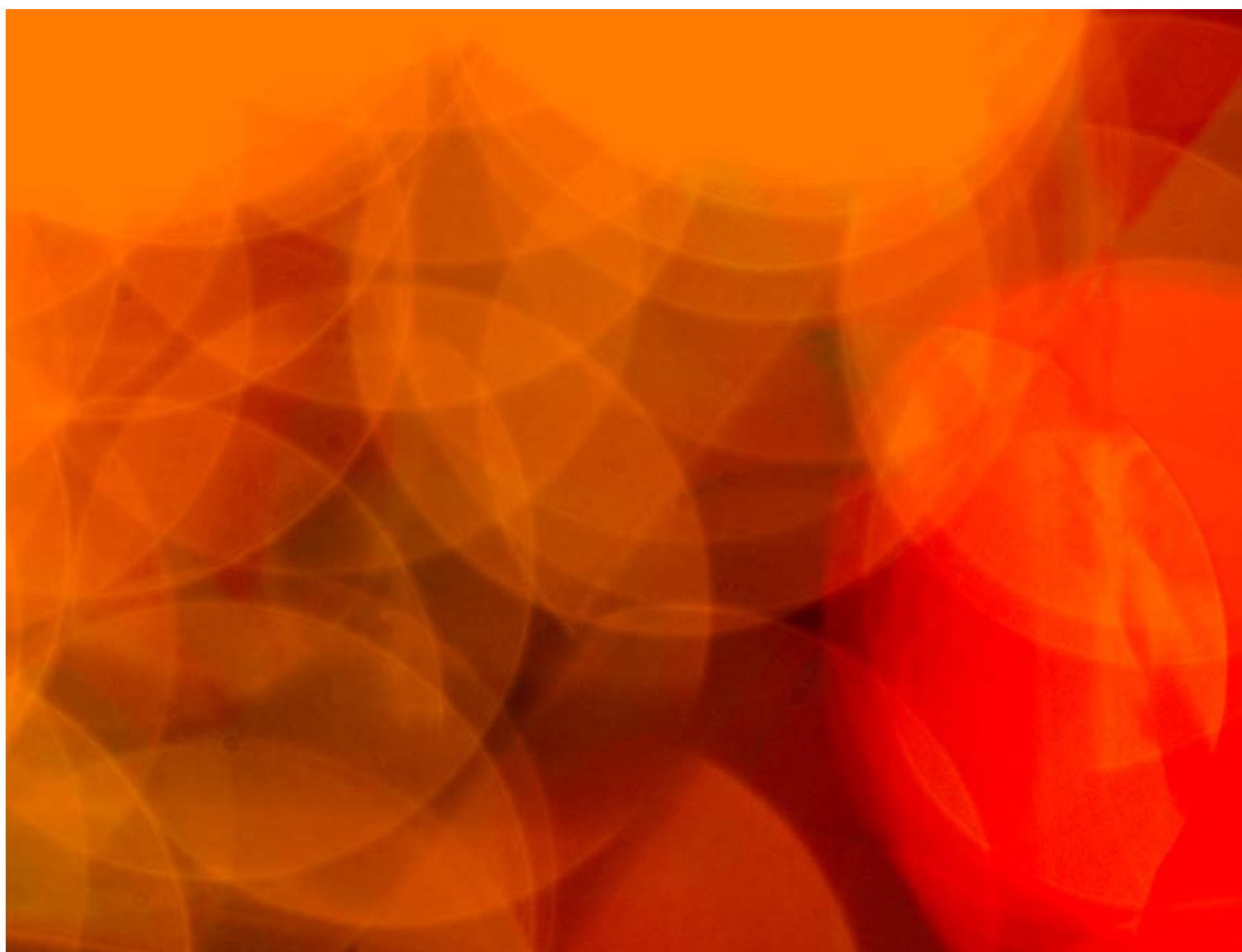


WCS

Developing Responsive Provision



**Training Quality Standard
Part B
Pre-submission guidance for
IT and Telecoms providers**

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Section 1: Introduction

1.1 Background to this activity

This guide is the output of a project funded by the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA), via the Learning and Skills Network (LSN).

It has been produced with advice and guidance from several IT and Telecoms providers and e-skills UK between May and August 2008 and is designed to assist providers with a specialism in IT and Telecoms with preparing for Part B certification of the Training Quality Standard.

NB At the time of writing (October 2008), there have been four successful submissions by IT and Telecoms providers for Part B.

1.2 Who is this guide for and how should it be used?

This guide is for learning providers of all sizes working in the IT and Telecoms sector and considering making a TQS Part B application. Providers may be engaging with employers on delivering vendor qualifications to IT professionals, in both IT and non-IT organisations (given that all organisations use IT, it is likely that providers will be engaging with employers across all sectors), and employers who have IT users in any context.

This guide has been developed for use by a range of people. **It is imperative that there is senior management buy-in to a TQS application;** middle managers, whether involved with curriculum design, managing provision, engaging directly with employers or monitoring quality are likely to be involved; and delivery staff will contribute – involvement at all levels is therefore advisable.

How to use this guide

You can use this guide to:

- help (develop an understanding of) everyone in your organisation of issues related to the implementation of the requirements of the Training Quality Standard and especially Part B of the Training Quality Standard
- help all your staff to become familiar with the requirements of Part B of the Training Quality Standard

- support and enhance your organisation's development programme linked to Part B of the Training Quality Standard
- help you check your progress as you work towards certification.

This guide is for **your** organisation's use and not for any external assessment.

1.3 Benefits of TQS

The process of achieving TQS accreditation is challenging but in an increasingly employer-led market place, it is important for providers to engage with the employer engagement agenda and to benchmark their abilities. However, there may also be the need for internal marketing to ensure buy-in across your organisation.

Achieving the Training Quality Standard will enable providers to:

- **demonstrate to employers the level and quality of service they offer**
In a competitive marketplace, TQS certification highlights those providers who are adept at employer engagement; at understanding the needs of a business; and at suggesting and delivering training solutions that match need. There is prestige attached to TQS certification and it is envisaged that as employers become more aware of it they will actively seek out providers who have the Training Quality Standard.
- **conduct a thorough analysis of existing processes and procedures and ascertain where development is needed**
Although it is possible to do this without going through the TQS process, TQS has been developed as a tool for business improvement and is an opportunity to analyse, review and plan (which might happen as part of an annual cycle) and gain certification in the process.
- **prepare for the Framework for Excellence (which incorporates a responsiveness dimension)**
Providers holding TQS will automatically be graded as 'Outstanding' in the Employer Responsiveness section of the Framework. See: http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/National/Framework_for_Excellence-Provider_Guide.pdf

1.4 About the sector

To describe how your strategy has been shaped and how it meets the needs of the employers you serve, you will need to demonstrate an awareness of the issues that specifically affect the IT and Telecoms sector. The following points

are not intended to be a fully comprehensive list but should act as a useful starting point. It is likely that you will be able to add to this list based on your own experiences. NB A good reference source for the sector is *Technology counts – IT and Telecoms insights 2008* (e-skills UK).

- Businesses are choosing to recruit experienced and qualified workers from other sectors rather than younger recruits straight from the education system. The proportion of 16–29 year olds working in the sector has dropped 11% in six years. This is leading to skills gaps that some organisations are not yet willing to acknowledge, particularly in smaller organisations.
- Only 3% of IT and Telecoms professionals are not qualified to Level 2, with 55% holding a qualification at Level 4 or higher.
- As a result of globalisation there have been substantial decreases in roles such as IT user support, database and engineering.
- Gender imbalance is significant and worsening: in 2007 only 18% of IT and Telecoms professionals were female.
- There are varied attitudes towards training: 18% of companies employing 1–10 staff provided training to staff in 2007 compared with 78% of large organisations.
- Employers appear to favour private training providers with 83% of vendor awards being delivered by them in 2007. Only 2% of the IT and Telecoms workforce enrolled on publicly funded courses.

The information above, coupled with your own experiences will form part of your rationale for the development of your strategy and how you are working with employers and other stakeholders to tackle sector-specific issues.

Section 2: The Training Quality Standard

2.1 Overview

The Training Quality Standard was developed by the Centre for Enterprise (CFE) for the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Its introduction in 2007 brought with it a new certification framework and a new assessment model. Until March 2008 the standard was known as the New Standard for Employer Responsiveness and Vocational Excellence.

2.2 About the Training Quality Standard

The Training Quality Standard has a particular, and clearly defined, focus. It deals with how learning provider organisations develop and manage successful customer relationships with employers, and how they ensure that the content of the training solutions they deliver achieves the necessary quality to back up those relationships.

The Training Quality Standard aims to assess and, where appropriate, to certificate learning providers with reference to two broad issues:

- their responsiveness to employers' needs
- their expertise in particular industry sectors.

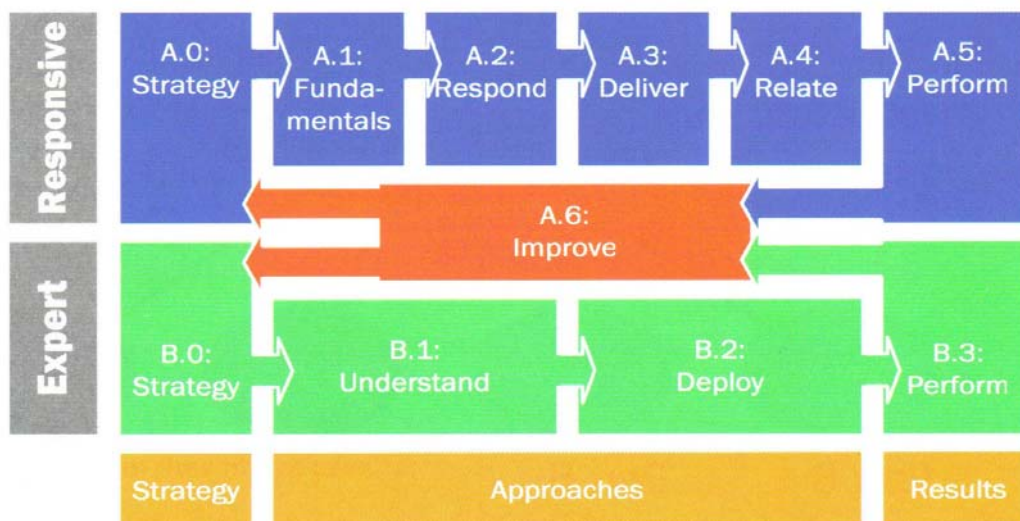
These concepts are set out in a practical framework of criteria and indicators that focus on two linked but ultimately very different delivery competencies:

- responding to the needs of employers as individual customers, which is covered in Part A of the Training Quality Standard
- developing and deploying products to address particular sector needs, which is covered in Part B of the Training Quality Standard.

Part A is for all organisations delivering training and development solutions.

Part B focuses on areas where organisations have expertise, having already demonstrated their ability to serve employers through Part A.

An overview of the Training Quality Standard is reproduced on page 7.



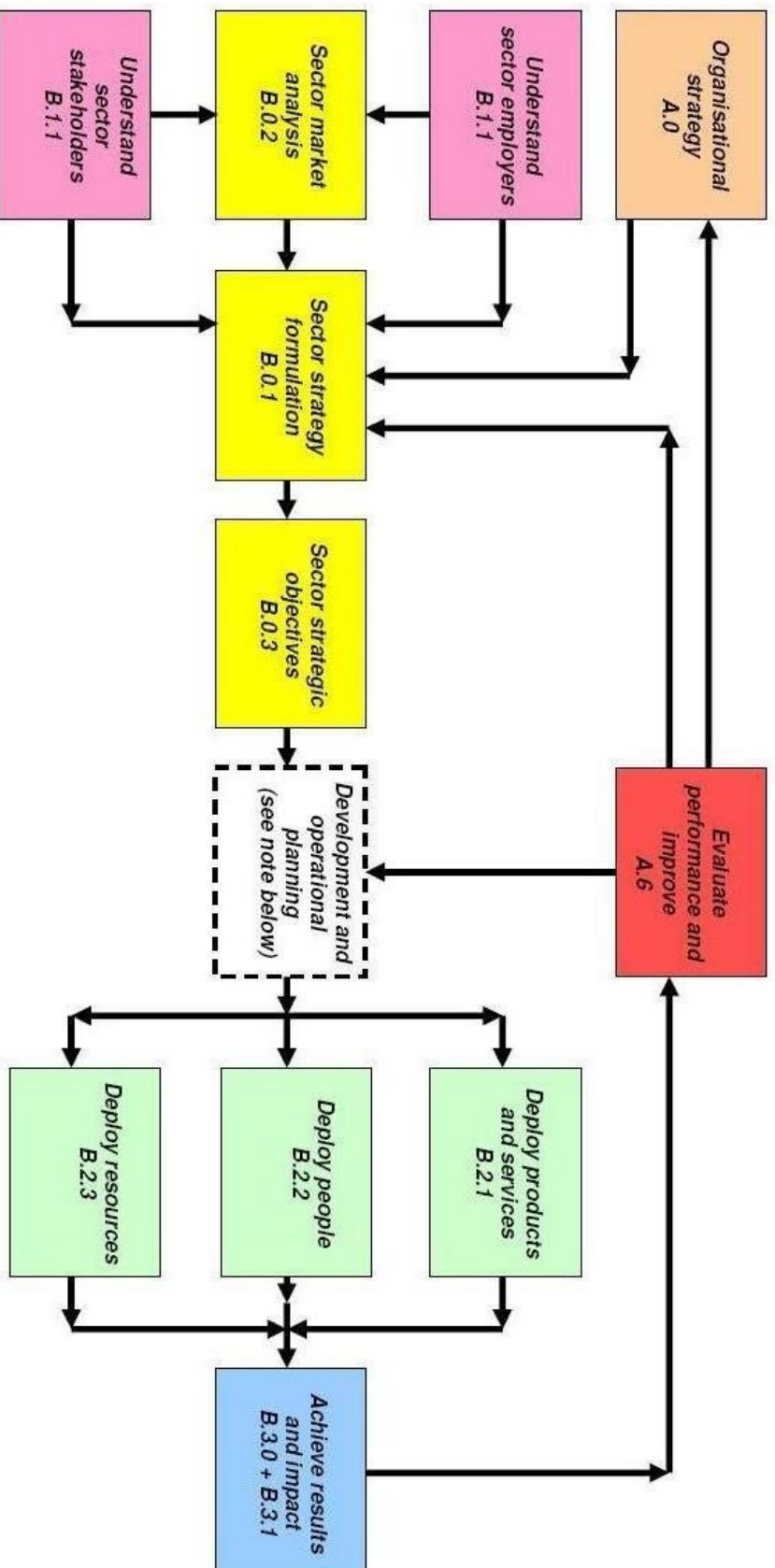
This diagram can be found in *Introducing the Training Quality Standard* (2008) available from www.trainingqualitystandard.co.uk

The Training Quality Standard is explicitly non-prescriptive but 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'.

One way for providers to present a coherent story about their expert provision is to base their story on the way that their processes are linked. In this way they can demonstrate that 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. This is illustrated generally by the following flowchart on page 8.

Training Quality Standard Part B

Flowchart – suggested process and outcome links



Note: Although there are not specific TQS criteria for operational and development planning, these processes are considered to be essential for the effective deployment and continuous improvement of products and services, people and physical resources.

2.3 The new world of the Training Quality Standard

As many learning providers are beginning to realise working with the Training Quality Standard requires them to ask new and different questions about their relationships with employers.

Working towards certification to the Training Quality Standard also means working with an assessment methodology that is unfamiliar to a significant number of learning providers.

This unfamiliarity with the ethos of the Training Quality Standard and its approach to assessment is leading to the emergence of myths about how much revision is needed to existing ways of working and approaches to quality development, and how much gaining TQS certification will cost in terms of time and money.

One thing is certain – these are myths. At the time this document was produced (October 2008) there simply had not been enough assessments for reliable statistics about costs to be generated. Neither have a large enough number of learning providers completed the learning and development journey towards Training Quality Standard certification for accurate estimates of development costs to be produced.

As you work through this guide, therefore, it is important to approach the activities and guidance with an open mind.

2.4 A note about Part B of the Training Quality Standard

The requirements of Part B of the Training Quality Standard are set out in *Introducing the Training Quality Standard* (see above.)

The Sector Skills Council for IT and Telecoms, e-skills UK, has produced customised guidance for the sector *Part B Guidance: IT and Telecoms (e-skills UK)* which can be found on their website at www.e-skills.com

Providers have two options when working towards TQS accreditation:

- gain Part A first and then work towards Part B
- work with Part A and Part B concurrently and seek accreditation for both parts at the same time.

NB It is not possible to achieve Part B without Part A.

2.5 A new approach to demonstrating success

Most learning provider organisations are familiar with assessments and inspections. Managers are used to supplying documentary evidence to support their claims about what they do. They are used to being interviewed and having their work observed. They are used to providing opportunities for their visitors to search for evidence to enable them to arrive at conclusions about particular aspects of the learning provider's service.

The approach to demonstrating success in the Training Quality Standard requires a different approach because the approach to assessment is different. The difference in approach is best illustrated by example.

Example

In assessment visits and during inspections managers in provider organisations will regularly say:

'We do this (specify what we do), and here's the evidence (often a document) to prove it.'

Success here depends on making an **assertion**: we do this, and then producing some form of evidence or **proof**, often documentary, to back up the assertion.

If the evidence presented is incomplete, the assessors and inspectors may ask for different evidence. They may also look for extra evidence via their discussions with the learning provider's staff, with employers and with learners.

However, when you come to work with the Training Quality Standard, you will need to make a **case** – that is, offer a rationale or an explanation to back up your **assertion**. The case you make must, of course, be based on your knowledge of your industry and of the market.

You must be able to explain **why** your strategy is valuable and **how** it ensures you are meeting the needs of employers in your sector. Moreover, when you come to think about assessment you must be able to do this in writing.

In summary, you need to do more than say you do something and offer the evidence to prove your point. You need to make a case for the relevance and value of any evidence you produce. You can't leave it to other people to make the case for you or to work out for themselves how the evidence you present helps you to make your case.

This all has implications for the evidence you decide to use. Your evidence only has validity and value when you are able to explain **why** it is important and **how** it helps you to make your case. If you cannot explain why a piece of evidence is of value, then you should not be thinking about using it to support your claims about your success.

Therefore, when you begin to think about certification the first questions you ask yourself will be about the case you want to make. Only when you are clear about your argument and your rationale for claiming you are ready to be certificated will you begin to think about the evidence you intend to use to support your assertion and the case you are making.

Section 3. Key considerations

This section provides an overview of the key considerations of the application form, section by section. Section 4 contains more detailed analysis plus activities and you can use it to create a strategy if you don't already have one, or check that the strategy you do have confirms to the criteria of the Training Quality Standard.

B.0 Strategy

Although the 'Strategy' section of the Part B application is not 'scored' directly, it plays a **vital** role in a high-quality bid for the following reasons.

- It forms the basis for the 'story' of the specialist provision so the impact on scoring is through how successfully the later narrative links back to the strategy and strategic objectives.
- It presents the main opportunity for the specialist area, through its strategies, to show that the management team understand their business, they are not operating in isolation and are serious about their performance and the opportunities to improve quality.
- It allows the specialist area to demonstrate that it understands and uses the organisation's business development strategies. Success in Part A certification will have demonstrated the effectiveness of its relationship with employers. The specialist area can then show that it has the strategy for taking advantage of the business development expertise and support through its commitment to cross-organisation working practices.

An objective review of this evidence will be the key first impression for an assessor of the 'overall' quality of the specialist area. Poorly presented or missing evidence in the strategy section will lead to an uphill battle for the rest of the Part B application.

B.1 Understand

The narrative in this section needs to explain the effectiveness of the processes that the Part B area of provision uses to understand sector employers, particularly the training solutions that employers need and their relation to the employers' common business needs.

General note to set the context of B.1.1

High-quality training solution provision does not happen accidentally. Managers, technical experts and work-based specialists will have worked

together to ensure that the contents of their training portfolio, coupled with a range of responsive delivery options meet the needs of employers within the area of operation of the provision.

Development of such provision requires a significant input from sector employers and training delegate customers. Indeed, a training provider's understanding of the 'employer audience' is likely to have evolved over a long time and be based on contact with many employer representatives, employers and company delegates.

However, although providers may consider this part of their business to be well informed they may still find it difficult to provide formal evidence because most of their evidence will probably have come from informal dialogue so is likely to be anecdotal and impossible to validate.

A high-quality Part B application will show a clear understanding of the marketplace in which the provider operates (B.0.2) and which employers it considers to be its key customer groups. It will need to show formally how it has been able to understand these employers.

The layout of this section is particularly important: it needs to present information coherently and enable appropriate links to be made with other Part B criteria.

The information could be sorted into the following three sections showing:

- you have planned the way you gather and analyse information from employers
- you have done what you planned to do using real examples and making references to the results of your analysis
- how the views of employers affected the training solutions on offer and influenced/changed strategy.

B.2 – Deploy

The narrative in this section needs to show that the development and delivery of products and services meet (or exceed) industry expectations and take account of employers' business needs.

You could initially focus on your existing range of products and services. However, it is important that you can show that these were formally and systematically designed to meet employer needs, that you rigorously evaluate

their effectiveness (especially business impact) and that you are continuously striving to improve/extend your provision portfolio.

It may be that historically your product development processes have been relatively informal, based on your belief that you understand the nature of your sector and your continued interaction with employers (and this may have been very effective!). However, the Training Quality Standard requires that you show evidence of the quality and effectiveness of your management processes and for this reason you should consider the following.

The evidence for this section could be presented very effectively if it focused on a development plan for the Part B area of provision. However, you should be clear that while a development plan can indicate the extent of the ambition of management to improve products and services it may not show the rationale that determined their creation; the processes for reviewing development progress; or the processes for evaluating the impact of new products and services.

B.3 – Perform

The narrative in this section is different from the bulk of the application because it should be **based mainly on data**. It should show your success measured against the sector performance objectives described in B.0.3.

This section is important because it provides the opportunity to demonstrate the effectiveness of the performance review process and how this provides a vital contribution to the ‘improvement journey’ of the provision.

There is likely to be a tendency here to simply list results for the training courses recently delivered in the Part B area. However, while data that provides evidence of improving results or sustained good performance is important, it should be presented as a continuation of the story of the provision, effectively, a culmination of all the hard work of planning and delivering to the employer audience.

The guidance is also explicit that **performance should be measured against your own sector performance objectives defined in B.0.3**, and this is a stark omission from most existing applications. Effective processes will have been planned from beginning to end, and therefore you should be able to show that you have delivered against your performance objectives, which in turn will have delivered against your general strategic aims.

The form of your results will depend on the sector performance objective against which you are presenting, but, for example, they could be made up of figures, graphs or tables and may be financial (eg full-cost income increases), retention and achievement data, customer satisfaction survey results.

You should provide commentary on each achievement, explaining the way the B.0.3 performance objective has been met and including issues that were encountered on the journey to achievement, and other relevant features, such as trends.

Finally, the Training Quality Standard is not about perfection: showing how you deal with performance objectives that have not been reached is as important as presenting the evidence of your success. You should therefore show how your performance review links to your improvement processes.

This provides a key opportunity to link the Part B application to the Part A application, which has an improvement section (A.6). Assessors will be looking for a harmonious interaction between the improvement processes used in the Part B area and those in use across the wider organisation. Real examples of the improvement process in action will do much to enhance your application.

Section 4: Working with Part B of the Training Quality Standard

4.1 Overview

Part B of the Training Quality Standard demands that you demonstrate how you work to support the development of your sector.

This section of the guide will help you to interpret the requirements of Part B of the Training Quality Standard and the specific guidance produced for learning provider organisations in the IT and Telecoms sector. It will help you to assess how far you have progressed towards certification; to articulate your successes and achievements with reference to Part B of the Training Quality Standard; and to identify any development actions you need to complete before you seek certification.

This section looks at:

- how you will **demonstrate your abilities** to fulfil the requirements of all sections of Part B: 3.0, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3
It sets out a structured set of tasks you are recommended to complete. If you already have extensive experience of working with the sector, use this part of the guide as a checklist to confirm that you are covering the necessary issues as you prepare to seek certification.
As you work through this section write down your judgements on nominated tasks as they will be useful background information when you come to write your submission for assessment (see page x)
- how you might proceed if you were **starting from scratch** working with your sector
It offers you guidance on how you might choose to proceed if you are just beginning to consider how effectively you serve the IT and Telecoms sector and to review the requirements of Part B of the Training Quality Standard (IT and Telecoms). Use the guidance here to help you to begin your development journey.
- how you might **decide on the best evidence** to support your work
- how you might develop your abilities to **make a case** about your work with the sector
- how you might **write your submission**.

Use your copy of *Introducing the Training Quality Standard and Part B Guidance: IT and Telecoms (e-skills UK)* produced by e-skills UK to help you

complete the activities in this section. The documents can be found at:
www.trainingqualitystandard.co.uk and www.e-skills.com

4.2 Interpreting the requirements of Part B of the Training Quality Standard

B.0 Strategy

This part of the Training Quality Standard focuses on your strategy for working with the sector.

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 your sector or to refine your existing strategy to ensure it more fully addresses the requirements of this part of the Training Quality Standard.

Demonstrating your abilities

Work through the tasks below, all of which focus on your strategy for working with employers in the IT and Telecoms sector.

Producing your strategy

- 1 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.

- 2 Make sure that the strategy you identify or compose is linked to the work you are doing with the IT and Telecoms sector. (If yours is a large organisation, with several different sector employer strategies, it will be particularly important to differentiate what you do to support the development of the IT and Telecoms sector from your work with other sectors.)
- 3 Ensure that you specify what you aim to do with the IT and Telecoms sector, or with the part of the sector with which you work and intend to work. If you have already produced documentation about this make sure the statements are clear and unambiguous.
- 4 As you work to produce your strategy, or on its revision and updating, check that you have taken into account the expectations of e-skills UK

and employers in your sector. Draw attention to the parts of your strategy that do this.

- 5 Confirm that your plans for your work with employers fit in with the skills needs and the development needs for the sector that have been identified by e-skills UK.
- 6 Make sure you also take into account the issues facing the whole IT and Telecoms sector, both in the short term and in the longer term.
- 7 There may be other issues you will also need to address, some of which will have been identified by employers. Check with e-skills UK and with other relevant stakeholders what these issues are.
- 8 Make sure you have specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timebound (SMART) objectives in your strategy. They are likely to include financial issues, customer relationships, resources, operational effectiveness, and so on. Define your success criteria and the ways in which you plan to measure your success now, rather than later.
- 9 Check that you have expressed the key points in your strategy in ways that will make sense to all the people with whom you are likely to want to communicate your messages about your work – your stakeholders.

Consider your **stakeholders** in very broad terms. They are the people and organisations with which you work and interact. At the very least your stakeholder group will include: e-skills UK, the LSC, your Regional Development Agency (RDA), your employers and their trade organisations, other learning providers with whom you work closely, awarding bodies, trade unions and the brokerage service. You will almost certainly identify more groups and you must be able to explain your rationale for your list. If you already have a strategy, check that you have communicated its details to your key stakeholders.

- 10 When you think about your market, note down the key customer groups within your market segments.
- 11 Specify clearly what information about the market and the key customer groups you currently collect, and aim to collect. Ensure you have a systematic approach and a timetable for doing so.
- 12 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 employers and other key stakeholders want from training solutions and how you design your approaches to address these expectations. Include this analysis in your strategy.

- 13 Consider if you are gathering relevant information about the market for training solutions and stakeholder expectations. Explain how you confirm that you are doing so.
- 14 Set out clearly the ways in which the products and services you wish to offer and promote to your sector address the needs of your market and of your customer groups.

Communicating your message

- 15 Once you have produced your strategy ensure you communicate it to your key stakeholders.
- 16 Then ensure that 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.
- 17 Take action to correct matters where the messages received do not match the messages you have sent out.
- 18 Check that your staff are aware of your strategy and are able to communicate it in a consistent way to others. If you find inconsistency in the messages your staff are communicating, go back to your own statements and work to make them easier to understand.

Reviewing your work

- 19 Now think about the key concepts of strategy, approaches and results. Check that your strategy includes aims for your work with the IT and Telecoms sector. Check that your approaches – that is your policies, objectives, plans, systems and processes – are all designed and implemented to help you achieve your aims. Check that you have also identified results that you wish to achieve with the employers in the sector and that the results are linked to the achievement of objectives.
- 20 Confirm with your staff that they are aware of your strategy, your objectives and the results you wish to achieve with the IT and Telecoms sector.
- 21 Review the work you have done in connection with the points above. Keep the notes you have made safely.

Starting from scratch?

If you are just at the beginning of your development journey with Part B of the Training Quality Standard, you have a choice about how to proceed. You could use existing documents and build extra components or you could produce a separate strategy for your work with employers. You can produce a comprehensive strategy or you can produce a very short strategy.

The notes below give guidance to those looking to produce a detailed strategy. If this is not your intention, maybe because you already have a range of relevant documents, use the notes to help you confirm that you cover the points in a way that is relevant to your business.

If you decide to produce a new strategy think about the shape of the document. You will need to cover strategy, approaches and results. You might translate this into:

- **your aims and aspirations:** that is what you want to do to address employers' needs and the needs of the sector
- **the elements of your business that will help you to meet your aspirations:** which include your policies, your management systems and processes, your ways of interacting with employers and stakeholders, etc, plus the specific objectives you set yourself to turn your aims and aspirations into something more concrete
- **the results you want to achieve with all of the above:** once again these are quite specific statements which are related to your objectives.

You will need to write with several audiences in mind because much of your strategy will be communicated to a range of stakeholders. You might choose to write different words to be communicated to different groups. For example, for your own organisation you might have recorded some very specific financial objectives containing commercially confidential information that you would not wish to share with others.

You could still communicate the essence of what you are intending to do by explaining that you aim to double the numbers of employers you work with within a specific area, or increase the number of employer organisations of a defined size you intend to target. When communicating with the employers themselves you could talk and write about how you are focusing on the particular concerns in their part of the industry.

You probably need to write something about how you take into account the expectations of e-skills UK and how your strategy relates to the larger issues in the sector. It's easy to forget about this or to make assumptions about how your work fits in with the development of the sector. The safest thing to do is to write down your approach. It may make sense to note down the key issues facing the sector, or the part of it with which you work, and explain how you are addressing these issues through your training solutions. Talk to Genny Dixon at e-skills UK about these, and related issues, and draw on the information available from your LSC about the local and regional economy.

Your market analysis will focus on what is happening in your market and to the key customer groups. You need to be able to explain why you are working with these employers and with this part of the sector.

You might draw on labour market intelligence/information (LMI) to help you with this and perhaps your own market research, whether conducted in a systematic way or anecdotally. You need to be able to demonstrate that you understand your market and your customers and that your means of gathering the information enables you to do this.

Then it is important to make the link between what the market wants, what the sector's key stakeholders want and what you are proposing to deliver. You need to be able to demonstrate that what you are proposing to offer is needed and will be valued. Think about why your offer will interest all your stakeholders.

You should also think about how you are going to communicate your strategy to your key stakeholders and to employers and how you will ensure that the messages you want to send out are delivered accurately.

When you have a document or documents that cover all these points you can begin to test your approach and ask yourself the following:

- Does it work?
- Does what you have written make sense to people inside your organisation and beyond it?
- Can you run your business using the guidance you have produced?
- When are you going to review and refine your strategy?
- What process will you use to make sure your strategy continues to work well over time?
- Are you developing sustainable future growth?

B.1 Understand

This part of the Training Quality Standard focuses on how you ensure that you understand what employers in your sector, and other key groups, need and expect in terms of training solutions. It also requires you to demonstrate that your products and services are appropriate to the sector's needs and expectations.

A high-quality Part B application will show a clear understanding of its marketplace (B.0.2) and which employers it considers to be its key customer groups. It also needs to show formally how it has been able to understand these employers.

The layout of this section is particularly important: it needs to present information coherently and enable appropriate links to be made with other Part B criteria.

The information could be sorted into the following three sections showing:

- you have planned the way you gather and analyse information from employers
- you have done what you planned to do using real examples and making references to the results of your analysis
- how the views of employers have had an impact on your training solutions and how their views have influenced/changed your strategy.

Demonstrating your abilities

Make a list of the employers and stakeholders (see B.0 above for a definition of stakeholders) in the IT and Telecoms sector with whom you have engaged in dialogue over a defined period. This may be six months, a year, two years or more.

1. Then note down the subjects of the dialogues and, if you can remember, the nature of the conversations.
2. Make brief notes about the sort of inputs you have sought from employers in the IT and Telecoms sector concerning their common business needs and what they want in training solutions.
3. List the factors that affect all employers seeking training and development solutions (for example retention, productivity, morale, competitiveness).

4. Identify the products and services you have developed, or refined, to meet employers' expectations and to address the factors above.
5. Show how you make sure you become aware of changes in the sector's needs and expectations and how you refine your products and services to ensure they remain relevant.

Starting from scratch?

When you are working with this part of the Training Quality Standard you will need to think carefully about how you work with employers and those who influence the development of the sector and how effectively you build up relationships with these groups.

The key term used in the Training Quality Standard is dialogue. Use the definition below when you are considering what constitutes dialogue.

Dialogue: a conversation, discussion between representatives of two groups, an exchange of ideas.

You are looking to demonstrate how your approach to your work is shaped by your employers and by the other key stakeholders. You are looking to demonstrate that you are responsive and that what you offer is what the sector wants and needs.

You also aim to show that you take on board examples of things working well – good practice – and modify your approaches to make the most of all that you find relevant to your situation.

Being in a position to give examples of how you have modified what you do in the light of these inputs, or how you have designed programmes specifically to address needs you have identified, is essential. It gives what you are saying about your responsiveness some basis in fact.

A list of the programmes you have developed in this way would be helpful, as would notes on the changes you have made to respond to business needs and to the needs of the sector via modifications to your programmes.

If you can also show that an ongoing review and evaluation process is in place and operating and that you keep on adjusting and amending what you do, to ensure you are still responding to the requirements of the sector, you are making a strong case for your organisation.

B.2 Deploy

This part of the Training Quality Standard is about how all parts of your organisation work to meet the needs and expectations of employers and the sector.

There is a close link between B1 and B2. If your organisation is large, you need to consider here the way your organisation works in terms of cross-selling – for example would staff in the Hospitality faculty feel confident selling IT courses? How is this managed in your organisation?

Demonstrating your abilities

Make a list of the products and services that you deliver to the IT and Telecoms sector.

1. Explain the process you use to match relevant products and services with the needs and expectations of local employers, (as far as possible).
2. Explain also how you ensure that your products and services meet the expectations of the sector. What specific needs and expectations do your products and services respond to and address?
3. Explain how you ensure that you meet employers' expectations – in delivery and content, for example. Define the characteristics of **delivery** (eg location, time, structure) and **content** (eg programme details, organisation, qualifications, etc) that you analyse to confirm your judgements. Then make a case that you meet expectations – back it up with examples.
4. Consider how you can demonstrate that the people who arrange and deliver your products and services have the skills and knowledge to meet sector expectations. Make sure you have defined the terms **arranging** and **delivering**. Also explain your understanding of **expectations**.
5. Then explain how you make sure that your staff are able to fulfil the service specification. You will need to draw attention to your recruitment policy, your training and development processes and the methods you use to monitor and improve performance, as well as being clear about the qualifications and experience your staff need.

6. When you deliver your products and services you will need to demonstrate how you ensure your resources meet employer requirements. Are buildings equipped to the required standards? Are the programme materials the right quality? If programmes are delivered on employers' premises, do the employers supply sufficient resources of the right standard?
7. Be clear about how you arrive at your decisions about what is right and appropriate. For your own benefit, make sure you have created definitions of all the more abstract concepts you use in your documents. What does regular mean, as in regular updating? How do you know that an action you take is appropriate?

Starting from scratch?

Here you have the opportunity to take each of your products and services and demonstrate that you have understood the needs and expectations of employers and other key stakeholders when designing and delivering them.

Think how you can demonstrate how you make sure that the offer you make to an employer is what they need, want and will value.

You will need to keep some records of how you know you are meeting, and have met, employers' expectations. This is not just about end-of-programme evaluations – you also need to think about how the programmes are delivered and resourced.

Can you be sure you have used the best delivery methods for employers? Would it be best to deliver the programme on the employer's premises? Do you give feedback to employers about the progress of their employees as often as they want it, and in the form that is best for them?

In other words, when setting up relationships with employers, do you take the time to make sure you know what they want and then commit to delivering it?

It's not just being able to demonstrate you can be flexible – you need to be able to show that you are working in the way that is right for employers.

This will mean broaching issues such as location, mode of delivery, time of delivery, etc, when the programme is set up. This means that those arranging your programmes need to know what each employer expects of them.

It also means confirming, before the programme starts, during its life and at the end, that your approach meets the needs and expectations of your employers.

Thus, you need a system for making sure you get this right. The details of the system are for you to decide. Use the guidance in 'Thinking about B.3' below to help you to shape your approach.

B.3 Perform

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

B.3 is closely related to B.0. The guidance is explicit that **performance should be measured against your own sector performance objectives defined in B.0.3**, and this is a stark omission from most existing applications.

The narrative in this section will be different from the bulk of the application because it should be **based mainly on data**. It should show your success measured against the sector performance objectives described in B.0.3.

This section is important because it provides the opportunity to demonstrate the effectiveness of the performance review process and how it contributes to the 'improvement journey' of the provision.

There may be a temptation here to simply list results for the training courses. While data that provides evidence of improving results or sustained good performance is important, it should be presented as a continuation of the story of the provision – the culmination of all the hard work of planning and delivering to the employer audience.

The form of your results will depend on the sector performance objective against which you are presenting, but they could include figures, graphs or tables and may be financial (eg full-cost income increases).

Demonstrating your abilities

1. Note down the results you have achieved with reference to each of your objectives.
2. Describe the results in qualitative terms but also set out the performance data and relevant statistics and analyses of your data.
3. Use all this information to help you judge how well you have met your objectives in both qualitative and quantitative terms. Also make a judgement about the effectiveness of the processes you use to measure your successes and achievements.
4. Note any trends that your data and analyses indicate. Make sure you present this information in a relevant and usable format.

5. Once you have produced your data and your analyses draw some conclusions about how the delivery of your products and services has contributed to the outcomes sought for employers in the sector by some of the other key stakeholders, including e-skills UK.

For example, your efforts may have resulted in your working with employers who have not been actively involved in developing their workforce in the past, or you may be working with a hard-to-reach group of employers. If you have specified this as something you aim to do, then the results show that you are achieving success.

Starting from scratch?

Here you need to think carefully about the objectives you have set and how you know you are fulfilling them. You will need measurements, analyses, trends and statistics. You will also need to confirm that you are measuring the right things and collecting information about the issues that will help you to fulfil the requirements of B.0 more completely and run your business more effectively.

However, before you draw on any statistics you will need to be clear about the case they make. How do your figures and graphs illustrate your successes? Do you have any comparative data about the sector, locally, regionally and nationally, that you can use to help you with this task?

Learning providers have lots of experience of collecting information about learners: retention rates, achievement rates, qualifications rates, and so on. Often they have information and analyses that go back several years. However, the analyses in themselves have little value in the context of your work with the Training Quality Standard until you are clear about what they mean in business terms and how they relate to what you are trying to do.

As well as statistics about achievements and similar information, think about statistics that relate to the issues that interest employers. These will help you to make the case that you are supporting the development and improvement of the sector and helping individual employers – as well as their employees – to be more successful.

Statistics relating to improvements to worker productivity and to enhanced business profitability are the key areas that will back up what you have said about your contribution to the success of the sector in B.0.

Statistics relating to **enhanced worker productivity** usually deal with the impact of the learner's ability to use new skills. Often this is measured in terms of doing tasks more quickly or reducing error rates.

Statistics relating to **enhanced business profitability** usually relate to the measurement of what a learner will be able to do once he or she has gained the new skills and how this will benefit the business. A comparison between what the worker could do before the training and what he or she can do afterwards will help to make the point. This approach also allows you to undertake profitability calculations.

Both these types of benefits need to be addressed when you set up training and the nature of the calculations agreed before any training takes place.

If you measure the same things in every organisation you work with you will rapidly start to build up a useful profile of the success of your training. If you measure quarterly, for example, in less than a year you will start to see trends and be able to make a case for your impact on the IT and Telecoms sector.

Using this sort of approach will help you to begin to benchmark performance.

4.3 Thinking about evidence

Use *Introducing the Training Quality Standard* and *Part B Guidance: IT and Telecoms (e-skills UK)* from e-skills UK guidance to help you choose evidence to support your statements. Pay particular attention to the 'Points to consider' in *Part B Guidance: IT and Telecoms (e-skills UK)*. Also decide how relevant the items listed under the 'What could count as evidence' column are to your circumstances.

Remember: 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 made when completing the tasks linked to the 'Demonstrating your abilities'. What evidence will best illustrate your points?

Once you have identified pieces of evidence you think will be helpful explain specifically how they will support your case. Remember you can often use a single piece of evidence to back up several points.

Remember that although the different sections are considered separately in the activities, 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 for B.0.3 (Define results) are related directly to B.3.0 (Achieve results) and B.3.1 (Achieve impact) – but you should also bear in mind that the links between strategy, approaches and results are important for all aspects of work with the Training Quality Standard.

4.4 Making a case

The following activities will help you to develop your ability to make a case about your successes in the IT and Telecoms sector.

Assume you are going to make a presentation about how you work with employers in the IT and Telecoms sector and how you help to address the workforce skills issues in the whole sector to an audience made up of two groups of people. These are:

- employers who work with you
- stakeholders who include representatives from the LSC, e-skills UK and the brokerage service.

You have decided that your presentation will cover how you are addressing the main issues raised in Part B of the Training Quality Standard, although you may not mention the Training Quality Standard at all. You may choose to focus on your successes in supporting employers and the sector.

You are keen to ensure that your audience remembers your key messages so you intend to keep the presentation simple and straightforward. You have decided against extensive handouts and to make only limited use of slides (no more than six slides and one sheet of A4 paper, printed on one side only and with a font size of 12 pt). You have made these decisions because you want people to concentrate on your message and not get bogged down with lots of information.

These are the possible headings you have set down so far to help you to plan your presentation:

- Strategy – approaches – results – how we link all three
- Our key objectives with regard to employers
- Our key objectives with regard to the IT and Telecoms sector
- How we gather information about employers' business needs and their expectations about training solutions

- How we know we are offering products and services that the sector values and wants
- How we consult our key stakeholders about all aspects of training
- Our approach to training delivery – how we make it relevant to employers
- How we ensure our staff – that is those who deliver our provision and those who work behind the scenes or those who work as managers – remain competent to do their the job
- How we measure our successes in terms of our work with employers and the sector more generally
- Key statistics about our work with the sector that we want our audience to remember.

However, time is tight and you know you will not be able to cover all these points. You have 15 minutes to get your message across and to make sure people will remember what you want them to remember. (Any questions will come after the 15 minutes you have available for your presentation.)

When you think about the structure for your presentation, remember that the most common approach is to break a presentation down into key elements and allocate a proportion of the time to each of them. Some possible timings for your presentation are noted below:

- an introduction – what will be covered and key points (2–3 minutes)
- a series of clear and unambiguous mini-presentations which have different but related themes, for example, the three most important aspects of our work with you, how we help you to succeed, etc (8 minutes)
- a summing up of what you have said (2 minutes)
- a final point or points – a message with which to leave the audience (2 minutes).

NB For people who are not used to making presentations a good way of estimating how long a message will take to deliver is to think in terms of articulating about 140 words per minute. Speaking faster will mean people begin to switch off, because there is too much to follow. Speaking more slowly will mean people begin to switch off because they are bored.

People listening to presentations also need a theme or some linking statements to help them to remain aware of what the presentation is about.

An additional activity:

How would your presentation vary if you were presenting to your own staff?
Assuming you are using the same content, how would your message differ?
How would you customise your presentation to suit this audience?

4.5 Writing your submission for assessment

If you wish to use the work you have done in connection with your development journey to support your submission for assessment you will need to modify your notes to ensure that you:

- write with the assessment team's needs in mind
- make a coherent case for your claim to be ready for certification
- follow the guidance given by the certification body
- write in a manner that is accessible to a reader who does not know your organisation.

You will also need to remember that your submission will be scrutinised by the lead assessor. It will be assessed and scored remotely. The visit made to your site is a verification visit. Verification is about confirming – or not confirming – the case you have already put forward in your submission.

Feedback from recent assessments indicates that the quality of the submission is vital to your success and that you need to write a narrative about your organisation built around your strategy, the approaches you use to manage and deliver your provision and the results you achieve.

Providers who are doing well in assessment are able to make a case clearly and to guide the assessment team. TQS assessment is where your words really matter and you are being asked to make a case via the quality of your writing.

Section 5: Costing the development process

5.1 What costs are involved?

Costs involved in working with the Training Quality Standard are not limited to assessment and certification. Information about these costs can be obtained via the Training Quality Standard website. (www.trainingqualitystandard.co.uk)

Having completed an analysis of the cost of working with the Training Quality Standard, based on the activities set out in Section 3, providers have concluded that the major cost involved is the use of managerial time.

They also identified a range of activities they believe their managers will need to complete, or ensure others complete, before they seek certification.

As a result of reviewing Section 3 in terms of the likely costs of completing the development journey, you should:

- be better able to estimate the costs of working with the Training Quality Standard
- have a better understanding of the activities your organisation needs to undertake to prepare for certification
- be more confident that you are accurately identifying the areas in which you need more assistance to help offset the costs of your development journey.

Section 6: Next steps

6.1 Systems and processes

As a result of your work with Section 4 you have now produced a strategy, if you didn't already have one, to support your work with employers in your sector.

It will be important to:

- review your strategy on a regular basis (You will need to decide the timescales.)
- set and review your strategic aims and objectives
- undertake appropriate market research (You will need to define appropriate in the context of your business.)
- demonstrate that you are meeting the needs and expectations of employers in the sector and of the IT and Telecoms sector as a whole. (You will need to refer to the e-skills UK website to help you demonstrate that your work with the sector as a whole meets employer needs and expectations.)

Take some time to confirm that you have a robust approach to supporting your employers, employer groups and their employees. To achieve this you may wish to consider:

- how you evaluate the impact of your work
- how you measure satisfaction with your work.

You may wish to specify a range of performance indicators to help you **evaluate the impact** of what you do. To do this you will probably identify indicators that refer to:

- employers (eg those related to enhancements to employee productivity and to whole organisation profitability)
- employer groups (eg those that demonstrate how the sector is improving, becoming more efficient or more profitable) (note: you may decide to include all the organisations in your supply chain in your considerations)
- employees (eg those relating to learner achievement, retention, progression, etc).

When you think about **satisfaction**, and specifically about **employer satisfaction**, you may wish to consider doing more than reviewing opinions at the end of programmes or in line with course and programme review requirements. You may decide to keep checking that in the opinion of your employers you are meeting needs and expectations throughout their period of involvement with you.

The Training Quality Standard draws attention to the arranging and the delivery of training solutions. You may wish to confirm that employers are satisfied with both aspects of the service they receive.

You may also wish to check that they are satisfied with delivery and content. Again these are aspects of the training solutions that are specifically raised in the detail of the Training Quality Standard.

With reference to **continuous improvement** you may wish to demonstrate that your work with the Training Quality Standard is not a one-off activity by showing that you are creating systems and processes that will help you to set up ways of working and to review, refine and update your work.

Also contact e-skills UK about developments within the sector that may be of interest to you.

6.2 Thinking about assessment and certification

You should remember that this document is not an assessment guide. It is a tool to help you to develop your abilities to meet the requirements of Part B (IT and Telecoms) of the Training Quality Standard.

It offers you guidance on the actions you may wish to undertake before seeking certification and guidance on how to estimate the likely costs of your involvement with Part B of the Training Quality Standard.

It does not offer guidance on:

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

6.3 Further information

Training Quality Standard

At the time of writing (October 2008) the most up-to-date information about the Training Quality Standard is to be found at:

www.trainingqualitystandard.co.uk

by contacting: info@trainingqualitystandard.co.uk

or by telephoning: 0845 225 1310.

The most useful documents published to date are:

Introducing the Training Quality Standard (2008)

Frequently asked questions about the Training Quality Standard (2008)

Although originally published in 2007 they have been updated to reflect the changes involved in moving from the New Standard to the Training Quality Standard. They are also available from www.trainingqualitystandard.co.uk

Information about support for the Training Quality Standard is also available from the new Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) programme,

World Class Skills- developing responsive provision

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

Email: wcsenquiries@kpmg.co.uk

Telephone: 0800 3286075

E-skills UK

To download *Part B Guidance: IT and Telecoms (e-skills UK)* or find out more details from e-skills UK visit www.e-skills.com. SSCs keep their assessment guidance under review so it is best to access it directly from the website.

Applying for assessment

The choice of time at which to apply for assessment against the Training Quality Standard rests with you. That decision will be influenced by the assessment outcomes that you are looking to achieve.

If you wish to benchmark your practice against the Training Quality Standard, knowing that you are unlikely to be ready for certification, you will use different criteria for determining the timing of your assessment from those used by providers who believe they have completed their development journey and are ready to seek certification.

You will need to arrive at a decision about the timing of your organisation's assessment that will suit your particular circumstances and development objectives.

Appendix A: Training Quality Standard Part B 'readiness check' for training providers

Introduction

This checklist is designed to help organisations considering whether they are ready to make a Training Quality Standard (TQS) Part B application. When considering whether you are ready to make an application, you will need to refer in the first instance to the *Eligibility* document on the TQS website www.trainingqualitystandard.co.uk which has details of requirements, eligibility criteria and special conditions. You will know this document from your work towards Part A of the TQS.

You should also be aware that TQS assessment is concerned with **processes** as much as outcomes. It is clear from the TQS applications and the Centre for Enterprise feedback reviewed that the presentation of process evidence is far weaker than that of outcome evidence. This should be a major factor when considering 'readiness' to apply.

There is, however, a range of support to help you decide whether to apply and, if you do, how to approach it. For more information visit the TQS website (www.trainingqualitystandard.co.uk/).

Using the 'readiness' checklist

These questions are designed to establish whether or not you have the processes in place and the subsequent outcome evidence that are indicative of the 'sector expert' employer training provision expected by the Training Quality Standard Part B. They are for your organisation's use only so, to make the best use of them, please answer them honestly and then refer to the notes at the end of the questions. You may find it useful to run through the questions quickly at first, and make a note of your responses at that time, and then revisit them once you have begun to think in more detail about your submission for Part B. This will help you to keep track of progress and identify areas where there is still the need for development.

Training and development solutions should be designed specifically to meet the needs of employers. They may include apprenticeships frameworks, work-based NVQ programmes designed to meet the needs of the adult workforce, industrial short courses delivered using flexibility in attendance and location, and bespoke programmes designed specifically to meet the needs of one or more employers or employees. Importantly, a training and development solution will have been developed in consultation with one or more employers and should take into account the business needs of the employer **and** measure the business impact on them.

<i>'Readiness' checklist</i>		Part B application reference
(10)	Do you have evidence that you understand the market in which you operate, e.g. the outcome of a review of national, regional and local labour market intelligence (LMI) for your sector? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	B.0.2
(11)	Do you have evidence that you understand the business needs of the employers you work with, established through research and stakeholder and employer consultation? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	B.1.1 B.1.2
(12)	Do your sector-specialist staff who negotiate with employers over training solutions work closely with business development colleagues? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	B.2.2
(13)	Do you have established processes for determining the training needs of an employer that take into account the impact on their business? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	B.1.1 B.2.2
(14)	Do you have established processes for measuring the impact on the employer's business as the result of a delivered training solution? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	B.2.1 B.2.2
(15)	Do you set 'SMART' strategic performance objectives in relation to your activities with sector employers? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	B.0.3
(16)	Do you systematically review performance against these objectives? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	B.3.0 B.3.1
(17)	Do you have a Quality Improvement System in place that relates directly to your training products and services? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	B.3.1 A.6
(18)	Can you show clear links between the results of your sector performance reviews and your Quality Improvement System? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	B.0.3 B.3.1 A.6
(19)	Do you have evidence of improving results or sustained good performance against your performance objectives? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	B.3.0 B.3.1
(20)	Do you have evidence of improving results or sustained good performance against national benchmarks?	B.3.0 B.3.1

<i>'Readiness' checklist</i>	Part B application reference
Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	

Interpreting your responses

- (1) If you answered 'yes' to all or nearly all of the questions, you have shown that you have most of the required processes in place. You may be able to submit a high-quality TQS Part B application quite soon.
- (2) If you answered 'yes' to 15 or more questions, including question 1(b), you have shown that you have most of the required processes in place. However, you also have a number of areas that need to be developed before you are able to submit a high-quality TQS Part B application.
- (3) If you answered 'yes' to between 10 and 15 questions, including question 1(b), you have shown that you have some of the required processes in place. However, you have quite a few areas that need to be developed before you are able to submit a high-quality TQS Part B application.
- (4) If you answered 'yes' to fewer than 10 questions, including question 1(b), you have shown that you have few of the required processes in place. Therefore, you have a large number of areas that need to be developed before you are able to submit a high-quality TQS Part B application.
- (5) If you answered 'no' to question 1(a) or 1(b), even if you answered yes to 10 or more of the other questions, you should make particular use of the 'Developmental support' document because TQS Part B requires evidence that established processes are working effectively and this will be more challenging for newer providers.

Appendix B: Benefits of the Training Quality Standard¹

We outline below some of the key benefits of achieving the TQS.

Informing Employer Choice in a demand led system

In a truly demand led system employers will be free to choose where they purchase their training and development solutions. It is, therefore, important to ensure that employers recognise what TQS represents and what they can expect from a provider with TQS. The LSC is working with a range of stakeholders to ensure that providers with TQS are highlighted to employers as their preferred provider. The LSC is working on The Employer Guide to Training Providers to ensure that employers with TQS are 'flagged' as being highly responsive.

Train to Gain

As the Train to Gain service is enhanced for 2008/09 it is vital that the service continues to be high performing, helping employers identify and meet their skills needs. Providers with TQS will play a major role in further raising the credibility and equality of the Train to Gain service.

Train to Gain Brokers have been made aware of providers with TQS and what this represents. These providers should be prioritised over those without the standard when referring new TTG business. The Employer Guide to Training Providers will link in with this when TQS providers will be flagged as preferred.

National Apprenticeship Service

As the apprenticeship programme expands TQS will play a major role in the delivery of responsive provision that meets the needs of the employer and the learner. Providers who have invested in a responsive infrastructure and excellence in vocational areas will drive the apprenticeship programme forward.

Framework for Excellence

The Framework for Excellence is an annual quantitative assessment of performance across all LSC funded providers. The Framework will provide an accurate, independent picture of the performance of the further education sector, validated and supported by published data.

¹ Information provided by the Learning and Skills Council

The evidence used to assess the employer views measure in the Framework will be based on a subset of the assessment criteria from TQS. Providers that achieve TQS for their whole organisation will automatically be rated outstanding across the whole Responsiveness to Employers KPA for the period for which TQS is awarded (three years).

In a reciprocal arrangement, from summer 2010 any provider that is in scope for the Responsiveness to Employers KPA may need to achieve a rating of good or outstanding in this particular area before it can apply for TQS. This alignment means providers do not need to do both.

Framework for Excellence evidence will be highly relevant to support an application for TQS, not least because the Frameworks Employer Views survey is based on elements of TQS.

The operational relationship between TQS and Framework for Excellence was agreed by Ministers in March 2007 and published in the Framework for Excellence provider guides in July 2007 and July 2008.

Capital skills prospectus: implementing the key priorities of building colleges for the future

The LSC Capital Strategy published in March 2008 had confirmed the intention to help drive increased specialisation among FE providers, and ensure that capital investment supports provision to address identified skills needs. Providers with TQS will have priority access to specialist capital funding. The capital prospectus states that 'colleges applying for capital funding will need to demonstrate their commitment to employer engagement. In most cases, colleges will need to show that, at the point of application, they have at least applied for TQS, and they must have achieved the TQS before funding is released. This requirement will apply to other providers of employer responsive provision as well.

National Skills Academies

The LSC is working with the new and emerging National Skills Academies so that they adopt TQS as their key quality criterion in selecting and working with provider partners. This will ensure that only the highest standard providers are part of the National Skills Academies networks.