



COMPARABILITY OF ASSESSMENT POLICY



Version Number	Date	Purpose of Change	Classification	Sign Off
V4.1	12/11/2025	Merge of EPA and Awarding Content, and new Formatting	Public	Kerry Ore

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Unit F8A | Holly Farm Business Park | Honiley Road | Kenilworth | CV8 1NP
T: 02476 421125
E: info@smartawards.co.uk
W: www.smartawards.co.uk

Company Number 9079735 | VAT Number 216 7632

1. POLICY STATEMENT

1.1 Smart Awards is committed to delivering consistent, fair, reliable and valid assessments across all Qualifications, Apprenticeship Assessments, and End-Point Assessments (EPA).

1.2 This policy ensures that assessment decisions are comparable, regardless of when, where or by whom the assessment is carried out. Smart Awards will take all reasonable steps to ensure that comparability is maintained so that:

- Assessors and Independent End-Point Assessors (IEPAs) make consistent and objective judgements.
- Assessment outcomes reflect the same national standards across all delivery locations and time periods.
- Assessment processes are applied consistently across all Smart Awards qualifications and apprenticeship standards.

1.3 Smart Awards will achieve this through robust quality assurance arrangements, standardisation, moderation, and continual improvement to maintain integrity and public confidence in its assessment decisions.

2. SCOPE

2.1 This policy applies to all Smart Awards' activities related to:

- The development, delivery and award of regulated Qualifications.
- The development, delivery and award of Apprenticeship Assessments.
- The development, delivery and award of End-Point Assessments (EPA).

2.2 The purpose of this policy is to:

- Protect Smart Awards' integrity as an awarding and end-point assessment organisation.
- Ensure assessments are consistent, valid and reliable, regardless of assessor, centre or employer.
- Provide assurance that all assessment outcomes are comparable across different cohorts and assessment methods.
- Support assessors, trainers, employers, and centres in applying the same standards in all assessments.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

- **Chief Executive Officer (CEO)** – Holds overall responsibility for ensuring this policy is implemented and remains compliant with regulatory requirements.
- **Responsible Officer** – Oversees the operational implementation of this policy, ensuring comparability processes are embedded within all qualifications, apprenticeship and EPA delivery.
- **Quality Manager** – Maintains quality assurance processes that secure comparability of assessment across all delivery areas. Responsible for moderation, standardisation, assessor training and internal audit.

- **Centres, Employers and Training Providers** – Must implement Smart Awards' quality assurance procedures to ensure assessment comparability across assessors, learners and apprentices.
- **Assessors and Independent End-Point Assessors (IEPAs)** – Are responsible for applying national assessment standards consistently, attending standardisation activities, and ensuring fairness and objectivity in all decisions.

4. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

4.1 Smart Awards ensures comparability across Qualifications, Apprenticeship Assessments and EPAs through:

- Applying consistent assessment principles and grading criteria across all delivery models.
- Ensuring assessment design, delivery and decision-making reflect the same level of demand and rigour.
- Maintaining independence and impartiality at every stage of the assessment process.
- Reviewing assessment policies and guidance annually to maintain alignment with sector standards, Ofqual and SQA requirements.

4.2 All assessment decisions must be based on objective evidence of learner or apprentice performance against published criteria, and not influenced by personal or organisational interest.

5. QUALITY ASSURANCE ARRANGEMENTS

5.1 Assessment Design and Development

- Smart Awards works with subject and technical experts to ensure that assessment materials for Qualifications, Apprenticeships and EPAs are comparable in terms of breadth, depth and demand.
- Assessment tools and grading criteria are reviewed regularly to ensure they measure the intended outcomes and maintain validity, reliability and fairness.
- Assessment methodologies are designed to allow reasonable adjustments where required, without compromising comparability or rigour.

5.2 Assessment Delivery

- Centres, Employers and Training Providers must implement Smart Awards' assessment and internal quality assurance procedures to maintain consistent interpretation of assessment requirements.
- Smart Awards provides clear assessment guidance and documentation to ensure all assessors, apprentices and learners are assessed against the same standards.
- For EPAs, Smart Awards ensures all IEPAs follow consistent processes, including structured questioning, standardised marking frameworks, and common grading descriptors.

5.3 Assessor and IEPA Training

- All assessors and IEPAs undertake comprehensive induction and annual refresher training covering:
 - Consistent application of assessment and grading criteria.
 - Objectivity and avoidance of bias.

- Standardisation of evidence requirements and feedback practices.
- Annual refresher sessions and standardisation events ensure assessors' and IEPAs' understanding of standards remains consistent.

5.4 Standardisation and Moderation

- Smart Awards conducts standardisation meetings to ensure uniform interpretation of assessment criteria across assessors, Centres and IEPAs.
- Moderation processes include sampling of assessment evidence, review of recorded interviews, and observation of live assessments to ensure consistent application of standards.
- Where discrepancies are identified, Smart Awards will issue feedback, additional guidance, or require retraining.

5.5 Internal and External Quality Assurance

- Internal Quality Assurers (IQAs) verify assessment decisions at Centre or employer level to ensure consistency.
- External Quality Assurance (EQA) is undertaken in line with the requirements of the designated EQA body for each apprenticeship standard or qualification.
- EQA findings are reviewed and inform continuous improvement activity.

5.6 Collaboration and Best Practice

- Smart Awards collaborates with other Awarding and End-Point Assessment Organisations to share best practice and promote sector-wide consistency and comparability.

6. MONITORING AND REVIEW OF COMPARABILITY

6.1 Smart Awards monitors assessment comparability through:

- **Sampling and moderation** of assessment decisions across all assessors, IEPAs and Centres.
- **Trend analysis** of assessment and grading outcomes across cohorts, qualifications and EPAs.
- **Feedback reviews** from learners, apprentices, Centres, employers and training providers.
- **Observation of assessment activities** and review of documentation, recordings and evidence.
- **Annual comparability reviews** across all qualifications and apprenticeship standards to confirm consistency in application of standards.

6.2 Where inconsistencies are identified, Smart Awards will:

- Conduct a detailed investigation.
- Implement corrective action, including targeted moderation or additional training.
- Record the issue and outcomes on the SAMS Quality Assurance Log.
- Escalate significant concerns to the CEO and Board.

7. CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT

7.1 Smart Awards is committed to continuous improvement in assessment comparability by:

- Reviewing assessment specifications, procedures and materials following feedback or regulatory change.
- Updating policies and guidance based on findings from internal audit, EQA, and comparability reviews.
- Enhancing assessor and IEPA training materials to reflect lessons learned and sector developments.

8. REVIEW OF THIS POLICY

8.1 This policy is reviewed annually or sooner in response to:

- Feedback from Centres, Employers, IEPAs, apprentices and regulators.
- Changes to legislation, regulatory requirements or apprenticeship assessment plans.
- Findings from audits, comparability reviews or EQA feedback.

8.2 Revisions are approved by the Smart Awards Board and circulated to all relevant stakeholders.

9. OFQUAL GENERAL CONDITIONS OF RECOGNITION

9.1 A1.1 – The awarding organisation must not, by any act or omission, render itself unsuitable to continue to be recognised.

9.2 B3.1 – The awarding organisation must notify Ofqual when it has cause to believe that an event has occurred which could have an Adverse Effect.

9.3 D1.2 – A qualification will only be fit for purpose if it secures validity, reliability, comparability, manageability and minimises bias.

9.4 D3.3 – The awarding organisation must review and revise its approach where an Adverse Effect has occurred.

9.5 PR1.1 (Principles 2–4) – The awarding organisation must treat learners fairly, ensure qualifications are fit for purpose and maintain public confidence.

10. OFQUAL APPRENTICESHIP CONDITIONS

10.1 EPA1.1 – The awarding organisation must comply with all requirements, and have regard to any guidance, contained in the relevant Assessment Plan.

10.2 EPA1.2 – The awarding organisation must take all reasonable steps to satisfy itself that each apprentice has met the relevant Gateway requirements prior to taking an assessment.

10.3 EPA3.1 – The awarding organisation must promptly notify Ofqual when it has cause to believe that any event has occurred, or is likely to occur, which could have an Adverse Effect (e.g. assessment inconsistency or delivery failure).

10.4 EPA3.2(d) – Specific example: where there has been a failure in the delivery of an assessment which threatens assessors' ability to differentiate accurately and consistently between levels of attainment demonstrated by learners.

10.5 EPA3.4 – The awarding organisation must inform Ofqual of the steps taken or intended to correct or mitigate an Adverse Effect on comparability.

10.6 EPA4.1(a–b) – The awarding organisation must assign and maintain the correct level for each EPA in line with the associated Apprenticeship Standard to ensure comparability of level and demand.

10.7 EPA5.1–5.2 – The awarding organisation must comply with Ofqual's technical evaluation requirements and provide evidence to confirm the validity, reliability, and comparability of assessment materials and outcomes.

10.8 EPA6.2–6.3 – The EPA Qualification Level Conditions apply in addition to the General Conditions of Recognition, and take precedence where necessary, ensuring comparability and standardisation are maintained across all assessments.

11. QUALIFICATIONS SCOTLAND ACCREDITATION PRINCIPLES

11.1 Principle 1: The awarding body must have clearly defined and effective governance arrangements.

11.2 Principle 13: The awarding body and its providers must have systems and processes that ensure effective quality assurance and comparability of accredited qualifications.