and improving the quality of the provision?

This will lead to the judgement on the overall effectiveness of the provider and its capacity to improve.

The Main Questions are underpinned by a series of criteria, shown by 'C' in the framework.

Grading scales

Reviewers use the following 4-point grading scale to evaluate the criteria, the Main Questions, the provider's overall effectiveness and its capacity to improve:

- Outstanding (1)
- Good (2)
- Satisfactory (3)
- Inadequate (4)

Each criterion is evaluated according to the rubric below

Outstanding (1)	This judgment is awarded if the quality of the practices of all or the vast majority of those related to the criteria is varied and highly productive. The effectiveness of the performance and the initiatives are exceptional and highly exceed the expectations. It largely reflects the improvement and development and can be considered role models to be followed.
Good (2)	This judgment is awarded if the quality of most practices related to the criteria is varied and productive. The performance is effective and the initiatives are on-going and sometimes exceed expectations and it largely reflects the improvement and development.
Satisfactory (3)	This judgment is awarded if the quality of the majority of practices related to the criteria is generally at the acceptable level and the performance and initiatives at the expected level. It reflects some improvement and development.
Inadequate (4)	This judgment is awarded if the quality of the majority of the practices related to the criteria is at an inappropriate level and the performance is at a level less than the expected one and does not reflect any sought improvement.

Additionally the judgement for each Main Question, overall effectiveness and the capacity to improve are detailed below.

Main questions and judgement descriptions:

Learners' achievement

MQ1: How well do learners achieve?

In arriving at a judgement, reviewers will consider the extent to which learners:

C1.1 develop skills, knowledge and competences relevant to their learning and course level which reflect industry requirements

C1.2 achieve the qualifications they aim for and/or course Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) in a timely manner

- C1.3 make progress relative to their prior attainment or starting points and, where applicable, over levels or units
- C1.4 are self-motivated, have a positive attitude towards their learning and reflect critically on their learning
- C1.5 are able to work independently, as a member of a team or as a leader when necessary
- C1.6 attend regularly and punctually.

Evaluating learners' achievement

Grade	Interpretation
Outstanding (1)	Achievement is at least good in all criteria and outstanding in the majority including the skills development, achievement of qualifications and/or ILOs.
Good (2)	Achievement is at least satisfactory in all criteria and good in the majority including the skills development, achievement of qualifications and/or ILOs.
Satisfactory (3)	Achievement is at least satisfactory in the majority of criteria including the skills development, achievement of qualifications and/or ILOs. It might have a few good criteria.
Inadequate (4)	This is the judgment if either skills development or achievement of qualifications and/or ILOs are inadequate.

The provider is expected to keep sufficient and reliable achievement data. The review team will also consider all other available evidence, particularly the attainment and progress observed in training sessions/lessons to evaluate this MQ. The limited or lack of accurate and reliable achievement data will have a significant impact on the review team's judgement for leadership and management and the provider's overall effectiveness.

The Quality of Provision

MQ2: How effective are teaching/training and assessment in promoting learning?

In arriving at a judgement, reviewers will consider the extent to which:

- C2.1 teachers/trainers have relevant theoretical and practical command of their vocational or academic specialisms
- C2.2 teachers/trainers use structured lesson plans with clear ILOs informed by prior and continuous assessment of learners

- C2.3 teachers/trainers deliver training sessions that are managed well and address the specified session ILOs which are shared with learners
- C2.4 teachers/trainers use a range of teaching/training methods and activities, which are suitable for delivering the ILOs, and engage learners productively throughout the session**
- C2.5 a range of accurate and rigorous assessment methods are used to evaluate learners' understanding and measure the achievement of ILOs**
- C2.6 teachers/trainers maintain and regularly update learners' performance records and provide effective feedback to help learners improve
- C2.7 teachers/trainers tailor their teaching/training to address the individual learners' needs and capabilities in line with the ILOs
- C2.8 teachers/trainers use teaching and learning methods that stimulate self-learning, higher order and critical thinking amongst learners, and promote life-long learning
- C2.9 teachers/trainers utilise learning resources and materials effectively to promote and enrich the learning experience.

Evaluating the effectiveness of teaching/training and assessment

Grade	Interpretation
Outstanding (1)	Teaching/training is at least good in all criteria and the majority of the criteria are outstanding including the effectiveness of teaching/training methods and rigorousness of assessment methods .
Good (2)	Teaching/training is at least satisfactory in all criteria and good in the majority including the effectiveness of teaching/training methods and rigorousness of assessment methods .
Satisfactory (3)	Teaching/training is at least satisfactory in the vast majority of criteria including the effectiveness of teaching/training methods and rigorousness of assessment methods . It might have a few good criteria.
Inadequate (4)	This is the judgment if either the teaching/training or the assessment methods is inadequate.

MQ3: How well do programmes meet the needs and interests of learners and stakeholders?

In arriving at a judgement, reviewers will consider the extent to which:

- C3.1 programmes on offer are based on an analysis and understanding of market needs in terms of levels required and professional standards that meet learners' and stakeholders' needs and requirements**

C3.2 there is a formal mechanism implemented to design, approve, update and periodically review programmes and, where applicable, ensure they meet the NQF requirements

C3.3 programmes are structured and planned with detailed course outlines that indicate the ILOs, teaching and assessment methods

C3.4 programmes are sufficiently resourced to meet the needs of learners and stakeholders

C3.5 programmes are supported with a relevant range of extra-curricular activities, which support and enhance the programmes on offer

C3.6 the provider is effectively implementing clear requirements and mechanisms for access and entry level to programmes which are reviewed and adjusted as needed.

Evaluating the quality of programmes

Grade	Interpretation
Outstanding (1)	Programmes are at least good in all criteria and are outstanding in the majority including offering programmes that are based on an analysis of market needs which meet learners' and stakeholders' needs and requirements, and programmes' structuring and planning.
Good (2)	Programmes are at least satisfactory in all criteria and are good in the majority including offering programmes that are based on an analysis of market needs which meet learners' and stakeholders' needs and requirements, and programmes' structuring and planning.
Satisfactory (3)	Programmes are at least satisfactory in the vast majority of criteria including offering programmes that are based on an analysis of market needs which meet learners' and stakeholders' needs and requirements, and programmes' structuring and planning.
Inadequate (4)	This is the judgment if either the programmes have little or no relevance to learners' needs and the requirements and expectations of stakeholders or inappropriately structured and planned.

MQ4: How well are learners supported and guided?

In arriving at a judgement, reviewers will consider the extent to which:

C4.1 the provider has an effective mechanism to support and guide learners to achieve better

C4.2 the premises and facilities provide an inspiring learning environment

C4.3 learners and stakeholders have access to well-informed advice and guidance about programmes and, where applicable, opportunities for progression and career development

- C4.4 communication with stakeholders is effective in informing and supporting learners' achievement
- C4.5 the arrangements for the delivery of programmes are appropriately flexible to suit the needs of learners and stakeholders
- C4.6 effective arrangements are in place to identify and support learners with special needs where applicable.

Evaluating the quality of support and guidance

Grade	Interpretation
Outstanding (1)	Support and guidance are at least good in all criteria and outstanding in the majority including having an effective mechanism to support and guide learners to achieve better.
Good (2)	Support and guidance are at least satisfactory in all criteria and good in the majority including having an effective mechanism to support and guide learners to achieve better.
Satisfactory (3)	Support and guidance are at least satisfactory in the majority of criteria including having an effective mechanism to support and guide learners to achieve better. It might have a few good criteria.
Inadequate (4)	This is the judgment if there is no mechanism to support and guide learners to achieve better. Learners are often left alone to deal with problems with their learning or the provider is unaware of learners who may be having learning difficulties.

Leadership, management and governance

MQ5: How effective are leadership, management and governance in raising achievement and improving the quality of the provision?

In arriving at a judgement, reviewers will consider the extent to which:

- C5.1 the provider has clear vision and mission statements which are linked with strategic planning that focuses on raising learners' achievement and cascaded to staff**
- C5.2 the provider's organisational structure is effective in meeting the provider's aims and objectives
- C5.3 the provider's health and safety and well-being policies, procedures and practices are effective in maintaining a safe, secure and healthy learning environment for learners and staff

- C5.4 the provider has effective arrangements to quality assure its provision
- C5.5 the provider's self-evaluation process is rigorous, regular and accurate and is used to provide continuous improvement in the overall quality of provision**
- C5.6 learners' achievement is closely monitored and analysed to inform decision making**
- C5.7 high quality staff are recruited, inducted and effectively deployed
- C5.8 staff performance is effectively monitored, staff are guided on how to improve and their training needs are assessed and acted upon**
- C5.9 processes are effective in maintaining links with stakeholders and gathering, analysing and acting upon their views and those of learners
- C5.10 where one exist, the effectiveness of the governance in holding the leadership accountable for the provider's performance, and in their contributions to its strategic directions.

Evaluating the effectiveness of leadership, management and governance

Grade	Interpretation
Outstanding (1)	Leadership and management will be at least good in all criteria and outstanding in the majority including: strategic planning, self-evaluation process, and performance monitoring of learners and staff.
Good (2)	Leadership and management are at least satisfactory in all criteria and good in the majority including: strategic planning, self-evaluation process, and performance monitoring of learners and staff.
Satisfactory (3)	Leadership and management are at least satisfactory in the vast majority of criteria including: strategic planning, self-evaluation process, and performance monitoring of learners and staff. It might have a few good criteria.
Inadequate (4)	This is the judgment if any of these criteria: strategic planning, self-evaluation process, and performance monitoring of learners and staff are inadequate.

Limiting Judgement

- If significant health and safety issues are found, leadership and management will be judged as 'inadequate', regardless of all other review judgements, as well as the provider's overall effectiveness. During the review, in case of critical health and safety hazardous situations, the review team will suspend the review.
- Providers applying for Institutional Listing (IL) are expected to have met all the IL standards of NQF to be graded as outstanding in the leadership and management.

Overall Effectiveness (OE)

OE: How effective is the provision in raising learners' achievement and meeting the full range of learners' and stakeholders' needs?

In arriving at a judgement, reviewers will consider the grades of the five main questions based on the following interpretation:

Grade	Interpretation
Outstanding (1)	All main questions evaluated as at least good and the majority are outstanding including learners' achievement and either quality of teaching/training or leadership and management . There is a clear and demonstrable commitment to improving all aspects of provision. Learners' and stakeholders' needs are expertly and closely matched by the programmes on offer.
Good (2)	All main questions are at least satisfactory; and the majority are good including learners' achievement , and either quality of teaching/training or leadership and management must be good. It is unlikely that the quality of programmes is less than good. There will be no major weaknesses in the provision and the provider may have pockets of excellence.
Satisfactory (3)	All main questions are likely to be at least satisfactory. This should include learners' achievement and teaching/training . The provider makes some attempts to tailor its programmes to meet the needs of learners and stakeholders.
Inadequate (4)	This is likely to be the judgment if either learners' achievement, teaching/training or the quality of programmes is judged as inadequate, especially if significant numbers of learners are underachieving. Learners and stakeholders' needs and interests are poorly served by the programmes offered. The provider has little or no idea about its strengths and areas for improvement.

Capacity to Improve (CI)

CI: How strong is the provider's capacity to improve the quality of learning?

In arriving at a judgement, reviewers will consider the following interpretation

Grade	Interpretation
Outstanding (1)	The provider has a strong history of improvements that has clear impact on its operations, and effective initiatives that focus on raising learners' achievement and rates of retention and enrolment. The provider effectively measures the impact of improvement actions. Features of leadership and management that promote and contribute to improvement are all at least good and in some cases outstanding.
Good (2)	The provider has shown in the past that it can lead effective improvement which has essential impact on its operations, and carry out a number of initiatives that focus on raising learners' achievement, rates of retention and enrolment. The provider knows its strengths and areas for development and is committed to improvement, and suitably measures the impact of improvements done.
Satisfactory (3)	The provider's planning shows that there is a sense of direction based on self-evaluation process and the arrangements for assuring and improving quality are sufficient and focused on raising learners' achievement. The provider has some relevant history of improvements although the impact of these is minimal or have yet to be seen.
Inadequate (4)	This is likely to be the judgment if there is limited planning related to raising learners' achievement; if the self-evaluation process is weak or inaccurate; or if there is ineffective leadership and management; staff are not sufficiently aware about their roles and responsibilities and it is not clear who will carry through the action required for improvement. The provider may have a history of a very limited improvement or changes that led to no impact.

The review process also includes the following

Appeals

If the provider is dissatisfied with the review outcomes and judgments made it may submit an appeal, in writing, to the Directorate of Vocational Reviews using the appropriate form. This process will be in accordance with QQA's policies and procedures.

Monitoring visits

All providers who receive a judgement of inadequate for overall effectiveness will be subject to monitoring visits by the DVR. The purpose of these visits will be to monitor the progress the provider is making in addressing the areas of development detailed in the review report. This process will be in accordance with QQA's policies and procedures.

Non-compliance with the review process

Providers may be deemed inadequate because of their failure to comply with the review requirements. This process will be in accordance with QQA's policies and procedures.

PART TWO

GUIDANCE ON USING THE REVIEW FRAMEWORK

Introduction

The Review Framework sets out the areas that will be explored during a review of vocational education and training provision. In addition, providers follow the structure of the framework in their Self-Evaluation Form (SEF).

The framework as a whole should be viewed as focusing on the outcomes for learners - their achievement of external qualifications, ILOs and personal goals, as well as their capacity to be effective and self-directed learners – and the factors that most contribute to these outcomes, in particular the quality of the provision offered and the effectiveness of the leadership, management and governance of the provider.

The framework requires judgements at two levels:

- judgements relating to the Main Questions. These are shown by 'MQ' in the framework and guidance.
- judgements relating to criteria that underpin the main questions. These are shown by 'C' in the framework and guidance.

Making judgements in relation to the main questions and the criteria

This part of the guidance describes, for each of the main areas of the Review Framework, the sources of evidence on which reviewers will base their judgements and guidance on how to interpret the review criteria. The grading tables are contained in Part One of this document.

Learners' achievement

MQ1: How well do learners achieve?

Essential sources of evidence are, but not limited to, the following:

- the Learners' Performance Data (LPD) spreadsheet
- the results of internal assessments of learners' performance
- the results of external examinations where taken and benchmarked to the international/global pass rates
- learners' progression rates within programmes and over levels
- assessment materials
- registers of attendance and its aggregated rates

- external verifiers and moderators reports where appropriate
- evidence of learners' reflection on their learning
- scrutinised learners' theoretical and practical work
- discussions with learners and stakeholders conducted by the QQA review team
- learners' and stakeholders' feedback collected by the provider (course evaluation), aggregated and analysed
- where relevant, records of the acquisition of workplace skills and knowledge by learners, supervisors or assessors
- relevant policies and procedures
- observation of lessons/training sessions by QQA review team
- the provider's records of the observations of individual teachers/trainers
- provider's SEF.

Interpreting the criteria

The achievements of learners are judged by reference to: standards reached, and whether they are high enough in terms of skills development, achievement of qualifications and/or ILOs; the progress made by individuals and particular groups within the programme and/or over levels, taking into account their prior attainment and potential; the extent to which individuals have become competent, self-directed learners and show commitment to their learning.

C1.1 Learners develop skills, knowledge and competences relevant to their learning experience and course level which reflect industry requirements.

The basic vocational coverage should be prescribed in the programmes and external examination syllabus. During their observations of lessons and/or training sessions, reviewers evaluate learners' practical skills, competences and knowledge of the theory aspects of their vocational areas. Learners' ability to organise and complete practical tasks will be compared with what can reasonably be expected of learners at that stage in their course. Learners near the end of their course should be approaching commercial speeds for completion of tasks. The work they produce should reflect the standards expected in their chosen industry. A contributory factor to this judgement will be the satisfaction of individual learners and stakeholders with acquired skills/competences and the extent to which learners utilise those skills/competences at the workplace and/or life. The reviewers will also consider the records kept on employability after the completion of the course.

C1.2 Learners achieve the qualifications they aim for and/or course Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) in a timely manner.

Reviewers will judge whether achievement rates accurately reflect the standards of knowledge and understanding seen in lessons and/or training sessions and demonstrated

in practical activities. They will also consider the rate of learners achieving the qualification in a timely manner and how does this compare to published data, where applicable. By looking at learners' written work, observing practical activities and talking to learners, reviewers will assess whether learners' knowledge, skills and understanding are as advanced as they should be for the level of work they are undertaking. For example, when they complete a course, learners should be able to proceed successfully to another course at a more advanced level or show vocational and/or employability skills that ensure they gain employment in their chosen industry. The reviewer will consider how the provider ensures that learners achieve the planned course objectives and/or ILOs. The assessment tools used to measure learners achievement is linked to the ILOs.

C1.3 Learners make progress relative to their prior attainment or starting points and, where applicable, over levels or units.

All providers are expected to undertake some form of initial assessment of learners' attainment on entry to the course or programme and to use this to judge the progress made by learners. Whilst formative and summative assessments provide a measure of the attainment levels of learners, this must be taken in context with the progress they have made from their starting points. A contributory factor to this judgment will be the progress made by learners in the observed lessons or training sessions. Reviewers will also take into account the feedback from stakeholders on the progress that learners have made. Where applicable, reviewers will consider to what extent learners are making progress over levels or units.

C1.4 Learners are self-motivated, have a positive attitude towards their learning and reflect critically on their learning.

Reviewers will take account of lesson observations, learners' work and their views to judge this criterion. They will assess the extent to which learners have positive attitude towards their learning and respond to the teaching/training offered and the level of enthusiasm and application they bring to their studies. Self-motivated learners do not wait to be told answers but seek to solve problems for themselves, to question, and think creatively and are eager to demonstrate their understanding and present their work. In addition, reviewers will consider the extent to which learners are able to take control of their own learning without prompting or excessive intervention by the teacher/trainer. Learners consolidate and extend what they have been taught by questioning their teachers and carrying out independent research. They are confident to present arguments, founded on evidence, which challenge what they have been taught; and they are not reluctant to be convinced by the well-argued views of others. In particular, effective learners can assess honestly their own strengths and weaknesses and how they can improve their performance, particularly in setting realistic and achievable targets.

C1.5 Learners are able to work independently, or as a member of a team or as a leader when necessary.

To be well prepared for the world of work, learners must be able to work independently and within teams. Reviewers will evaluate if learners are self-directed, assume responsibilities and able to work effectively in a leadership or subordinate capacity, or with their peers. Observations of lessons and/or training sessions give clues about learners’ ability to work individually and/or together. In group work, learners are expected to display how well they listen to each other, build on each other’s contributions and how they divide responsibilities during practical assignments. This criteria also includes the extent to which learners show understanding and respect for others, their values and beliefs. Where applicable, reviewers will consider the extent to which learners exhibit these qualities during on job training.

C1.6 Learners attend regularly and punctually.

This is an important indication of learners’ commitment to their course of study and their learning and whether they have the discipline and personal qualities necessary for the world of work. Judgements will cover current levels of attendance and punctuality as well as the extent to which attendance has improved and been maintained at an appropriately high level. Reviewers will also consider how the provider deals with poor attendance or frequent lateness.

The Quality of Provision

MQ2: How effective are teaching/training and assessment in promoting learning?

Essential sources of evidence are, but not limited to, the following:

- observation of lessons/training sessions by QQA review team
- the provider’s records of the observations of individual teachers/trainers
- teachers/trainers’ Curriculum Vitae (CVs).
- samples of learners’ assessed work
- individual lesson plans and schemes of work, including course assessment plans
- external verifiers and moderators’ reports, where appropriate
- relevant policies and procedures
- the provider’s teaching/training resources
- discussions with learners, stakeholders, trainers and relevant staff members conducted by the QQA review team
- learners’ and stakeholders’ feedback collected by the provider (course evaluation)
- provider’s SEF.

Interpreting the criteria

Judgements about teaching/training focus on how well lessons and training sessions are prepared and delivered to promote learning, and how effectively learners participate in lessons and are assessed and provided with feedback. Judgement will also consider how well the needs of individuals and course requirements are met, and whether learners are developing skills which reflect industry standards and/or the ILOs of the programmes on offer.

C2.1 Teachers/trainers have relevant theoretical and practical command of their vocational or academic specialisms.

Good vocational and/or specialist subject knowledge is a pre-requisite for effective teaching and training and should be evidenced by teachers'/trainers' accurate explanations, knowledgeable responses to learners' questions and ability to draw on direct practical experience to illustrate points or different ways of tackling problems. Teachers/trainers are also expected to provide good role models to learners in terms of their personal and social skills, particularly in how they interact with learners, as well as displaying an obvious depth of knowledge and understanding of their vocational or subject area.

C2.2 Teachers/trainers use structured lesson plans with clear ILOs informed by prior and continuous assessment of learners.

The provider is expected to provide evidence on how effectively teachers/trainers plan their lessons or training sessions in advance, either as individual lessons or as part of a course of study or programme. Importantly, there must be evidence that this planning has been informed by prior assessment of learners' attainment and that sessions are being adapted in response to the outcomes of assessment throughout the courses of study or programme. There is no set format or template for a lesson plan but it will state precisely the ILOs, and what knowledge, competences and skills learners are expected to have achieved by the end of the session. The lesson plan will also indicate the teaching/training and assessment methods that will be used to measure learners attainment of the ILOs. An effective plan will include a range of activities which will accommodate the varying needs of learners and ensure that learners are challenged and participate well in the lesson.

C2.3 Teachers/trainers deliver training sessions that are managed well and address the specified session ILOs which are shared with learners.

Prompt starts set a disciplined and purposeful tone to sessions. Sharing the session ILOs and revisiting what was covered in the previous lesson/session establish the context for the current session's coverage. In addition, it is important that class and time are managed carefully throughout the session to allow sufficient time for activities to be completed by all in the group, for learner participation and questions and assessment of learners'

progress. Thus ensuring the flow of the lesson is delivered in a progressive and systematic way. There should also be time allowed for an appropriate summary of the session, an evaluation of whether the session ILOs have been met and a preview of what will happen in forthcoming sessions.

C2.4 Teachers/trainers use a range of teaching/training methods and activities which are suitable for delivering the ILOs and engage learners productively throughout the session.

Teachers/trainers should present opportunities for purposeful learning through teaching/training that is well ordered and organised and through worthwhile and appropriately focused activities which engage and motivate learners throughout the session. Teachers'/trainers' success in engaging learners will be evidenced by learners' attentiveness and by how well they participate in activities, tackle problems and respond in question and answer sessions. Effective teaching/training is learner-focused, challenging but supportive, enthusiastic and responsive to the needs of learners in the group. It also involves using a range of relevant styles and methods which best suit the age, background and experience of the group, and suitable for delivering the ILOs.

C2.5 A range of accurate and rigorous assessment methods are used to evaluate learners' understanding and measure the achievement of ILOs.

The judgement of the quality of assessment and how it is used to inform teaching and learning come from reviewers' observations of lessons, scrutiny of learners' work, the provider's policies, verification/moderation reports, and from discussions with teachers/trainers, learners and other stakeholders. The most effective sessions will involve teachers/trainers regularly assessing what learners know, understand and can do, asking them questions that test understanding and responding to answers to challenge learners further. A range of rigorous assessment methods - formative and summative - are used to measure the achievement of ILOs throughout the course. Marking of learners' work is accurate with clear rubric that will provide information on how well learners are doing and whether they are on target to meet the planned course objectives or ILOs.

C2.6 Teachers/trainers maintain and regularly update learners' performance records and provide effective feedback to help learners improve.

Individual teachers/trainers are expected to carefully monitor, assess and accurately record the performance of individual learners and their progress throughout a course of study or programme. Teachers/trainers are expected to provide a constructive and continuous verbal and written feedback that will include comments and praise for work which is accurate and well produced as well as what the learner precisely can do to improve further. Reviewers will discuss with learners if they know how well they are doing, whether they have appropriate opportunities to review with their teacher/trainer their progress and

whether they are on track to achieve their planned course objectives or ILOs. In addition, learners are expected to know exactly how and when their attainment and progress will be assessed.

C2.7 Teachers/trainers tailor their teaching/training to address the individual learners' needs and capabilities in line with the ILOs.

Teaching/training needs to be adjusted to address the individual learners' needs and capabilities in line with the ILOs; both to support and guide learners who need help and to set challenging tasks to extend those who could be challenged further. Ways of meeting the varying needs of all learners in the group should be detailed in the lesson plan. Such planning requires a sound knowledge of the differing needs of group members, acquired through prior and continuous assessment. Effective teaching/training also involves adjusting, or even completely changing, a lesson plan if the needs of the group are not being met through the original planned activities, session content or mode of delivery.

C2.8 Teachers/trainers use teaching and learning methods that stimulate self-learning, higher order and critical thinking amongst learners, and promote life-long learning.

Teachers/trainers encourage learners to take responsibility for their learning, identify their strengths and weaknesses, act on feedback and propose new learning goals. All learning tasks, activities and questions are directed to encourage learners to be critical and analytical, and promote individual and group learning as well as learning in different contexts through formal, non-formal and informal learning. Teachers/trainers use different strategies that promote life-long learning within learners' personal, civic, social and/or employment-related contexts. The providers are expected to provide the required competences that support learners through a lifetime of work and learning which include the ability to identify, organise, plan and allocate resources; work with others, acquire and evaluate information; understand complex interrelationships; and work with a variety of technologies. Teachers/trainers approach should be able to instil in learners a desire to constantly improve their knowledge, understanding and skills.

C2.9 Teachers/trainers utilise learning resources and materials to effectively promote and enrich the learning experience.

Teachers/trainers use the available learning resources and materials effectively to support the range of learners' needs and extend their interest and motivation. Resources may include computers, audio-visual aids, data shows, books, magazines, artifacts, industrial machines and prepared handouts. Their use should be planned in such a way as to make a contribution to furthering understanding or accelerating learner performance.

Grading of individual lessons/training sessions

When grading individual lessons/training sessions, reviewers focus particularly on learners' performance during the observed session. It is not the teacher/trainer performance itself that is crucial to the judgement but rather the impact of his/her knowledge and expertise, the planning of the session, the teaching/training and assessment methods used and the quality of the delivery on learning that is crucial. Note that any session which does not involve some form of learning assessment is unlikely to be graded satisfactory or better. The evaluation of individual lessons or training sessions is detailed in the table below.

Evaluating the effectiveness of individual lessons or training session

<p>Outstanding (1)</p>	<p>The teacher/training is very well planned and enthusiastically deliver session which is challenging and motivating for all groups and individuals, and the stimulating and relevant range of activities are expertly matched to learners' needs. The teacher/trainer has a high level of subject/vocational expertise and teaching/training experience. The teaching/training inspires learners, promotes their independence and higher order thinking skills and ensures that most if not all learners make good or better progress in the acquisition of the relevant knowledge, understanding and/or skills. High quality resources are used effectively to promote learning. The teacher/trainer uses a range of effective assessment activities to measure learners' performance and achievement of the session objectives/ ILOs and accordingly inform the delivery of the session. Teacher/trainer provides constructive feedback; learners know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.</p>
<p>Good (2)</p>	<p>The teacher/trainer is well prepared and delivers the session briskly using a range of appropriate resources and activities. The majority of learners make good progress in their acquisition of the relevant knowledge, understanding and/or skills and have a positive attitude to their learning. The teacher/trainer has good subject/vocational knowledge and is confident using a range of teaching/training methods and promotes learners independence and generally higher order thinking. Most learners are engaged in the session for most of the time. Resources are used judiciously to support learning. Effective assessment of learners' progress is evident in the session and used in planning. Learners are provided with effective feedback on how to improve.</p>

Satisfactory (3)	The teacher/trainer has suitably planned and delivers the session to meet the needs of learners. Teachers/trainers have relevant subject and course knowledge and use teaching/training methods to generally engage learners in the session. The majority of learners make satisfactory progress in their acquisition of the relevant knowledge, understanding and/or skills. Some assessment is evident and occasionally feedback is provided. Resources are adequate and used appropriately in the session.
Inadequate (4)	As a result of the ineffective planning and/or delivery of the session, or the teacher/trainer inadequate subject/vocational or teaching/training experience most learners do not make the progress expected of them. The teacher/trainer unenthusiastic or overly teacher-centred delivery fails to engage or motivate learners and as a consequence they are bored, restless and/or disinterested. The class activities may be inappropriate, either too difficult or not challenging enough. Assessment is not carried out or is superficial and is not used effectively to help learners improve. Resources, if used at all, are not used effectively to promote learning.

MQ3: How well do programmes meet the needs and interests of learners and stakeholders?

Essential sources of evidence are, but not limited, to the following:

- programme/course plans, schedules and schemes of work, including course outlines and assessment plans
- justification behind offering programmes such as: market surveys, the use of market information and coherent progression pathways for learners
- course materials and learning resources
- discussions with learners, stakeholders, trainers and relevant staff members conducted by the QQA review team
- learners' and stakeholders' feedback collected by the provider (course evaluation)
- promotional literature/prospectuses
- relevant policies and procedures
- the provider's extra-curricular activities
- observation of lessons/training sessions by QQA review team
- correspondence with external vendors
- the provider's records of the observations of individual teachers/trainers
- NQF reports where applicable
- provider's SEF.

Interpreting criteria

Judgements about the appropriateness and effectiveness of programmes relate to the extent to which programmes are designed, structured and planned, and whether they are provided in response to an identified market needs and meeting the requirements of learners and stakeholders, or a specific labour market gap and whether they provide opportunities to progress to a higher level, either at the provider being reviewed or with another provider. For providers offering vocational programmes the judgement will also relate to their content and relevance to the current world of work.

C3.1 Programmes on offer are based on an analysis and understanding of market needs in terms of levels required and professional standards that meet learners' and stakeholders' needs and requirements.

The provider should have a mechanism in place for market needs analysis and/or the rationale behind offering particular programmes in term of levels required and professional standards. Discussions with employers or other relevant stakeholders will help reviewers gather evidence for this criterion, and where appropriate, will discuss whether the programmes offered have improved their employees' productivity. Senior managers are expected to gather and analyse stakeholders' views on the quality and relevance of the programmes offered. Reviewers will expect to be provided with examples of how particular programmes have been offered in response to requests from stakeholders as well as through customization to their specific needs. Discussions with learners will include asking why learners are following a particular course and whether it matches their needs and abilities. A provider may offer and deliver programmes for niche market very effectively which expertly matches specific learners' and/or stakeholders' needs.

C3.2 There is a formal mechanism implemented to design, approve, update and periodically review programmes and where applicable, ensure they meet with the NQF requirements.

The provider is expected to have procedures and systems in place to design, approve, update and regularly reviewing the programmes on offer. The mechanism describes the process of programme design and approval, and state the roles and responsibilities of members and/or committees involved. The provider is expected to benchmark, involve external validators and subject matter experts at key stages of programme development. Programmes are designed based on effective and reliable systems which include planning, delivering, assessing and verifying learners' achievement as well as managing and staffing the programmes and where appropriate, in-line with NQF requirements. Programmes are checked and formally approved against a set of approval criteria. The approval criteria must be agreed, documented and approved by the provider's management board/body, or its representative body.

Programmes are reviewed and updated regularly where the provider is expected to provide evidence on how they have responded to changing market, learners' and stakeholders' needs and, where appropriate, their response to national initiatives and in-line with NQF requirements. The provider should ensure that the externally accredited programmes are current and according to the international partners' requirements and standards.

C3.3 Programmes are structured and planned with detailed course outlines that indicate the ILOs, teaching and assessment methods.

Reviewers will assess whether the different components of the programmes, or courses that compose the programmes, are appropriately and clearly planned and structured to meet the needs of learners and stakeholders. The programmes are designed to enhance and support practical and theoretical learning and have effective processes for assessments of learners' achievement (formative/summative) and monitoring of learning. Reviewers will consider whether the scheduling of tasks, assignments and assessments is manageable and whether components are planned in a sequence that encourages a progressive acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skills. Reviewers will also take into account whether programmes have clearly defined progression routes. The emphasis in this criterion is on planning the programmes – a provider may be offering a wide range of highly relevant programmes but they may be poorly planned and structured. Reviewers will scrutinise course outlines, content and plans to ensure they are up to date and fit-for-purpose with clear ILOs and indicated corresponding teaching and assessment methods. All learners are expected to have at least a written summary of course content before they enroll. If courses are customised for employees in a particular company, outlines of course content are expected to be sent to the employer's training officer in advance.

C3.4 Programmes are sufficiently resourced to meet the needs of learners and stakeholders.

Reviewers will make a judgement as to whether the provider has sufficient and appropriate resources to deliver the stated programmes effectively to learners. This is particularly important where courses require specific resources such as technical or commercial machines and materials and access to sufficient computers and relevant computer software. The judgement here also includes assessing whether the premises are adequate and appropriate considering the number and type of learners as well as the programmes on offer. As above, a provider may be offering a wide range of highly relevant programmes but they may be poorly resourced or the premises may be inadequate to deliver them effectively.

Learning resources should be of an appropriate range and quality, reflecting industrial and commercial standards or be from the relevant subject area and be at the appropriate level given the background of the group. Providers should be aware of the legal implications of photocopying or reproducing copyrighted materials.

C3.5 Programmes are supported with a relevant range of extra-curricular activities which support and enhance the programmes on offer.

‘Extra-curricular’ activities are those activities which providers offer to learners outside the scheduled teaching or training session as a mean of enriching and enhancing their learning experience and where applicable promoting life-long learning. These might include in-house and on the field activities such as: external visits to employers, relevant places/sites, listening to invited speakers, contest and competitions, work experience or secondment. Reviewers will judge the relevance and impact of these on the progress learners make and the general learning experience offered by the provider.

C3.6 The provider is effectively implementing clear requirements and mechanisms for access and entry level to programmes which are reviewed and adjusted as needed.

The provider is expected to have and effectively implement clear access and entry level measures to all programmes/courses on offer including those leading to national qualifications. These measures specify the target audience, the level of any prerequisite requirements and the level(s) of entry or progression pathways. The provider is expected to accept those learners who have met all entry requirements into a specific programme/course, regardless of the learner’s other irrelevant characteristics such as gender, religion and nationality. The provider is expected to review and adjust these measures as needed taking into consideration learners with special educational needs.

MQ4: How well are learners supported and guided?

Essential sources of evidence but not limited to the following:

- discussions with learners, stakeholders’, trainers and relevant staff members conducted by the QQA review team
- learners’ and stakeholders’ feedback collected by the provider (course evaluation)
- relevant policies and procedures
- arrangements to support learners with special educational and training needs
- observation of lessons/training sessions by QQA review team
- relevant examples of support given to learners to achieve better such as success stories.
- performance/progress records
- premises and its facilities
- promotional leaflets, prospectuses, course outline, website and social media
- provider’s SEF.

Interpreting the criteria

Judgements on support and guidance focus on the availability and effectiveness of support for course-related and personal matters, including initial advice and guidance, information about opportunities for future study and employment, the quality and impact of the learning environment and the additional learning support available so that all learners achieve their full potential.

C4.1 The provider has an effective mechanism to support and guide learners to achieve better.

Providers are expected to have a formal, comprehensive and explicit support mechanism in place, readily accessible to all learners which ensures they have every opportunity to reach their full potential and achieve the stated programme or course outcomes. This will include initial guidance on course choice, some form of induction programme that enables them to settle in quickly and confidently and access to a nominated member of staff should they have problems with their studies or other personal matters which may affect their learning. The review team will consider examples where learners are supported to overcome their learning difficulties and improve their achievement, and relevant success stories. This criterion also covers judging the effectiveness of the support and guidance offered by administrative staff.

C4.2 The premises and facilities provide an inspiring learning environment.

The quality of the environment in which courses are delivered plays an important role in supporting learning. A learning environment that inspires and supports learning is likely to be characterised by the availability of teaching/training aids and materials and displays of learners' work, educational/training posters, artifacts and other relevant items. Providers are expected to have hygienic facilities with sufficient and appropriate rooms, furniture, ventilation and air-conditioning, all of an appropriate quality and in good working condition, to ensure that all learners are comfortable and able to focus on the teaching/training that is being delivered. Additionally, learners have access to learning resources, and where needed Information Technology (IT) and other facilities.

C4.3 Learners and stakeholders have access to well-informed advice and guidance about programmes and, where applicable, opportunities for progression and career development.

Providers are expected to have appropriate procedures in place and/or materials available which provide information to learners and stakeholders about the programmes offered and opportunities for progression, either at the provider itself or generally elsewhere. This includes, where applicable, offering advice and guidance about further study, employment opportunities and career progression. Reviewers will consider the availability and quality of course outlines, brochures, website and purposeful utilisation of social media. Effective providers will also keep records of the destinations of previous learners and use these to shape planning and practice.

C4.4 Communication with stakeholders is effective in informing and supporting learners' achievement.

Stakeholders such as employers and parents, are expected to be informed throughout the course of learners' performance and achievement and whether there are any issues or problems with their studies. Providers are expected to have regular, formal and explicit procedures in place for keeping stakeholders informed, including written records or reports of learners' performance and course outcomes which are regularly shared with stakeholders. Reviewer will also consider regular meetings with parents such as open day.

C4.5 The arrangements for the delivery of programmes are appropriately flexible to suit the needs of learners and stakeholders.

Many learners, particularly those in full time employment, will require a degree of flexibility in the timing and structure of programmes. Effective providers will accommodate this in their planning, liaising with both learners and stakeholders to achieve the most suitable arrangements to maximise the opportunity for learners to achieve their learning goals. This may also include conducting courses in convenient venues, choice of language, providing access to distance learning materials and internet-based support.

C4.6 Effective arrangements are in place to identify and support learners with special needs where applicable.

The providers are expected to have policies and procedures to support learners with special needs. In particular, effective arrangements are in place to deal with these learners which include: procedures and/or initial assessment to help identify special needs; clear access and admission procedures; suitable facilities equipped with proper industry standard learning resources; assessment arrangements and, as needed, equipping all teachers/trainers with the professional knowledge and skills to meet the needs of this category of learners.

Leadership, management and governance

MQ5: How effective are leadership, management and governance in raising achievement and improving the quality of the provision?

Essential sources of evidence are, but not limited to, the following:

- the provider's management structure and details of staff roles and responsibilities
- the provider's mission and vision statements
- the provider's strategic and development/action plans
- analysis of learners' performance data and utilisation of outcomes
- quality assurance procedures and other relevant documentation
- records of staff qualifications, monitoring and training

- minutes of management, staff and other relevant meetings
- self-evaluation procedures and outcomes including the yearly update of SEF
- arrangements for health and safety and well-being
- relevant policies and procedures
- external verifiers and moderators reports where applicable
- admission, placement, assessments of prior attainment and use of outcomes
- links with internal and external stakeholders
- where applicable, governing body roles, responsibilities and accountabilities
- discussions with learners, stakeholders, trainers and relevant staff members conducted by the QQA review team
- learners' and stakeholders' feedback collected by the provider (course evaluation) and utilisation of outcomes
- history of improvement/plans for further improvements
- repeat business
- provider's SEF.

Interpreting the criteria

The quality of leadership, supported by efficient management, is central to the success of the provider. Whatever the leadership and management structure adopted by a provider, it is they who are responsible for the quality of the provision (the quality of teaching/training, the range and appropriateness of the programmes offered, the effectiveness of the support and guidance offered to learners) and its impact on the achievement and success of learners. The provider's leaders and managers also have responsibility for ensuring that learners and staff study and work in a healthy, safe and secure, high quality and well-resourced environment.

If significant health and safety issues are judged by the review team to be present, leadership and management as well as the provider's overall effectiveness will be judged as 'inadequate', regardless of all other review judgements. During the review, in case of critical health and safety hazardous situations, the review team will suspend the review.

C5.1 The provider has clear vision and mission statements which are linked with strategic planning that focuses on raising learners' achievement and cascaded to staff.

The provider is expected to have clear vision and mission statements and strategic directions that focus on maximising learners' achievements and improving the quality of provision. Furthermore, the vision is communicated to, and shared with staff. The provider will not

only have clarity of vision, but have targets which are challenging, embedded in a theme of continuous improvement and translated into clear strategic planning based on thorough understanding of their provision. An effective and detailed operational plan is developed accordingly which sets out clear tasks and how progress will be monitored.

C5.2 The provider's organisational structure is effective in meeting the provider's aims and objectives.

The wide range of types and size of providers means that the organisational structures will vary enormously. The size of the provider will differ according to the number of enrolments and range of courses offered, and the type of institution may vary according to whether it is part of a franchise, who it is regulated by or whether it is part of a larger organisation or wholly independent. Reviewers will make a judgement as to whether the organisational structure is appropriate for that provider. This may include analysing the size, experience and responsibilities of staff and particularly the senior management team, and whether their roles and responsibilities are clearly defined. Where appropriate, reviewers will consider the effectiveness of the provider's governance arrangements.

C5.3 The provider's health and safety and well-being policies, procedures and practices are effective in maintaining a safe, secure and healthy learning environment for learners and staff.

All providers are expected to have appropriate, comprehensive and current health and safety policies, procedures and equipment in place and to give the highest priority to the health, safety and well-being of learners and staff. These should be evident in the day-to-day interactions and running of the institution and in an understanding by management and staff as to their responsibilities for these aspects. Providers are also expected to have undertaken an appropriate risk assessment as well as having formal records of evacuation procedures available for reviewers to examine, and based on the nature of the provision, to have staff trained on first aid and handling emergency cases. Although the review does not include a full, formal health and safety audit, reviewers will take note of any obvious hazards to learners and staff, including inappropriate social media (internet) use, and, where relevant, to the supervision and care of young learners, particularly during break periods. Generally, providers are expected to actively promote a climate of care, understanding, tolerance and respect. They should be able to demonstrate to reviewers how this is done, for example by having formal, actioned and regularly reviewed policies in place that clearly state its attitude to and procedures for dealing with incidents of racist, bullying, harassment or other inappropriate behaviours.

If significant health and safety issues are found, leadership and management will be judged as 'inadequate', regardless of all other review judgements, as well as the provider's overall effectiveness. During the review, in case of critical health and safety hazardous situations, the review team will suspend the review.

C5.4 The provider has effective arrangements to quality assure its provision.

The provider is expected to have a quality assurance system that includes a collection of processes and procedures by which it ensures that the quality of all aspects of the learning provision is maintained to the standards that meet the needs and expectations of learners and stakeholders and where applicable the NQF Institutional Listing Standards. Reviewers will focus on the effectiveness of the mechanisms utilised by the provider to review teaching/training and learning, and to improve learners' achievement. In addition, how the provider ensures that assessment are efficiently, effectively and consistently delivered, across different learner groups, and that internal and external assessment moderation and verification processes exist and are effectively implemented. All providers are expected to have effective procedures for assessing and utilizing learners' prior attainment. Reviewers will assess the quality and appropriateness of initial assessment methods and materials, how effectively the outcomes are used for session planning, and how well learners' individual needs are catered for.

C 5.5 The provider's self-evaluation process is rigorous, regular and accurate and is used to provide continuous improvement in the overall quality of provision.

The self-evaluation process can take many forms but all providers are expected to regularly and systematically evaluate their provision and the impact it has on learners' achievement. The most effective self-evaluation process is rigorous, consultative, inclusive, manageable and regular and be integral to the provider's overall approach to quality improvement. Reviewers will discuss with managers whether and how these self-evaluation outcomes are used to assure quality and to take action where quality is not as high as it should be. Accordingly, providers' development/action plans should be clear, appropriate, regularly updated and linked to self-evaluation outcomes. Providers are expected to have a realistic and accurate estimation of their strengths and areas for development, and this should be reflected in the grades awarded and the evidence provided in their QQA Self-Evaluation Form (SEF).

C5.6 Learners' achievement is closely monitored and analysed to inform decision making.

All providers, regardless of the types of programmes offered, are expected to collect data on learners' achievement. This includes both their attainment levels, as measured by retention, success and/or pass rates on courses (both internally designed and externally accredited courses) and, importantly, the progress learners make from their starting points on the courses. Reviewers will make a judgement as to the accuracy of these data and whether the provider has procedures in place to verify assessment decisions, for example through a rigorous internal verification system. Furthermore, providers are expected to analyse the data as a mean of identifying trends over time and areas for development. Effective providers will discuss these data at relevant management and staff meetings to

inform their strategic and action planning and self-evaluation process. Staff are expected to be able to explain to reviewers whether rates of achievement are improving, declining or staying the same and whether there are variations among the courses and levels offered.

C5.7 High quality staff are recruited, inducted and effectively deployed.

Learners' achievement is invariably reliant on the quality of the teaching or training and the support they receive. The provider's staff recruitment policy identifies the minimum requirements in terms of appropriate qualifications and experience, particularly for those involved in the design, delivery and assessment of programmes. Accordingly, providers should ensure that there is a close match between teachers'/trainers' qualifications and experience and the vocational areas or subjects they teach. Providers are expected to have formal induction procedures in place to ensure that the provider's vision, plans, programmes and procedures are fully understood by newly recruited staff. Reviewers will also check that teachers/trainers are effectively deployed in terms of matching specific groups of learners' age and needs, and where applicable, learners with special educational needs.

C5.8 Staff performance is effectively monitored, staff are guided on how to improve and their training needs are assessed and acted upon.

Providers are expected to have formal, regular and relevant procedures and records in place for monitoring the performance of staff and identifying areas for improvement, particularly for those involved in teaching/training. Reviewers will consider the extent to which providers have an effective class observation system to monitor the quality of teaching/training which result in action planning and improvement. This may include, for example, developing more effective teaching and assessment methods, utilising information and communication technology (ICT) in sessions and accommodating the full range of learners' needs. Effective providers will also have in place a programme of continuing professional development for all staff, usually linked to a performance management process with clear targets to improve the provision.

C5.9 Processes are effective in maintaining links with stakeholders and gathering, analysing and acting upon their views and those of learners.

Effective links with relevant stakeholders are vital if providers are to gather information about the range, quality and appropriateness of the programmes they are offering and establishing whether there are gaps in provision which could be filled by the provider. Vocational providers will have well established links with employers and employer groups in those industries for which it is preparing its learners and delivering programmes. For other types of providers, for example where courses are offered to school-age children, reviewers will gauge how effectively are the links with parents, local community groups and feeder schools. Reviewers will also consider networks with relevant local, regional and

international partners and awarding bodies. Reviewers will analyse the appropriateness and effectiveness of the methods providers use for collecting and analysing learners' and stakeholders' views. Reviewers will assess the relevance and coverage of these methods as well as whether the outcomes are analysed, discussed and used to improve the provision.

C5.10 Where one exist, the effectiveness of the governance in holding the leadership accountable for the provider's performance, and in their contributions to its strategic directions.

Where applicable, providers are expected to have some form of governance arrangements. These arrangements should enable members of the governing body/Board of Directors to participate in supporting the provider, to be involved in reviewing its performance holding the leadership accountable, setting its strategic direction and influencing decision-making. Not every provider will have a formally constituted governing body or Board of Directors. In some, the owner may rely on an advisory group to assist in the governance of the provider. All these are perfectly acceptable arrangements in principle. The reviewers will evaluate whether the respective professional and governance roles are kept separate, so that both may function effectively.

Reviewers will assess whether the governance arrangements provide effective oversight of the providers' work, in line with their aims. Reviewers will evaluate how a governing body interacts with the provider and how it responds to their advice.

Overall effectiveness

How effective is the provision in raising learners' achievement and meeting the full range of learners' and stakeholders' needs?

In making this judgement, reviewers will consider whether leadership and management promote a quality of provision that enables all learners to achieve their aspirations and the needs of all relevant stakeholders are met.

In arriving at the judgement for overall effectiveness, reviewers will base their judgements on the outcomes of the five Main Questions, with a particular emphasis on raising learners' achievement and, within that judgement, the progress that learners make from their starting points and whether they have achieved the ILOs and/or course objectives.

The review team will not consider the grades for the five Main Questions and for overall effectiveness in isolation but will analyse the relationship between the grades to ensure that a coherent 'story' is told as to why the outcomes are as they are. For example, if achievement and overall effectiveness have been graded as satisfactory, but other grades awarded are higher or lower than this, the review team will explain why this is the case and detail this in the written review report.

Capacity to improve

The team will evaluate the provider's history of improvement and the impact of initiatives undertaken. Reviewers will pay particular attention to initiatives that focus on raising learners' achievement and rates of retention and enrolment, particularly those initiatives which are continuously improving the quality of teaching/training and assessment. In addition, reviewers will consider improvements made to the quality of provision as a result of addressing learners or stakeholders' concerns, or weaknesses identified through their self-evaluation processes, recommendations provided by the previous QQA quality review. Furthermore, the provider will measure the impact of these improvements. Reviewers will consider the effectiveness of the provider's management and the robustness of the processes underpinning strategic planning and quality improvement. Effective providers will have robust, clear and comprehensive plans for improvement with challenging but realistic targets. Crucially, reviewers will judge whether the provider has sufficient and appropriate high quality staff and resources to enable improvements to be carried out. Reviewers will also consider whether the provider has the capacity to make further improvements to its provision or to maintain the already high quality provision it offers.

