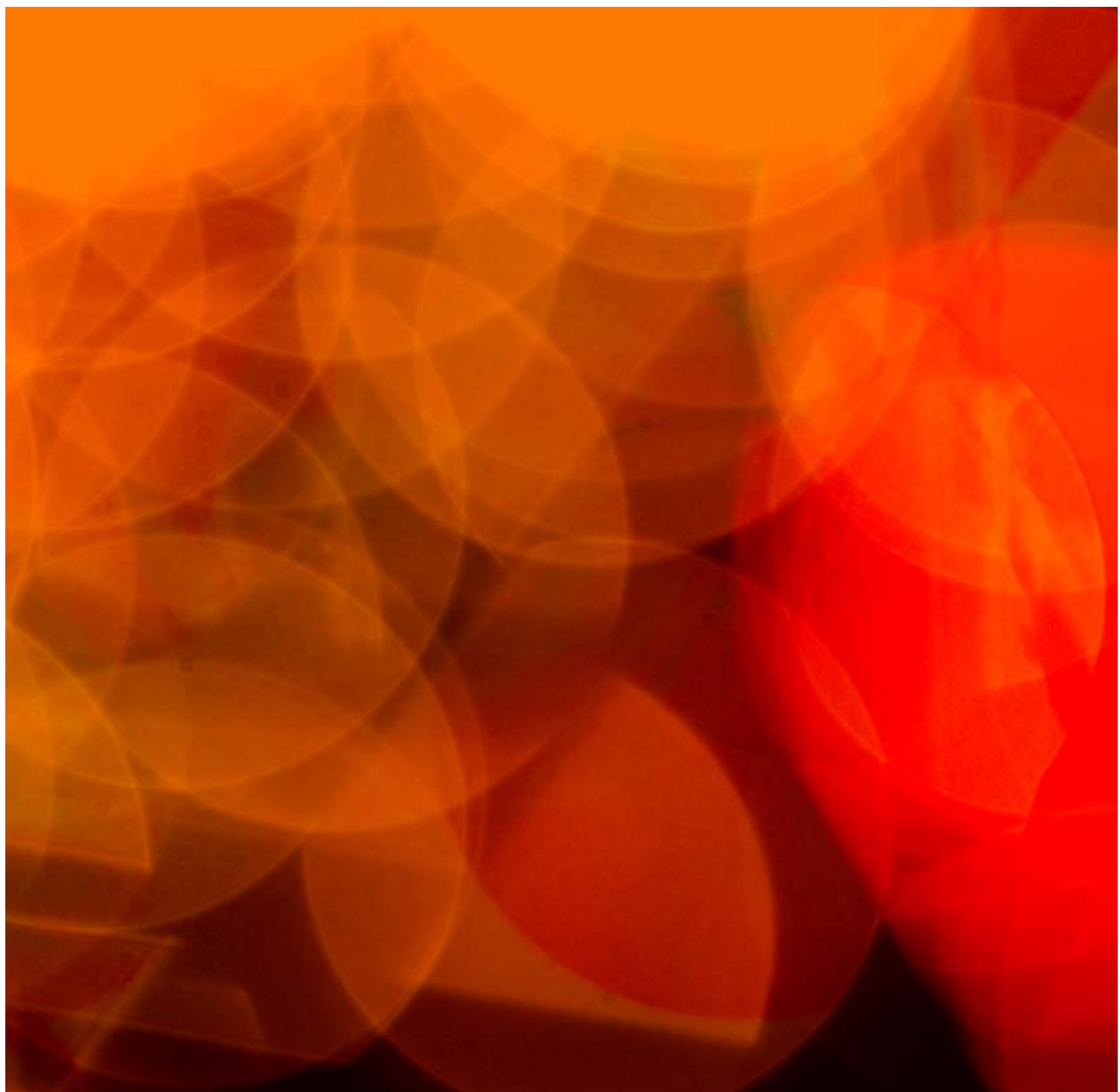


Training Quality Standard Part B

Section 3: Application guide



Getting ready for Training Quality Standard Part B: a step-by-step guide for health-care training providers

Section 3: Activities to prepare for your TQS Part B application

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1. Introduction

This guide is the third of a three-part suite of resources designed to assist training providers that aspire to achieve Part B of the Training Quality Standard (TQS).

The three parts are:

- **Section 1: A readiness checklist** – designed to enable a training provider to compare their systems and processes with the requirements of the TQS Part B. It can be used as a quick ‘first check’ and as an ‘audit tool’ to ensure that all the required systems and processes have been implemented before the submission of a Part B application.
- **Section 2: TQS Part B explained** – whether you are just starting out on your TQS Part B journey or are well on your way this guide is designed to help steer you through the practicalities before making an application.
- **Section 3: TQS activities to prepare for your TQS Part B application** – designed to assist health training providers gather appropriate evidence for a high-quality TQS Part B submission.

This set of activities has been produced specifically to assist provider organisations to:

- tell a coherent story about their health provision
- explain the processes that form the structure of the provision
- explain the links between the processes, vital to a high-quality operation.

You should remember that this document is not an assessment guide. It is a tool with activities to help you develop your abilities to meet the requirements of Part B of the Training Quality Standard and one that will help you to write your application for assessment.

It does not offer guidance on:

- how to apply for assessment
- the detail of the assessment process
- how assessments will be conducted.

About the activities

There follows a series of tasks and activities that will enable you to demonstrate your abilities linked to criteria B.0, B.1, B.2 and B.3.

Completing these tasks will help place you in a good position to make a case about your achievements when you come to think about certification.

Remember that although the activities for each criterion are considered separately, the various parts of the Training Quality Standard are linked. In some cases the link is formal and obvious: for example, the objectives you identify when thinking about the application form item B.0.3 (strategy) are directly related directly to items B.3.0 and B.3.1 (outcomes).

However, you should also bear in mind the **links between strategy, approaches and results** that are important for all aspects of work with the Training Quality Standard as you work through the application process.

2. Working towards criterion B.0 'Strategy'

This part of the Training Quality Standard focuses on your strategy for working with the health sector. Although the 'strategy' criterion B.0 carries no points, it is important to use it to clearly explain your strategy and targets as it gives the background and context against which everything else will be assessed.

This section forms the basis for the 'story' of how your organisation understands the health sector that you are striving to engage with and uses partnership activities with stakeholders to improve its sector skills profile. Before attempting to complete the three elements of the 'Strategy' section, take some time to think about the relationship between them. This will enable you to get the best evidence in the appropriate section, make the sections easier to complete and make it much clearer for an assessor to understand.

Working through the specific requirements of B.0.1, B.0.2 and B.0.3 will help you to produce a robust strategy for working with employers in the health sector or refine your existing strategy to ensure it more fully addresses the requirements of this part of the Training Quality Standard.

Remember: an appropriate strategy implemented through a combination of sector knowledge, effective systems and processes, together with appropriate deployment of staff and physical resources, is the key to a TQS application. Existing evidence should only be used to prove the existence and operational success of the structure you are describing.

Activity 1: Producing (or reviewing) your health-sector employer strategy

If you are going to work effectively with employers you will need to produce a strategy, or plan, for working with your sector or with the part of the sector on which you focus. Look through your existing documents and decide if you already have such a strategy or plan. If you do not, then produce one. You will also need to demonstrate that you have shared this strategy with employers and stakeholders.

A nine-point plan!

1. Make sure that the strategy you identify or compose is linked to the work you are doing with the health sector. Ensure that you specify what you aim to do with the health sector, or with the part of the sector with which you work and intend to work. Set this down clearly. If you have already produced documentation about this make sure the statements are clear and unambiguous.
2. As you work to produce your strategy, or on its revision and updating, check that you have taken into account the expectations of employers, the Sector Skills Council (Skills for Health) and other stakeholders. You need to demonstrate that you know about the relevant employers and their needs when defining your strategy. Highlight the parts of your strategy that demonstrate you have done this.
3. Make sure you have objectives within your strategy. Your objectives should be 'SMART' – specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely. Your objectives will help you turn your aims for your work into tangible tasks and activities.

4. Specify clearly what information about the health-sector needs and the key employer/customer groups you already collect and aim to collect. Ensure you have a systematic approach to collecting this type of information and a timetable for doing so. Skills for Health will already have regional labour market intelligence (LMI) to complement your local analysis.
5. Be clear about how you analyse the information you collect and how you use it to shape your work with your sector. This will mean explaining how you make sure you know what impact employers and other key stakeholders want to achieve from training solutions from the outset. You will then need to explain how you design your training to address these expectations. Include your analysis of these issues in your strategy.
6. Set out clearly the ways in which the products and services you wish to offer and promote to your sector address the needs of the health sector and of your employer/customer groups. Illustrate with examples of Diplomas, apprenticeships or continuing professional development (CPD) provision.
7. Ensure you have a means of checking and confirming that the messages about your strategy that you want to communicate to stakeholders have been received and understood.
8. Check that your staff are aware of your strategy and are able to communicate it in a consistent way to others.
9. Now think about the key concepts of strategy, approaches and results. Check that your strategy includes aims for your work with the health sector. Check that your approaches, your objectives, your plans, systems and processes, are all designed and implemented to help you achieve your aims. Check that you have also identified the results and impact that you wish to achieve with regard to the employers in the sector and that the results are linked to the achievement of objectives. Make sure that you have all the evidence you need to support your claims.

Health-sector employer strategy checklist

	Yes/no?	Action required
Does your strategy specify what you aim to do with the health sector?		
Does the strategy contain 'SMART' objectives?		
Do your plans for your work with employers fit in with the skills needs and development needs for the sector that have been identified by Sector Skills Agreement for health and employers?		

<p>Are your staff able to articulate and justify your strategy, your objectives and the results you wish to achieve with the health sector?</p>		
<p>Does your strategy specify clearly what information about health-sector needs and key employer/customer groups you already collect and aim to collect?</p>		
<p>Does the strategy outline how you analyse the information you collect and use it to shape your work with your sector?</p>		
<p>Does the strategy set out clearly the ways in which the products and services you wish to offer address the needs of your market and of your employer/customer groups?</p>		
<p>Does your strategy show you have a means of consulting as well as checking and confirming that the messages about your strategy have been received and understood by stakeholders?</p>		
<p>Reflecting on the completed/refreshed strategy, are the key concepts of strategy, approaches and results transparent and understood?</p>		

3. Working towards criteria B.1 ‘Understanding’ and B.2 ‘Deploying’

This activity focuses on helping you to show how you ensure that you ‘**understand**’ (criterion B1) what employers in your sector need and expect in terms of training solutions. It also requires you to demonstrate that the products and services you design are appropriate and how all parts of your organisation **are deployed** (criterion B2) to meet each employer’s needs and expectations and the needs and expectations of the sector as a whole.

There is a close link between B1, which deals with how you make sure you understand the needs and expectations of the health sector and then design relevant products and services, and B2.

As already stated, TQS Part B guidance is clear that training providers are required to **tell a coherent story of their employer provision as it relates to the sector** in which they operate. One way of presenting a coherent story about expert provision is for a provider to **base their story on the way that their processes are linked**. In this way they can demonstrate they have a complete range of appropriate processes, in line with the evidence requirements, and the links between the processes will allow the story to ‘flow’ naturally.

The following narrative and activity aim to help you review the employer journey and demonstrate that from initial enquiry to overall impact or return on investment it is robust and transparent. They should allow the submitted narrative for B1 and B2 criteria to flow naturally.

Each stage in the employer journey needs to be considered in relation to the appropriateness of the structures for delivering the service.

Tracking the employer journey

An employer-responsive mission and strategy need to be supported by an appropriate infrastructure and organisational structure to respond to the needs of employers and the health sector at each stage of the service – the ‘employer journey’.

The stages in the ‘employer journey’ can be described as:

- marketing and communication
- refining the employer’s objectives
- conducting an appropriate diagnostic assessment of the employer’s needs and wider sector needs
- designing appropriate provision
- delivering learning or support
- using and reinforcing the learning
- evaluation of learning or support
- establishing the impact and benefits to the organisation and delivery of health services.

Tracking the employer journey for the health sector – some notes

Purpose

The employer-journey needs analysis process is a simple method of ensuring that every development request is met with a quality response. All the stages should be logged clearly (for example on a customer relationship management – CRM – system). You may wish to abbreviate the length of the individual stages or even combine them. The important issue is that the ground has been covered, the employer/client is fully engaged and the results achieve the greatest possible impact.

Stage 1 Marketing and communication

- Receiving the enquiry
This is the first impression phase. It may happen via the telephone, web or in person. The goal must be to impress the employer with a professional response while giving them a clear idea of the next stages. The result should be a simple record of the enquiry, using an agreed pro forma to record the request exactly as stated, as well as an agreement with the employer of the next response from the provider. This should be recorded (for example on the CRM system).
- The contact-handling process
The initial request should be passed to the person who will be responsible for the initial stage of the response, or perhaps all of it, depending on its complexity and scale. They will usually contact the employer within the agreed time to arrange to meet. As a minimum they will obtain enough data to move on to the next stage of the process and agree a broad project timescale. This should be recorded.
- Clarifying the employer's goal or business need
This will probably be a meeting. Its aim is largely to establish some initial goals and a belief in the competence of the provider to deliver an effective solution. It is primarily about demonstrating good listening and building rapport and initial trust.

If it is your first visit there may be an element of necessary organisation needs analysis (ONA) before you suggest development remedies.

A SMART goal is critical to the success of any programme and in the choice of the correct training solution. If the situation is complex and requires more analysis, agree the next stage with the client. The goal agreement should be recorded.

Stage 2: Refining the employer's objectives

This activity will usually involve you supporting the employer to undertake a form of gap analysis. 'Where are we now?' 'Where do we want to be?' and 'What skills and knowledge do we need to get there?' are the most typical questions. It will also be necessary to determine the current level of skill in the staff involved.

At this point it should be possible to agree a broad budget for the project and ensure this is broadly acceptable to the client. The next stage will be to develop a formal proposal that includes:

- the agreed objectives
- evaluation criteria
- the broad training approach selected for its suitability and effectiveness

- the fee basis and total client investment
- time scales and action plan.

After this meeting, it will usually be necessary to draw up a contract, using the provider's template.

Stage 3: Conducting an appropriate diagnostic assessment of the employer's needs and wider sector needs

After the goals have been agreed there may be a need for a more formal analysis activity if the issue is sufficiently complex or the learners need to be assessed. This may involve a range of options, of which the most common may be:

- a review of the employer organisation and its health services
- consideration of the specific employer needs against the needs of the sector indicated through the Sector Skills Agreement
- meetings with some or all of the learners in focus groups or similar activities (This has the advantage that the meetings can be both consultative and informative, perhaps reassuring nervous learners.)
- testing the learners, where aptitude or the basic literacy, numeracy and IT skills are essential
- business plans
- national policies for the sector.

Stage 4: Designing appropriate provision

This stage may include:

- designing a learning process within the resources of the project
- appointing staff to manage the learning process and agree venues
- drafting a development plan to summarise the whole learning process (Once the employer accepts this design, it may be appropriate to draw up a contract and /or service-level agreement. It may also be appropriate to confirm the project manager.)
- designing specific learning approaches to meet the sector needs, for example work-based learning reflecting Skills for Health learning design principles.

Stage 5: Delivering learning or support

A manager from the organisation should, where possible, attend, participate, train or become otherwise involved here. The programmes should confirm the learning objectives with their participants and ensure they are committed to the demands of the learning initiative.

The owner of the process and the training deliverers are jointly responsible for immediate validation of relevance and satisfaction. This will be achieved by observation, direct questioning tests, session-by-session evaluations, commitments to future activity, and end-of-course 'happy sheets'. These should enable continuous improvement of the learning method. Verifiers and assessors may need to become involved at this stage.

Stage 6: Using and reinforcing the learning

The transfer of learning into the workplace can often require very active support. The learner should have created either a learning log or action notes as a result of the learning. These can form part of the debrief conversation and practical decisions can be made which can be usefully transferred into the workplace. The manager may need to arrange authority for this or provide a coach to help the learner with their new skills.

Stage 7: Evaluation of learning or support

The evaluation results from the learning sessions will give an immediate indication of any significant problems. It is at this stage that the analyst will need to ensure that the SMART goals set earlier are being met.

A re-involvement of key stakeholders at this stage will be valuable. The main groups involved here will be:

- the learners
- their managers and the project manager
- human-resource and training staff linked to the project
- the development deliverers.

Business and service benefits will often be a combination of 'hard' and 'soft' data:

- hard data will include cost/benefits, reject rates, quality improvement, downtime, days lost, productivity and profits
- soft data could include attitudes, team-working, job satisfaction, ideas, confidence, customer reaction and communications effectiveness.

Stage 8: Establishing the impact and benefits to the organisation and delivery of health services

A final evaluation of how learners are using their new knowledge and skill and, equally importantly, how free and confident they feel to use it, will give some useful data. Ideally at the outset the project manager will have asked a question like 'At the end of the project what changes would you like to see in how the organisation is operating and/or the health-care services being delivered and the patient/client experience of these?', and include an emphasis on these throughout. The following examples can be used

How provision has helped:

- employers to enhance/change service delivery
- meet employers' specific targets
- support new roles and new skill mix
- innovative ways of delivering provision for work-based learning
- flexible approaches to providing, assessing and crediting CPD.

All of the above stages should be informed by Skills for Health's learning design principles, which are available on www.skillsforhealth.org.uk

Activity 2: Tracking the employer journey by effective understanding and deploying

Look at the reporting form below and for each of the employer journey stages consider the following:

- the key tasks involved in health provision
- the key roles (who performs these tasks)
- interdependencies with other functions in your organisation
- potential blockages to the effective delivery of this stage of the journey.

Record your thoughts on the form, discuss them with colleagues and suggest strategies to address the issues you have identified.

Tracking the employer journey for the health sector

Stage of the journey	Current position	How to improve
Marketing and communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receiving the enquiry • The contact-handling process • Clarifying the employer's goal or business need 		
Refining the employer's objectives		
Conducting an appropriate diagnostic assessment of the employer's and service needs		
Designing appropriate provision		
Delivering learning or support		
Using and reinforcing the learning		

Stage of the journey	Current position	How to improve
Evaluation of learning or support		
Establishing the impact and benefits to the organisation and delivery of health services		

Having tracked the employer journey for the health sector you may now want to:

- produce a flow chart of development and employer-engagement processes related to the 'preferred' employer journey
- produce a development and delivery process map to support the employer journey
- produce an action plan relating to appropriate stages of the employer journey to support and underpin the CRM activity.

4. Working towards criterion B.3 'Perform'

This part of the Training Quality Standard deals with the results you achieve in fulfilling the objectives you have set out in your strategy and the impact your work has on the sector's workforce and, therefore, on service delivery.

B.3 'Perform' is closely related to B.0 'Strategy'. You need to return to the strategic objectives you set in B.0 and demonstrate how you check that you have achieved them.

Evaluation and impact measures need to:

- provide, where possible, a direct measure of impact on the employer's delivery of health-care services and the availability of an appropriately skilled and informed workforce to deliver services
- be relevant to the employer
- be agreed with the employer
- be measurable!
- include measures from the learner's perspective.

Activity 3: Determining impact

Reflecting on your health strategy note down the results you have achieved with reference to each of the objectives you specified. The table below highlights some examples of evaluation and impact measures that may help you.

Strategic objectives	Determining impact	Notes
	Income from employers	
	Volume of repeat business from employers	
	Number of employers engaged for training	
	Number of employees being trained	
	Number of training needs analyses/ organisational needs analyses completed	

Strategic objectives	Determining impact	Notes
	Numbers of employer complaints	
	Employee/learner satisfaction	
	Employer satisfaction	
	The effect on service delivery and the patient/client experience	
	The degree to which sector needs have been addressed	

5. Thinking about evidence

Now that you have completed the activities above you can begin to think about the evidence you might wish to use to back up your case.

Use *Introducing the Training Quality Standard* (www.trainingqualitystandard.co.uk) and the Skills for Health guidance grid for Part B to help you to make choices about the evidence you are going to use to support the statements you have made with reference to criteria B.0, B.1, B.2 and B.3.

Pay particular attention to the questions raised under 'Points to consider' in the grid. Also review the items listed under 'What could count as evidence' and decide how relevant these suggestions are to your own circumstances.

Note: the evidence you choose must back up the points you are making. Evidence is only relevant when it is linked to your argument, or your case.

Look at the notes you have made when completing the tasks outlined above for each criterion. What evidence do you think will best illustrate the points you are making?

Identify pieces of evidence that you think will be helpful. Then explain specifically how they support the case you wish to make. Remember you can often use a single piece of evidence to back up several points.

What next?

If you have implemented all the recommendations of this guide, you will have a strategy that sets the challenge of high-quality work with employers in the health sector.

You may now be thinking about progressing to TQS Part B assessment and certification. Before you make this decision it is important that you consider the following.

- Have you implemented **all** the processes and systems that TQS Part B requires?
- Have the processes that you implemented **had time to make a difference** to your employer-focused health provision?

You could now revisit the readiness checklist in Section 1 and audit your newly improved provision to check whether you have implemented all the required processes.

And, finally...

Remember

1. You should be aware that certification under the Training Quality Standard will be very difficult, or impossible, without the support and commitment of senior staff in your organisation. Furthermore, training provider organisations that register for TQS are formally required to do so with the 'full support of the appropriate management authorities' who are also 'committed to the organisation preparing an application for assessment'.
2. The Training Quality Standard is explicitly non-prescriptive. That is, a provider organisation is not obliged to do things in a predetermined way to become certified. However, much of the assessment is 'scored' on the basis of the 'approaches' that a provider uses. These approaches have to be 'sound' and effectively 'deployed'.

3. TQS applicants need to use cross-referencing and diagrams to simplify the presentation of their Part B evidence and link the Part B and Part A applications. Research evidence and SSC feedback suggest that application evidence is typically repetitive, and linking and cross-referencing are weak or non-existent.
4. TQS assessors will expect all employer-facing staff to understand the operation of the processes explained in the application and this forms a key part of the verification visit.
5. When writing the narrative for your application form, bear in mind the guidance from the TQS team – they are looking for demonstration of the RADAR methodology

Results:

What do you want to achieve?
 What are appropriate targets?
 How are these met or exceeded?
 What evidence do you have of benchmarking?
 Can you show sustained results?

Approach:

What do you plan to do and why?
 Can you evidence a clear approach that is well defined and developed?
 Who is involved in shaping your approach?
 Is it linked to policy/legislation?
 Can you demonstrate a sound means of achieving results through your approach?
 Can you demonstrate sector-specific approaches?

Deployment:

Can you demonstrate systematic roll-out of your approach throughout the organisation?
 Are staff supported through on-going and appropriate continuing professional development?

Assessment and Review:

Can you evidence assessment and review of your approach and deployment methods?
 Do you regularly seek to improve?
 As a result of your assessment and review can you demonstrate how your planned results are evaluated and changed?
 Can you demonstrate that employers have actively informed and shaped your provision?
 Can you demonstrate that you have considered and reviewed your provision against the sector needs as well as local employers?

6. Useful contacts

1. The World Class Skills and Excellence Gateway websites contain a great deal of useful material.

Email: wcsenquiries@kpmg.co.uk

Telephone: 0800 3286075

Website: <http://excellence.qia.org.uk/programmesandservices/wcs>

2. Training Quality Standard Team

Email: info@trainingqualitystandard.co.uk

Enquiry line: 0845 225 1310

Website: www.trainingqualitystandard.co.uk

3. Skills for Health

Telephone: 0113 3063200

Website www.skillsforhealth.org.uk