

# Quality Assurance and Improvement Framework

For Modern Apprenticeships, Foundation  
Apprenticeships and Employability Fund

Adaptations for 2021-22

(Update November 2021)

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## Introduction

This document outlines adaptations which are being introduced to the formal quality assurance review process for 2021-22. These adaptations are partially a response to the pandemic situation but are being evaluated on an ongoing basis and may be incorporated as a permanent adaptation where we have identified a positive benefit.

### How we will grade your full quality review

Our quality assurance review methodology continues to be underpinned by the EFQM RADAR principles. However, for the quality assurance reviews being conducted in 2021-22 we are trialling the allocation of separate grades for each quality standard and separate grades for equality and diversity also aligned to the standards. In order to reach the final grade, we will use a set of grade descriptors instead of the EFQM RADAR score.

The table below provides an exemplar of how grades will be presented in the quality assurance report issued to the learning provider:

Standard	Quality Standard Grade	Equality & Diversity Grade
Service Delivery	Very Good	Good
Leadership and Quality Culture	Good	Good
Outcomes and Impacts	Good	Satisfactory

The detailed grade descriptors are detailed in Appendix 1.

### Equality and diversity

In previous years providers were awarded an overall RAG status in relation to their equality and diversity activity and performance. However, we recognise that providers may have effective strategies in place and have adapted their delivery approaches, but results are not reflective of these endeavours. Therefore, for 2021-22 we have decided to allocate separate grades to each of the standards in relation to equality and diversity.

### Report publication

In line with other education and quality assurance agencies throughout the UK our formal quality reviews were suspended in 2020/21. As the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic continue to impact the provider network we have taken the decision not to publish the 2021-22 quality assurance review reports on the SDS website.

## Appendix 1 - Quality Standard Grade Definitions

Grade	Descriptor
<b>Excellent</b>	A grade of <b>excellent</b> indicates the learning provider fully demonstrates meeting the standard thereby providing a very high level of assurance. This applies to provision in which learners' experiences and achievements are of a very high quality, and where learners and employers report a very high level of satisfaction with the service provided. There are examples of highly effective practice worthy of dissemination across the wider learning provider network. The learning provider demonstrates a strong track record of high performance and levels of performance are sustainable.
<b>Very Good</b>	A grade of <b>very good</b> indicates the learning provider fully demonstrates meeting the standard thereby providing a high level of assurance. Provision is characterised by major strengths with a few areas for enhancement. The learning provider is committed to ongoing continuous improvement and committed to raising standards and performance to excellent.
<b>Good</b>	A grade of <b>good</b> indicates the learning provider fully demonstrates meeting the standard thereby providing a good level of assurance. Provision has important strengths which collectively outweigh areas for improvement. However, learners' experiences may be diminished by aspects of delivery which require improvement. The learning provider should seek to improve further the areas of strengths and take action to address the areas for development.
<b>Satisfactory</b>	A grade of <b>satisfactory</b> indicates the learning provider demonstrates meeting the standard at a minimum level thereby providing a basic level of assurance. Provision has some important strengths which collectively just outweigh any areas for improvement. It indicates that learners and employers have access to a basic level of service and experiences have a positive impact on the learners. However, areas for improvement limit the overall quality of the learner experience. The learning provider should develop clear actions to address the areas for improvement.
<b>Weak</b>	A grade of <b>weak</b> indicates the learning provider has been unable to meet the standard at an acceptable level and has not provided sufficient assurance. Few strengths are identified, and these are outweighed by significant areas for improvement. These diminish the overall quality of the learner experience. The learning provider is required to take immediate action to address the weaknesses in the quality of their delivery.
<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	A grade of <b>unsatisfactory</b> indicates the learning provider has been unable to meet the standard at an acceptable level and has not provided sufficient assurance. There are significant areas of concern requiring immediate remedial action. Learners and employers are not receiving a satisfactory level of service and learners' prospects of completing their learning successfully are significantly at risk.

## Equality & Diversity Grade Descriptors

Leadership and Quality Culture	
Grade Definitions	
<b>Excellent</b>	A grade of <b>excellent</b> indicates the learning provider demonstrates a clear commitment across all priority equality groups through a well-implemented equality strategy providing a very high level of assurance. There is clear evidence of planned activities to support and engage underrepresented and/or disadvantaged groups in their WBL provision and a detailed understanding of the issues faced by the sectors the provider delivers in. The provider works effectively with partners to support their strategy and equality & diversity staff CPD is well executed and assessed for impact. There are examples of innovative and effective practice to support equality groups worthy of dissemination across the wider learning provider network.
<b>Very Good</b>	A grade of <b>very good</b> indicates the learning provider demonstrates a clear commitment to equality groups in their provision thereby providing a high level of assurance. Equality & diversity plans and policies are being implemented by the provider and are being assessed for impact. The provider has a very good understanding of the challenges faced by equality groups and the issues faced by the sectors the provider delivers in. The provider works well with partners to support their equality-related activity and relevant, regular staff training on equality and diversity takes place and is assessed for impact.
<b>Good</b>	A grade of <b>good</b> indicates the learning provider demonstrates commitment to equality groups in their provision thereby providing a good level of assurance. There is evidence of equality & diversity related plans and activities being implemented and the provider ensures staff are aware of these. The provider demonstrates a good understanding of the challenges faced by those from underrepresented or disadvantaged groups. There is regular and relevant equality related staff training but there is limited evidence of how this is assessed for impact.
<b>Satisfactory</b>	A grade of <b>satisfactory</b> indicates the learning provider has provided limited evidence of their commitment to supporting underrepresented and/or disadvantaged groups thereby providing a minimum level of assurance. Evidence of equality related plans are poorly documented and staff awareness of these is limited. The provider has a limited understanding of the challenges faced by those from underrepresented and/or disadvantaged groups and the variation in challenges for different sectors. Equality & diversity related staff training is minimal and there is no evidence how this relates to their needs or how it is assessed for impact.
<b>Weak</b>	A grade of <b>weak</b> indicates the learning provider is unable to demonstrate commitment to equality groups in their provision therefore unable to provide sufficient assurance. There is no evidence of equality-related plans or activity in place and staff knowledge of the needs of different equality groups is limited and not being addressed. This significantly impacts the quality of learner experience for those from underrepresented or disadvantaged groups.

<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	A grade of <b>unsatisfactory</b> indicates the learning provider has been unable to meet the standard at an acceptable level, has not provided any assurance. There is no evidence of commitment to equality and diversity in their strategy and there are significant areas of concern regarding the provider's obligations relating to relevant equality legislation. Learners and employers are not receiving a satisfactory level of service and learners from underrepresented and/or disadvantaged groups are not being appropriately served by the provider.
<b>Service Delivery</b>	
<b>Grade Definitions</b>	
<b>Excellent</b>	A grade of <b>excellent</b> indicates the learning provider demonstrates frequent and excellent examples of evidence of adapting their service delivery thereby providing a very high level of assurance. E&D plans and policies deliver support for all learners' success and are shared at induction. All learners are treated as individuals and there are many examples where delivery is being adapted to suit individual needs effectively. Adaptations are reviewed regularly, and further enhancements made as appropriate. The provider proactively supports their employers to have inclusive workplaces and practices appropriate to their sector(s). There are many examples of effective and innovative practice worthy of dissemination across the wider learning provider network.
<b>Very Good</b>	A grade of <b>very good</b> indicates the learning provider demonstrates very good examples of evidence where they are adapting their service delivery thereby providing a high level of assurance. Learners are treated as individuals and there are examples where the majority of delivery practices and approaches have been adapted to suit individual needs. These adaptations are reviewed regularly, and further enhancements made as appropriate. The provider consistently supports their employers to have more inclusive workplaces and practices. There are some examples of effective and innovative practice worthy of dissemination across the wider learning provider network.
<b>Good</b>	A grade of <b>good</b> indicates the learning provider demonstrates good examples of how they adapt their service delivery thereby providing a good level of assurance. Learners are treated as individuals and there are a few examples where delivery practices and approaches have been adapted to suit individual needs. These adaptations are reviewed regularly, and further enhancements introduced where required. The provider has some evidence of where they support employers to have more inclusive workplaces and practices.
<b>Satisfactory</b>	A grade of <b>satisfactory</b> indicates the learning provider demonstrates limited evidence as to how they adapt their service delivery thereby providing a minimum level of assurance. There is evidence of some support for under-represented/disadvantaged individuals, but this is limited. There are a few examples of where delivery practices and approaches have been adapted and limited evidence of the suitability of these adaptations being regularly reviewed and amended.
<b>Weak</b>	A grade of <b>weak</b> indicates the learning provider has been unable to demonstrate appropriate adaptations to their service delivery and has not provided sufficient assurance. There is no evidence of learners being treated as individuals or delivery approaches being adapted to suit their needs. This significantly impacts the quality of learner experience for those from underrepresented or disadvantaged groups.

<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	A grade of <b>unsatisfactory</b> indicates the learning provider has been unable to demonstrate any evidence at all of meeting the equality legislative requirements. There are significant areas of concern requiring immediate remedial action. Learners and employers are not receiving a satisfactory level of service and learners from underrepresented or disadvantaged groups prospects of completing their learning successfully are significantly at risk.
<b>Outcome and Impacts</b>	
<b>Grade Definitions</b>	
<b>Excellent</b>	A grade of <b>excellent</b> indicates the learning provider demonstrates consistently strong performance in relation to all priority equality groups aligned to their own strategy and areas of importance and focus. They perform consistently above national average(s) and these levels of performance are sustainable.
<b>Very Good</b>	A grade of <b>very good</b> indicates the learning provider demonstrates strong performance in relation to equality groups aligned to their own strategy and areas of importance and focus. They perform above national average(s) and these levels of performance are sustainable.
<b>Good</b>	A grade of <b>good</b> indicates the learning provider demonstrates acceptable performance in relation to some of the key equality groups. Their results are in line with national averages. There is evidence of positive trend(s) in performance and good assurance that these levels of improvement are sustainable.
<b>Satisfactory</b>	A grade of <b>satisfactory</b> indicates the learning provider demonstrates a minimum level of performance in relation to some of the key equality groups. Their results are in line with, or just below, national averages. There is limited evidence of positive trends and limited assurance that improvement can be generated or sustained.
<b>Weak</b>	A grade of <b>weak</b> indicates the learning provider has been unable to demonstrate acceptable performance in relation to the key equality groups. They perform consistently below national average(s).
<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	A grade of <b>unsatisfactory</b> indicates the learning provider has been unable to demonstrate acceptable performance in relation to the key equality groups. Participation rates from those from underrepresented groups are non-existent.