



West Midlands Combined Authority:

Quality and Standards Framework: Guidance Document

This document sets out the Quality and Standards Framework and serves as an overview guide on quality and standards in the ESHC directorate,

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Summary

The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) is committed to supporting the delivery and successful performance of skills and employment funding.

The Quality and Standards Framework will act as an overarching assurance to ensure learners and employers have a positive experience in accessing training delivery.

The devolution of adult skills funding is £167m per annum and the WMCA has committed to using the devolved funding against four regional priorities:

- Moving people into work.
- Upskilling and reskilling to respond to the regional economy and net zero.
- Provide a good basic education up to Level 2 for those who need it.
- Support our communities to be stronger and benefit from inclusive growth – community learning.

Context and Modelling

Quality assurance (QA) plays an essential part in our commitment to meet our regional priorities. We must ensure our region and its residents benefit from devolved funding being used by our providers to the highest standards. According to HM Treasury¹, the right modelling environment involves a culture where leaders value and recognise good QA. There needs to be a set of controls, a clear internal chain of responsibility and a route for challenge. The Quality and Standards Framework aims to ensure the following:

- Quality assessment processes are proportionate, consistent, and supportive.
- Quality processes are inclusive and transparent.
- Quality processes fall into a whole system approach to ensure continuous improvement.

To achieve this, the Quality and Standards Framework will fall under 4 key principles:

Quality & Standards Framework Principles



Clarity



Curiosity



Culture



Candour

¹ [Review of quality assurance of government analytical models: final report \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

Clarity: Staff need to be clear about what is expected of them, and the Quality and Standards Framework sets out to ensure everyone is clear about their roles and responsibilities pertinent to quality assurance.

Curiosity: The Quality and Standards Framework seeks to encourage staff at all levels to be curious, to ask questions both internally and with external providers.

Culture: The Quality and Standards Framework will embed a culture of high-quality delivery and a culture of quality standards underpinning all elements of the use of devolved funding.

Candour: The process and transparency of the Quality and Standards Framework will bring about an honest, open, and fair approach to quality improvement*.

*Intel may be shared with the DfE and other MCAs, and we will also consider the evidence they provide.

Quality & Standards Framework

Quality and standards are an integral part of the Economy, Skills, Health and Communities directorate and intertwine with both delivery, quality and compliance, forming the quality triangle.

The introduction of a Quality and Standards Panel, as part of the overall framework, ensures there is an independent overview of quality assurance that is informed by the monitoring and evaluation of delivery and compliance activity.



Delivery

The monitoring of delivery and performance is set out within the [Performance and management funding rules](#) or [operational guidance](#), depending on the programme/project.

Each provider is allocated a contract manager who provides the day-to-day operational management and reviews of performance throughout the year. Delivery activities include, but are not limited to:

- Delivery planning.
- Performance monitoring.
- Provider support.
- Growth & business cases.
- Performance Management Reviews (PMRs).
- Timely identification of areas for concern.
- Collation of learner, employer, and stakeholder feedback.
- Standardisation activities that bring about standards and consistency across the delivery team.

Providers should consult their programme guidance and contract specifications to understand the requirements of their contractual obligations and the potential consequences of failing to meet them.

Audit & Compliance

Providers will be subject to a variety of audit and compliance activities to ensure that funding is deployed in the way it was intended. These activities are designed to minimize risk, and the extent of these activities will depend on the type of programme/project and the outcomes of risk analysis.

The WMCA team will undertake activities including, but not limited to:

- Tier 1 Onboarding and supportive review
- Tier 2 compliance reviews.
- Overseeing tier 3 external audits.
- Leading investigations.
- Timely identification of areas for concern.
- Standardisation activities that bring about standards and consistency across teams.

The process for compliance is detailed in the [Audit and Compliance Scope](#) document.

Quality reviews

We expect providers to have a clear and ambitious vision for providing high-quality, inclusive education and training to all, raising quality standards to benefit the residents, and meeting the outcomes framework.

WMCA will undertake a range of activities to identify and minimise risk.

Quality reviews will fall into the following areas:

- Quality schedule

- Support & challenge.
- Enhanced

Quality schedule reviews will be conducted by the Quality and Standards team and follow an audit schedule as selected by the Quality and Standards Panel.

Additional reviews outside of the agreed schedule will be selected on a case-by-case basis by the Quality and Standards Panel. These reviews will be linked to high-risk emerging factors, such as data quality/performance, tiered review grading, whistleblowing, and supportive reviews for newly onboarded providers

The process for quality visits is detailed in the [Quality Visits Handbook](#) document.

Quality and Standards Panel

The Quality and Standards Panel provides oversight of quality and standards of training across provider delivery ensuring that training delivery is of good quality to deliver positive outcomes for residents and employers and funding is used for the purpose intended. Quality will be measured against a set of benchmarks aligned to the four regional priorities.

The Quality and Standards panel will undertake activities including, but not limited to:

- Provide an objective view of quality & standards.
- Review and consider quality issues arising from delivery & compliance.
- Review interventions to ensure the planning, and monitoring of this led to improvement.
- Review new programmes before delivery.
- Evaluate feedback from learners, employers, and stakeholders to support improvement.
- Reporting to SMT (termly).