



SMART AWARDS – CENTRE ASSESSMENT STANDARDS SCRUTINY (CASS) STRATEGY



Version Number	Date	Purpose of Change	Classification	Sign Off
V2	01/10/2026	Full document reformatted and revised to align the CASS Strategy with the updated EQA Strategy, ensuring consistency in structure, terminology and approach.	Public	Kerry Ore

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1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

1.1 This Centre Assessment Standards Scrutiny (CASS) Strategy sets out Smart Awards' arrangements for ensuring the accuracy, consistency and integrity of centre-marked assessments.

1.2 It defines how Smart Awards scrutinises centre assessment decisions, applies moderation where appropriate and monitors the effectiveness of marking and internal quality assurance arrangements to maintain confidence in the results issued.

1.3 This Strategy applies to Smart Awards qualifications where assessments are marked by approved centres, including regulated, non-regulated and apprenticeship-related qualifications. End-Point Assessment (EPA) is excluded.

1.4 It covers risk-based scrutiny, assessment sampling, moderation, marking consistency, results accuracy and the evaluation of CASS arrangements.

1.5 This Strategy forms part of the Smart Awards Quality Assurance Framework and should be read alongside the EQA Strategy and relevant Smart Awards policies.

1.6 In matters relating to Centre Assessment Standards Scrutiny, including the scrutiny of centre marking, moderation and the accuracy of assessment decisions, this Strategy takes precedence over the EQA Strategy and associated operational procedures, subject to applicable regulatory requirements.

2. PRINCIPLES AND REGULATORY CONTEXT

2.1 Smart Awards shall maintain effective Centre Assessment Standards Scrutiny (CASS) arrangements in accordance with the Ofqual General Conditions of Recognition, including Condition H2, and applicable Qualifications Scotland Accreditation requirements.

2.2 Smart Awards shall ensure that centre-marked assessments are subject to appropriate scrutiny to maintain the accuracy, validity, reliability and consistency of assessment decisions and the integrity of results.

2.3 CASS arrangements shall be underpinned by the principles of impartiality, transparency, accountability, proportionality and continuous improvement.

2.4 Smart Awards shall apply a risk-based approach to CASS, taking account of qualification and assessment characteristics, centre performance, assessor competence, internal quality assurance arrangements and previous scrutiny outcomes.

2.5 CASS activities shall include appropriate sampling of centre assessment decisions, moderation where required, and the identification and correction of inaccurate or inconsistent marking.

2.6 Smart Awards retains overall responsibility for the effectiveness of its CASS arrangements and shall ensure that findings inform ongoing monitoring, standardisation and improvement activities.

2.7 Smart Awards shall ensure that CASS arrangements are appropriate to the structure, assessment methods and marking requirements of each qualification, with the level and nature of scrutiny determined by the risks associated with centre marking.

3. GOVERNANCE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 Smart Awards retains overall accountability for the effectiveness of its Centre Assessment Standards Scrutiny (CASS) arrangements and compliance with applicable regulatory requirements.

3.2 The Responsible/Accountable Officer shall maintain regulatory oversight of the CASS Strategy, ensuring that arrangements remain compliant with Ofqual and Qualifications Scotland Accreditation requirements and that significant risks or potential Adverse Effects are appropriately escalated and reported.

3.3 The Head of Department shall be responsible for the implementation, effectiveness and review of the CASS Strategy, including approval of changes to sampling arrangements, corrective actions and escalation decisions, ensuring appropriate resources and controls are maintained.

3.4 The EQA Manager shall oversee the operational delivery of CASS activities, including risk-based sampling, moderation arrangements, monitoring of assessment decisions, review of findings and recommendations for corrective actions or escalation to the Head of Department.

3.5 External Quality Assurers (EQAs) shall undertake CASS activities in accordance with Smart Awards' approved procedures, reviewing centre marking, assessment evidence and internal quality assurance arrangements, and reporting any inaccuracies, inconsistencies or concerns.

3.6 Smart Awards shall ensure that all personnel undertaking Centre Assessment Standards Scrutiny activities have appropriate competence, receive relevant training and have no personal interest in the outcome of the scrutiny, in accordance with the competence and impartiality requirements set out in the EQA Strategy.

3.7 Approved centres shall ensure that assessments are marked accurately and consistently, that effective internal quality assurance arrangements are maintained, and that all assessment records and evidence are made available for scrutiny.

3.8 Smart Awards shall ensure that CASS findings are reviewed, recorded and used to inform risk assessments, additional scrutiny, standardisation and continuous improvement activities.

4. RISK-BASED CENTRE ASSESSMENT SCRUTINY

4.1 Smart Awards shall apply a risk-based approach to Centre Assessment Standards Scrutiny, taking account of centre performance, assessment methods, qualification characteristics and the effectiveness of internal quality assurance arrangements.

4.2 Centre approval, risk ratings, audit frequency and associated monitoring arrangements shall be managed in accordance with the Smart Awards EQA Strategy.

4.3 CASS activity shall be informed by identified risks relating to the accuracy and consistency of centre marking, including previous scrutiny outcomes, assessor competence, assessment evidence and internal quality assurance findings.

4.4 Where increased risks to assessment standards are identified, Smart Awards may undertake additional sampling, targeted scrutiny or moderation, regardless of the centre's overall risk rating.

4.5 Findings from CASS activity shall inform centre risk assessments and any required corrective actions or additional monitoring arrangements.

4.6 The EQA Manager shall review CASS findings and recommend changes to scrutiny arrangements or escalation where necessary, subject to approval by the Head of Department.

4.7 Smart Awards shall document the rationale for CASS scrutiny arrangements, including the nature and extent of sampling or moderation required, the risks considered and any subsequent changes arising from scrutiny findings.

4.8 Smart Awards shall determine whether a Centre is permitted to undertake centre marking through its centre approval and qualification approval arrangements, taking account of assessor competence, internal quality assurance capacity, assessment resources and the risks associated with the relevant qualification. Approval and ongoing monitoring shall be managed in accordance with the EQA Strategy and applicable centre approval procedures.

5. DIRECT CLAIM STATUS (DCS)

5.1 Direct Claim Status (DCS) permits approved centres to claim certificates directly through Quartz without individual EQA approval, subject to ongoing monitoring and scrutiny by Smart Awards.

5.2 Smart Awards shall ensure that centres granted DCS demonstrate effective internal quality assurance arrangements, accurate and consistent assessment decisions, and compliance with applicable qualification and assessment requirements.

5.3 The granting, maintenance, suspension and withdrawal of DCS shall be managed in accordance with the Smart Awards EQA Strategy and relevant certification procedures.

5.4 Centres holding DCS shall remain subject to risk-based Centre Assessment Standards Scrutiny to confirm the continued accuracy and consistency of centre marking and the effectiveness of internal quality assurance arrangements.

5.5 CASS scrutiny of DCS centres shall take account of previous assessment and sampling outcomes, marking consistency, assessor competence, qualification-specific risks and any identified concerns regarding assessment integrity.

5.6 Where CASS activity identifies inaccurate or inconsistent marking, ineffective internal quality assurance or risks to the integrity of results, Smart Awards shall take proportionate action, which may include increased scrutiny, corrective actions or a recommendation to suspend or withdraw DCS.

5.7 The EQA Manager shall review CASS findings relating to DCS and make recommendations to the Head of Department, who shall approve any resulting changes to scrutiny arrangements or escalation decisions.

6. SAMPLING AND CENTRE ASSESSMENT STANDARDS SCRUTINY (CASS)

6.1 Smart Awards shall undertake systematic scrutiny of centre-marked assessments to ensure that assessment decisions are accurate, consistent and supported by valid, authentic and sufficient learner evidence.

6.2 CASS activities shall provide assurance that assessment criteria are applied consistently across centres, assessors and qualifications, and that assessment standards are maintained over time.

6.3 Smart Awards shall maintain documented qualification-specific CASS arrangements, identifying the assessments and components subject to centre marking, the scrutiny or moderation approach applied, sampling methodology and frequency, and the rationale for the arrangements selected. These arrangements shall take account of differences in assessment methods, delivery models, centre characteristics and identified risks, and shall form part of the supporting evidence for this Strategy.

6.4 Smart Awards shall undertake Centre Assessment Standards Scrutiny at least annually in respect of each Centre undertaking centre-marked assessments not subject to moderation, including consideration of marking undertaken since the previous scrutiny and, where appropriate, observation of assessments and associated marking. These activities may be undertaken remotely or onsite, in accordance with applicable Ofqual requirements.

6.5 Smart Awards shall ensure that marking across all centre-marked components of each applicable qualification is subject to scrutiny over time. Individual components need not be scrutinised annually, provided that the arrangements ensure appropriate coverage and are supported by documented sampling records.

6.6 Smart Awards shall determine appropriate sampling arrangements having regard to identified risks relating to the Centre, assessment and qualification; learner registration volumes; the range of learner attainment; the number of assessors involved in marking; the number of personnel undertaking internal quality assurance; and previous scrutiny outcomes. Sampling arrangements shall be proportionate to these factors and adjusted where additional risks are identified.

6.7 Sampling shall be sufficiently representative to provide confidence in centre marking and, where appropriate, include different assessors, learners, assessment components, evidence types and achievement outcomes.

6.8 CASS activities may include random and targeted sampling, review of assessment evidence and marking records, scrutiny of internal quality assurance decisions, comparative reviews across assessors or centres, and moderation where appropriate.

6.9 Smart Awards shall ensure that sampling arrangements take account of the timing and nature of assessment activity, including qualifications delivered on a continuous or roll-on, roll-off basis.

6.10 Sampling arrangements shall be designed to provide sufficient assurance over marking standards, taking account of the assessment components, learner cohorts, assessor coverage and the risks associated with the qualification. Where sampling is insufficient to establish confidence in assessment decisions, further scrutiny shall be undertaken.

6.11 Additional or enhanced sampling shall be undertaken where identified risks indicate that existing scrutiny arrangements may be insufficient to provide confidence in the accuracy or consistency of assessment decisions.

6.12 External Quality Assurers shall undertake CASS sampling in accordance with approved arrangements, record their findings and identify any inaccuracies, inconsistencies or concerns requiring further investigation or corrective action.

6.13 Smart Awards shall record the sampling undertaken, the assessment evidence reviewed, the findings reached and the rationale for determining whether the required assessment standards have been maintained.

6.14 Where scrutiny identifies potential deviations from required marking standards, Smart Awards shall investigate the extent of the issue and determine whether additional sampling, correction of marks or results, or preventative action is required, in accordance with the relevant procedures.

6.15 The EQA Manager shall review CASS sampling outcomes, identify emerging risks or trends and recommend changes to scrutiny arrangements where necessary, subject to approval by the Head of Department.

6.16 CASS findings shall be documented and used to inform future sampling arrangements, centre monitoring, assessor and IQA standardisation, and continuous improvement activities.

7. MODERATION AND VERIFICATION

7.1 Smart Awards shall apply moderation and other appropriate scrutiny arrangements to ensure that centre-marked assessment decisions are accurate, consistent and aligned with the relevant qualification specification and assessment criteria.

7.2 Moderation shall be undertaken where required by applicable regulatory conditions or where Smart Awards determines that moderation is necessary to maintain confidence in the accuracy and consistency of centre marking.

7.3 Where moderation is required, Smart Awards shall undertake the necessary scrutiny and confirm the reliability of centre marking before the relevant results are issued.

7.4 Decisions regarding the application of moderation shall take account of qualification characteristics, assessment methods, the degree of judgement involved in marking, previous scrutiny findings and any identified risks to assessment standards.

7.5 Moderation activities may include the review of centre-marked assessment evidence, comparison of marking decisions against assessment criteria and exemplars, and comparative scrutiny across assessors, centres or learner cohorts.

7.6 Smart Awards shall determine the nature and extent of moderation using a documented, risk-based approach that provides sufficient assurance over the accuracy and consistency of assessment decisions.

7.7 Where moderation identifies inaccurate or inconsistent marking, Smart Awards shall investigate the nature, extent and potential impact of the issue on affected learners and assessment outcomes. Appropriate corrective action shall be taken, which may include additional sampling, re-marking of affected assessments or withholding the issue of results until confidence in the accuracy and consistency of marking has been established.

7.8 Any changes to assessment decisions or results arising from moderation shall be supported by appropriate evidence, authorised in accordance with Smart Awards' approved procedures and recorded to maintain a clear audit trail.

7.9 Where assessments are not subject to moderation, Smart Awards shall undertake appropriate scrutiny of centre marking in accordance with Section 6 of this Strategy and applicable regulatory requirements.

7.10 Verification and other post-assessment scrutiny activities shall evaluate the accuracy and consistency of assessment decisions, the application of assessment criteria and the effectiveness of centre internal quality assurance arrangements.

7.11 External Quality Assurers shall undertake moderation and verification activities in accordance with approved procedures, document their findings and identify any inconsistencies or concerns requiring corrective action.

7.12 The EQA Manager shall review moderation and verification findings and recommend additional scrutiny, corrective actions or escalation where necessary, subject to approval by the Head of Department.

7.13 Smart Awards shall use moderation and verification findings to identify trends in marking accuracy, inform assessor and IQA standardisation, and support the continuous improvement of assessment arrangements.

8. MARKING, RESULTS AND CORRECTING ERRORS

8.1 Smart Awards shall ensure that centre-marked assessment decisions accurately reflect the level of attainment demonstrated by learners and are made consistently against the relevant qualification specification and assessment criteria.

8.2 Approved centres shall ensure that assessors apply assessment criteria accurately, consistently and impartially, basing assessment decisions on valid, authentic and sufficient learner evidence.

8.3 Centres shall maintain effective internal quality assurance arrangements to monitor marking accuracy, support assessor standardisation and identify inconsistencies in assessment decisions.

8.4 Smart Awards shall monitor the consistency of marking across centres, assessors, assessment components and, where applicable, optional tasks or units, to identify potential variations that could disadvantage learners or compromise assessment standards.

8.5 Where inconsistencies in marking standards or assessment requirements are identified, Smart Awards shall investigate the potential impact and determine appropriate corrective action to maintain fairness and comparability of learner outcomes.

8.6 Smart Awards shall maintain appropriate controls to ensure that results are supported by assessment evidence and that any required moderation or pre-results scrutiny has been completed before results are issued.

8.7 Potential inaccuracies in assessment decisions or results may be identified through CASS sampling, moderation, EQA activity, appeals, complaints, malpractice or maladministration investigations, or notifications from centres and other stakeholders.

8.8 Where a potentially incorrect result is identified, Smart Awards shall investigate the nature, cause and extent of the error, including whether other learners, assessment decisions or qualifications may be affected.

8.9 Smart Awards shall determine appropriate corrective action in accordance with applicable regulatory requirements and the Incorrect Results Management Procedure set out in Annex A of this Strategy, taking account of the potential impact on learners, qualification integrity and public confidence.

8.10 Decisions regarding the correction of results shall consider relevant factors, including the nature and significance of the error, the time elapsed since certification, the impact on affected learners and any health, safety or licence-to-practise implications.

8.11 Where corrections are required, Smart Awards shall ensure that decisions are appropriately authorised, affected records and certificates are amended where necessary, and relevant learners and centres are informed in accordance with applicable procedures.

8.12 Where incorrect results or marking concerns present a potential Adverse Effect, Smart Awards shall assess and manage the risk in accordance with its regulatory notification and incident management arrangements.

8.13 Smart Awards shall maintain appropriate records of identified errors, investigations, decisions, corrective actions and communications to provide a clear audit trail and demonstrate regulatory compliance.

8.14 The EQA Manager shall oversee the review of CASS-related marking errors and recommend appropriate corrective actions or escalation to the Head of Department, with significant regulatory concerns referred to the Responsible/Accountable Officer.

8.15 Smart Awards shall review the causes of inaccurate marking or incorrect results and use findings to inform improvements to assessment guidance, centre monitoring, standardisation, internal quality assurance and CASS arrangements.

9. AUDITS AND MONITORING

9.1 Smart Awards shall ensure that findings from Centre Assessment Standards Scrutiny (CASS) activities are incorporated into its wider External Quality Assurance (EQA) monitoring arrangements to maintain oversight of centre marking and assessment standards.

9.2 Centre audit frequency, audit types, scheduling, reporting and associated monitoring arrangements shall be managed in accordance with the Smart Awards EQA Strategy.

9.3 EQA monitoring activities shall, where applicable, include scrutiny of centre assessment decisions, marking records, internal quality assurance arrangements and evidence of assessor standardisation, in accordance with this Strategy.

9.4 Where EQA activity identifies concerns relating to the accuracy or consistency of centre marking, Smart Awards shall determine whether additional CASS scrutiny, targeted sampling or moderation is required.

9.5 Findings from CASS activities shall inform centre risk assessments, ongoing monitoring arrangements and any required corrective actions, regardless of the centre's existing risk rating.

9.6 Smart Awards may undertake thematic or cross-centre reviews where CASS findings identify potential inconsistencies in assessment standards across centres, assessors or qualifications.

9.7 The EQA Manager shall review relevant CASS and EQA findings, monitor the completion and effectiveness of corrective actions relating to assessment standards, and recommend additional scrutiny or escalation to the Head of Department where necessary.

9.8 Smart Awards shall maintain appropriate records of CASS findings arising from EQA activity, including identified risks, corrective actions, follow-up scrutiny and evidence of resolution.

9.9 Outcomes from CASS-related monitoring shall inform future scrutiny arrangements, assessor and IQA standardisation, qualification reviews and continuous improvement activities.

10. SANCTIONS AND ESCALATION

10.1 Smart Awards shall take proportionate action where Centre Assessment Standards Scrutiny (CASS) identifies concerns that may compromise the accuracy, consistency or integrity of centre-marked assessment decisions.

10.2 Concerns requiring corrective action or escalation may include inaccurate or inconsistent marking, insufficient assessment evidence, ineffective internal quality assurance, repeated assessment errors or failure to address previously identified CASS findings.

10.3 Smart Awards shall assess the nature, seriousness and potential impact of identified concerns, including whether other learners, assessors, centres or qualifications may be affected, before determining appropriate action.

10.4 Corrective actions may include additional sampling, targeted moderation, re-marking of affected assessments, assessor or IQA standardisation, enhanced monitoring or restrictions on the release of results where necessary to protect assessment integrity.

10.5 Where CASS findings indicate significant or persistent non-compliance, Smart Awards may consider formal sanctions, including restrictions on Direct Claim Status (DCS), suspension of certification or restrictions on centre approval. Formal sanctions shall be applied in accordance with the Smart Awards Sanctions Policy, with associated centre monitoring arrangements managed in accordance with the EQA Strategy.

10.6 The EQA Manager shall review CASS findings and recommend appropriate corrective actions or escalation to the Head of Department, who shall approve the resulting decisions in accordance with Smart Awards' governance arrangements.

10.7 Where concerns indicate a potential Adverse Effect, regulatory breach, malpractice or maladministration, the matter shall be escalated to the Responsible/Accountable Officer and managed in accordance with Smart Awards' regulatory notification and relevant investigation procedures.

10.8 Smart Awards shall ensure that centres are informed of required corrective actions or sanctions, including the reasons for the decision, completion timescales, evidence requirements and applicable rights of appeal.

10.9 Smart Awards shall monitor the implementation and effectiveness of corrective actions to ensure that identified risks to assessment standards have been appropriately addressed. Any decision to remove restrictions or lift formal sanctions shall be made in accordance with the Smart Awards Sanctions Policy, with ongoing centre monitoring managed in accordance with the EQA Strategy.

10.10 All CASS-related corrective actions, escalation decisions, sanctions and subsequent reviews shall be documented to provide an appropriate audit trail and inform future scrutiny and centre monitoring arrangements.

11. REVIEW AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

11.1 Smart Awards shall review the effectiveness of its Centre Assessment Standards Scrutiny (CASS) Strategy at least annually, or sooner where regulatory changes, qualification developments or identified risks require an earlier review.

11.2 The review shall evaluate whether the sampling, moderation and scrutiny arrangements remain appropriate and effective in maintaining the accuracy and consistency of centre-marked assessment decisions.

11.3 The review shall consider relevant evidence, including CASS findings, marking inconsistencies, incorrect results, appeals, complaints, corrective actions and emerging risks or trends.

11.4 Where improvements are identified, Smart Awards shall review and amend its CASS arrangements as necessary, ensuring that changes are proportionate to the risks identified and applicable regulatory requirements.

11.5 Smart Awards shall document the outcomes of CASS reviews, including decisions, amendments and improvement actions, and monitor their implementation and effectiveness.

Annex A – Incorrect Results Management Procedure

A1. Purpose

A1.1 This procedure sets out the arrangements for identifying, investigating, determining and implementing appropriate action where a centre-marked assessment result issued, or proposed to be issued, by Smart Awards is suspected to be incorrect.

A1.2 Decisions shall be made in accordance with applicable regulatory requirements, taking account of Ofqual's guidance on making changes to incorrect results and the potential impact on affected learners.

A2. Identification and Initial Recording

A2.1 Potentially incorrect results may be identified through CASS sampling, moderation, EQA activity, appeals, complaints, malpractice or maladministration investigations, certification checks or notifications from centres and other stakeholders.

A2.2 Upon identification, the concern shall be recorded and referred to the EQA Manager for initial review, including the qualification, centre, affected learners, nature of the suspected error and available supporting evidence.

A2.3 Where there is an immediate risk of further incorrect results being issued, the EQA Manager shall escalate the concern to the Head of Department for consideration of appropriate interim controls.

A3. Investigation and Impact Assessment

A3.1 The EQA Manager shall coordinate the investigation, including examination of relevant learner evidence, assessment decisions, marking records, internal quality assurance records and certification information.

A3.2 The investigation shall establish whether an error has occurred, its cause and extent, and whether other learners, assessors, assessment components, centres or qualifications may be affected.

A3.3 Where necessary, additional sampling, independent review or re-marking shall be undertaken to establish the accuracy of affected assessment decisions.

A3.4 The potential impact shall be evaluated, including the significance of the error, whether results or certificates have already been issued, the time elapsed, potential learner disadvantage and any health, safety or licence-to-practise implications.

A3.5 Where a potential Adverse Effect or regulatory breach is identified, the matter shall be referred to the Responsible/Accountable Officer for consideration of regulatory notification and any additional actions required.

A4. Determination and Authorisation

A4.1 Following investigation, the EQA Manager shall document the findings and recommend whether results require correction, further investigation or other appropriate action.

A4.2 The Head of Department shall review the findings and authorise the proposed action, ensuring that the rationale is documented and relevant regulatory requirements have been considered.

A4.3 Decisions shall consider the interests of affected learners, the integrity of the qualification, public confidence and whether correcting an established error could itself result in disproportionate adverse consequences.

A4.4 Significant or complex cases, including those involving potential regulatory implications, shall be referred to the Responsible/Accountable Officer before a final decision is implemented.

A5. Implementation and Communication

A5.1 Where correction is authorised, Smart Awards shall ensure that affected results and certification records are amended accurately and that replacement or withdrawal of certificates is managed where necessary.

A5.2 Affected centres and learners shall be informed of the decision, the reasons for any correction and the implications for their qualification outcome, together with relevant information about available review or appeal arrangements.

A5.3 Where correction affects previously issued results, Smart Awards shall consider whether additional stakeholders require notification, taking account of applicable regulatory and data protection requirements.

A6. Recording, Follow-Up and Prevention

A6.1 Smart Awards shall maintain an auditable record of the concern, investigation, evidence reviewed, impact assessment, decisions, authorisations, corrections and communications.

A6.2 The EQA Manager shall identify any underlying causes and recommend appropriate preventative measures, including enhanced sampling, assessor or IQA standardisation, improvements to marking guidance or changes to internal controls.

A6.3 The Head of Department shall ensure that agreed actions are implemented and their effectiveness reviewed, with findings informing future CASS arrangements and centre monitoring.