



Joint Council for
Qualifications^{CIC}

Leading the VTQ cycle: A senior leader's guide to supporting their exams officer

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Vocational and Technical Qualifications (VTQs) are a vital part of the qualification landscape, recognising applied learning and assessment across a wide range of subjects and levels. The administration and quality assurance processes operate throughout the year and require strong collaboration between curriculum teams, quality leads and exams officers.

This document is designed to:

- Help you understand your exams officer's role in administering VTQs.
- Help you understand how you can support your exams officer and contribute to the successful delivery of results and certification.
- Provide insight into the VTQ year from your exams officer's perspective, including the pressures, priorities and pivotal moments that define successful delivery.

The VTQ year: a continuous cycle

Unlike many general qualifications, VTQ activity can take place throughout the academic year. Depending on the qualification and awarding organisation, centres may manage multiple assessment, results and quality assurance cycles across the year. Often with overlapping deadlines and assessment windows.

Processes and terminology can differ between qualifications and awarding organisations. However, what stays the same is that delivery relies on strong organisation, clear processes and effective support from senior leadership teams.

Throughout this guide, we include anonymised perspectives from exams officers.

“At the start of the year, once learners are enrolled, it is straight into registrations or entries, checking programme codes, levels and pathways. Each awarding organisation has slightly different systems and deadlines, so there is a lot of cross-checking to make sure nobody is missed.”

Key activities across the VTQ cycle

Learner administration

- Confirming learner details with curriculum teams
- Managing registrations or entries, where required
- Managing re-sit entries and late changes, where required
- Maintaining accurate learner data across awarding organisation systems

“It is important to ensure the data is accurate from the outset. If a learner is missed early in the process, it can create issues later in the cycle.”

Assessment delivery and quality assurance

- Scheduling any internal and external assessments
- Coordinating with quality leads, curriculum teams and internal verifiers
- Supporting access arrangements and invigilation for any externally-assessed components
- Preparing for external quality assurance activity and sampling
- Monitoring assessment and submission deadlines

“There can be periods of overlapping deadlines for entries, claims, sampling activity, and assessment windows. Communication between the exams office and curriculum teams is critical.”

Results and certification

- Submitting results and certification claims through awarding organisation systems, where required
- Managing certification processes
- Distributing certificates securely
- Supporting learner progression through accurate and timely processing

“There can be significant pressure when managing both general qualifications and VTQ outcomes simultaneously. Although the processes differ, both are equally important for learners’ progression.”

Review and preparation

- Reviewing processes and updating centre documentation
- Evaluating what worked well and identifying areas for improvement
- Attending training and updates from awarding organisations
- Preparing for future assessment and quality assurance cycles

“As soon as one assessment cycle is completed, preparation for the next cycle begins. VTQ delivery is continuous throughout the year.”

Your exams officer's and quality lead's role in VTQs

Your exams officer is responsible for the general administration of VTQ processes across both externally- and internally-assessed components. Depending on how VTQs are organised within your centre, examples of your exams officer's responsibilities are shown below.

You will also need to make sure you have a member of staff responsible for overseeing the quality assurance processes linked to internally-assessed components, ensuring that assessment and internal verification activities meet awarding organisation requirements. This might be a nominated quality lead.

Examples of exams officer's key responsibilities	Quality lead key responsibilities
Accurately managing learner registrations and entries adhering to awarding organisation deadlines	Coordinating internal verification and sampling
Managing assessments, claims and results submissions	Managing standardisation and quality meetings
Coordinating external assessments and associated administrative processes, including invigilation where required	Liaising with External Quality Assurers/External Quality Reviewers, where applicable
Maintaining secure, accurate and auditable records, ensuring readiness for audit or review	Ensuring assessors and internal verifiers are trained and supported
Liaising with awarding organisations, teaching staff and senior leaders	Overseeing the implementation of quality assurance feedback and actions
Maintaining up-to-date knowledge of awarding organisation and JCQ requirements	Monitoring the effectiveness and consistency of internal assessment practices

“Our quality lead and I work closely together. They oversee the quality of assessment, while I manage the administration and data. Regular communication helps ensure everything runs smoothly.”

Your role as a senior leader

Strong leadership and oversight are crucial in helping exams officers, quality leads and curriculum teams work effectively together.

You can support this by clearly defining the boundaries between exams administration and quality assurance responsibilities, ensuring all staff understand their roles and accountabilities.

Regular meetings between the exams officer, quality lead and curriculum teams are essential for effective communication and planning. It is important to recognise that VTQ delivery requires ongoing administrative and quality assurance support throughout the year, not just during traditional examination periods, and resources should be allocated accordingly.

Senior leaders should promote a culture of shared accountability and collaboration across teams. You should also ensure that policies, procedures and staff responsibilities remain aligned with awarding organisation and JCQ requirements.

“What makes the biggest difference is when leaders understand that VTQs are not limited to a single exam series. It is an ongoing cycle that requires attention throughout the year.”

Your next steps and action plan

We recommend you make an action plan that outlines how you can support your exams officer as a senior leader. Look at our suggestions and decide how you can implement them in your centre.

Action	We're doing this well	We need to improve	We need to start this	Notes / Actions
We hold regular meetings between SLT, the exams officer, quality leads and curriculum teams.				
We review our exams officer's workload and provide extra support during peak periods.				
Roles and responsibilities for VTQs are clearly documented and understood by all staff.				
VTQs are included in whole-centre strategic planning discussions.				
We conduct an annual review of VTQ processes and update procedures based on lessons learned.				
We have contingency plans for disruptions (e.g., staff absence, IT issues, awarding organisation changes).				