



Example process insertions relevant to the quality management of Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs)



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** All weblinks and web-images checked and correct at time of writing (May 2026).*

About this Toolkit

The Toolkit provides a lens through which to scrutinise and adapt existing academic governance and quality management processes to create Level 4 and Level 5 programmes of study that are HTQ-ready. By HTQ-ready, we mean that qualifications are ready for submission to the Department for Education (DfE) for approval as Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs), and to navigate this external approvals process as smoothly as possible.

Importantly, the Toolkit is not intended to replace or duplicate established quality management processes. However, in recognition of the unique positioning of HTQs as classroom-based, occupational-standard aligned and employer-endorsed qualifications, it is important that programmes are as fully prepared as possible before entering the DfE approval process.

The aim is to minimise the need for changes to programmes and modules that have already been validated, and to avoid unnecessary delays in the approval process. As a qualification cannot be marketed as an HTQ until full DfE approval has been granted, any such delays may have consequences for student recruitment and programme delivery.

The Toolkit was developed by Elizabeth Cleaver Consulting Limited in partnership with an expert practitioner group comprising representatives from De Montfort University, New College Durham, Newcastle College University Centre, Northumbria University, Nottingham Trent University, Sheffield Hallam University, Teesside University, the University of Manchester, the University of Portsmouth and the University of Salford.

The resources were developed in response to feedback from awarding organisations involved in the pre-2025 HTQ approval process, as highlighted in Gatsby's 2025 report, *The Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQ) Approval Process in England: A Review*.

The project was commissioned by the Gatsby Foundation and supported by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). Users are advised to consult the most recent guidance from the DfE on the HTQ approval process before using these resources.

Purpose of this document

This guidance document has been developed as one of a suite of resources designed to support degree awarding bodies in England to prepare to submit validated Level 4 or 5 qualifications for external approval and recognition by the Department for Education (DfE) as Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs). It provides a series of HTQ-relevant insertions with which to adapt your development consent, validation and periodic review codes of practice, guidelines and documentation. Where questions and prompts involve decisions and branching options, they are presented as a flow diagram.

As the approval of a qualification as an HTQ by the DfE takes place **after** a programme has been validated by its awarding body, checking for HTQ readiness at the very earliest stages of its development and approval is important. If scrutiny is not rigorous at these points, a programme submitted for HTQ approval may be returned with change requests. Given that awarding bodies and providers are not permitted to advertise the HTQ status of a programme until full HTQ approval has been granted, any requested changes will need to be addressed before the programme can be advertised and recruitment can begin.

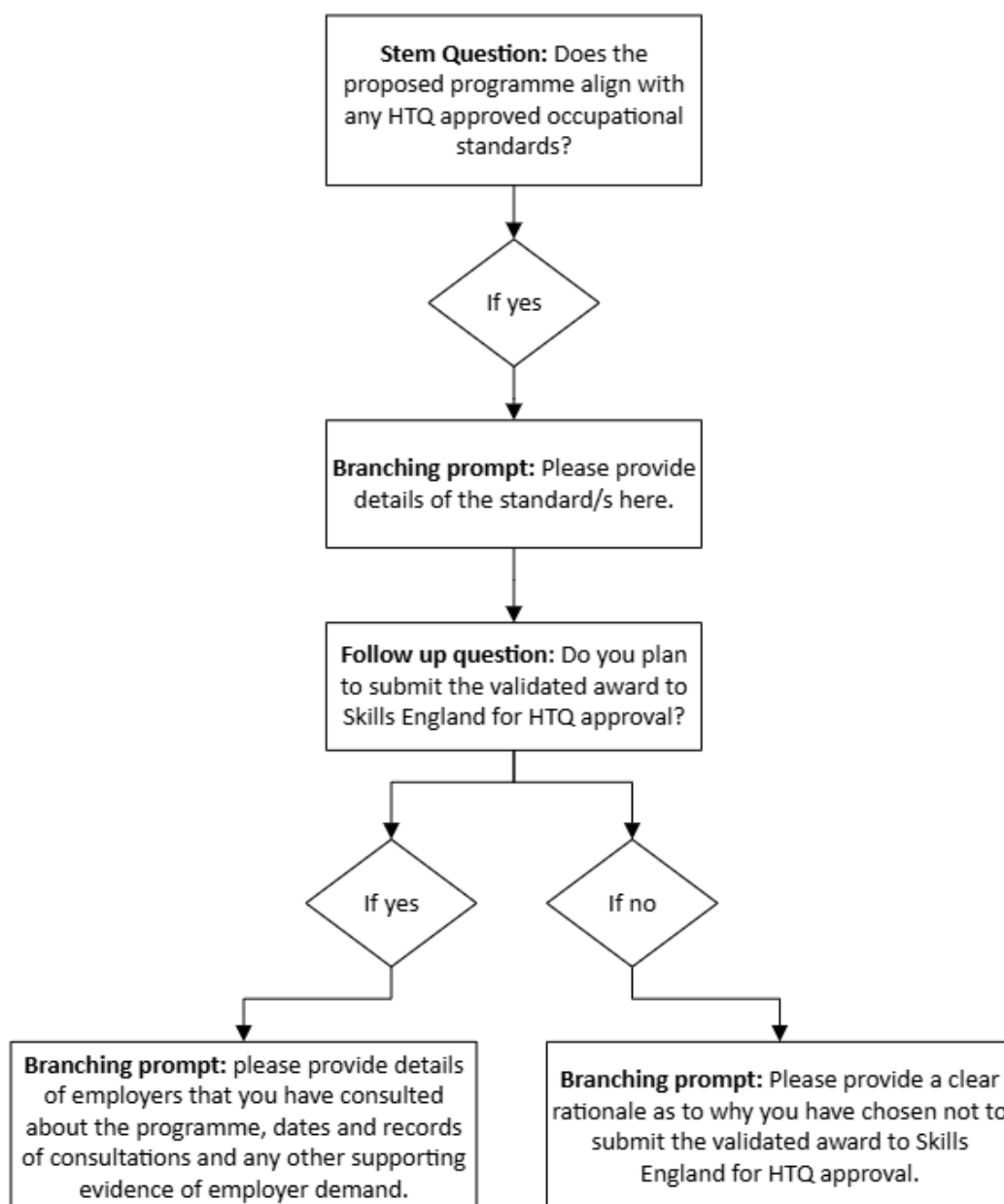
The periodic review (PR) process acts as a useful checkpoint for your current HTQ programmes of study. For those programmes with extant HTQ status, it is a point at which the programme teams can confirm that the programme remains in good standing and continues to meet HTQ approval expectations, drawing on evidence from annual monitoring exercises and external examiner reports. A separate guidance document has been developed to help you to ensure that external examiners undertake this ongoing scrutiny and review on an annual basis.

The example insertions presented below, are designed to support awarding bodies to address any gaps highlighted by their completion of the HTQ Readiness Checklist. The checklist questions that these insertions relate to are reproduced for information in Appendix 1.

Importantly, any suggested process and documentation insertions offered here are not intended as a replacement for current codes of practice or guidelines. They are produced to help you to adapt and augment relevant parts of your quality management guidance, processes and reporting requirements, to ensure they are HTQ compliant.

Insert 1: Development Consent Stage: HTQ questions and prompts

This set of questions is key to ensuring that HTQ readiness is established at the earliest stage of programme and module development. It starts from the premise that all eligible programmes that could align to an HTQ-approved occupational standard should be asked whether they are applying for HTQ status, and if not why not. It also ensures that employer demand and endorsement evidence is presented at the earliest opportunity.



Insert 2: Development Consent Stage: standalone modules

There is now the potential for single modules or groups of modules (offering a minimum of 30 academic credits) to be individually funded through the Lifelong Learning Entitlement. You may wish to include a section which prompts programmes teams at this early development stage to indicate whether any modules have the potential for marketing individually. Please also note that this question may be relevant to other priority sector programmes at Levels 4, 5 and 6 and you may wish to include it in wider development consent documentation.

Stem prompt: please indicate the names of any modules/groups of modules that you intend to develop/use as part of this programme that have the potential to be offered for independent recruitment. For each, please indicate evidence of employer and/or student demand for these modules.

Insert 3: Validation Stage: programme specification template questions and prompts

This set of prompts is designed to be inserted into HTQ programme specification documentation, for submission to a validation panel.

Stem prompt: Please confirm the full details of the occupational standard/s to which this programme will map.

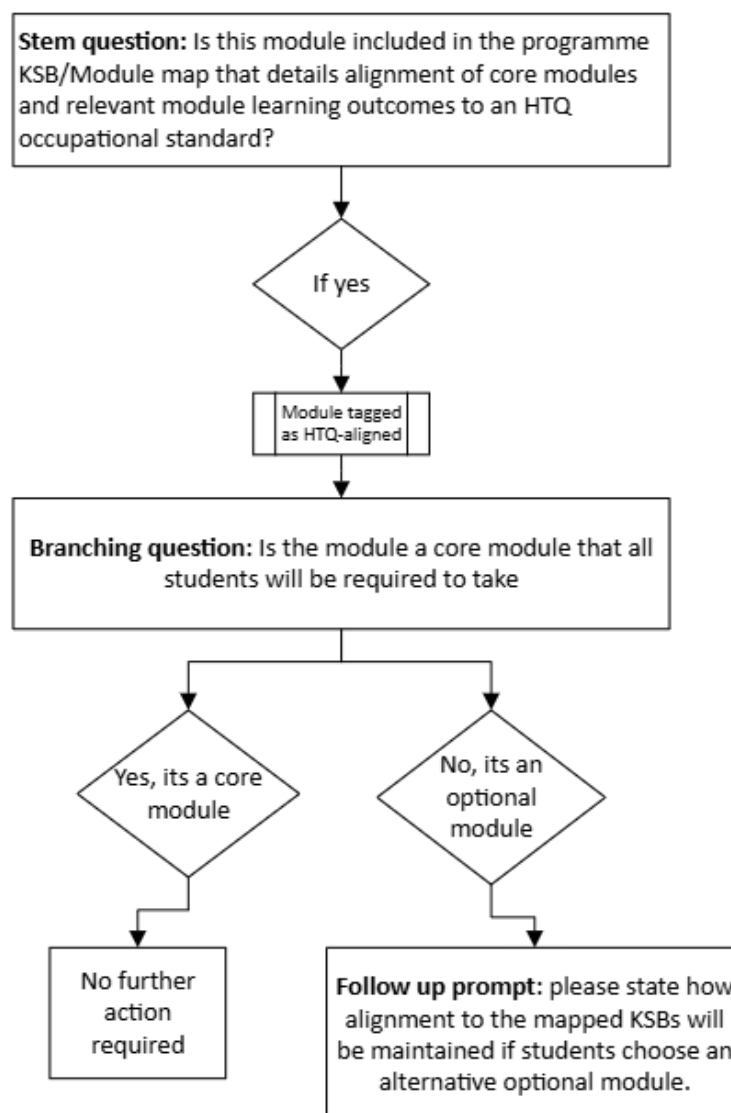
- Occupational Standard Name:
- Occupational Standard Reference Number:
- Level of Study:

KSB mapping prompt: please complete the KSB/Module map to evidence alignment of core modules and relevant module learning outcomes to the HTQ occupational standard/s listed above. NB. If modules are optional, please state how alignment to mapped KSBs will be maintained if students choose alternative modules.

Employer demand and engagement prompt: please detail employers that you have consulted with about the programme, the dates and records of these consultations and any other supporting evidence of employer demand. This may include data from the Local Skills Improvement Plan, and other regional and national data sets.

Insert 4: Validation Stage: module specification template questions and prompts

This set of insertions will ensure that all modules that form part of a validated HTQ programme and map to KSBs are tagged and can be monitored. This is important as any changes to a module, once the parent award has been approved as an HTQ, may impact on the continuing alignment of the overall programme to its occupational standard. Introducing an 'HTQ-aligned' tag within your programme and module management system will help ensure that changes to a module do not inadvertently impact on programme KSB alignment.



Insert 5: Validation Stage: sample assessment materials

*This suggested insertion relates to the requirement that sample assessment materials (SAMs) accompany any qualification submission for HTQ approval. If you intend to gain HTQ approval **before** the first intake of students to the qualification, then you will need to provide example SAMs from other similar awards or state that they are indicative assessment documents. To ensure consistency, you may wish to involve an external examiner in the review of any indicative assessment documents you submit, to ensure alignment with your awarding body's normal assessment review processes.*

SAMs requirement: Please include three Sample Assessment Materials (SAMs) attached to three separate programme modules. Where an HTQ is awarded at Level 5, and covers learning at both Levels 4 and 5, at least one Level 5 SAM must be included. Please submit your SAMs using your normal assessment brief template, adapted to include the following information:

- a clear task brief written for a student audience.
- clear marking criteria which explicitly indicate the relationship of each marking criterion to a module learning outcome and connected KSBs (as outlined in the KSB Module Map).

Past assessment briefs taken or adapted from existing relevant courses must include details of **the date** at which they were issued to students and must not be more than two years old.

New SAMs created for the purpose of this validation/periodic review event must include the date of validation and clearly detail that they are indicative of the types of assessment that will be used, and do not represent previously issued or future assessments.

Insert 6: Validation/Periodic Review guidance – panel composition

This suggested text insertion relates to the panel composition guidance for panels that are assessing HTQ-ready programmes.

HTQ programme panels will be arranged by the Academic Registry team, with the exception of an external academic advisor, employer representatives and student panel members, who will be nominated by the programme team. An HTQ panel will normally comprise:

- An independent Chair from a different academic subject area to that of the programme(s) under consideration.
- A representative from a different academic subject area to that of the programme(s) under consideration, ideally with experience from another HTQ or apprenticeship programme.
- A student representative, ideally from another HTQ or apprenticeship programme with experience of study that aligns to the Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours (KSBs) of an Occupational Standard.
- One or two external academic panel members. Ideally, the nominee(s) will have a robust knowledge and understanding of occupational standards, experience of the design and/or delivery of HTQ programmes of study and an understanding of the current HTQ approvals process. Where this is not the case, a clear rationale as to why and how the nominee is suitable must be provided on the External Panel Member Nomination Form.
- One or two employer representatives, ideally from organisations that have been consulted about or have endorsed the programme under development.
- A member of the academic registry team.

All panel members will normally be provided with a briefing organised by Academic Registry. This is dual purpose: an introduction to/reminder of the awarding body processes, and clarity about any specific expectations that will be placed on an HTQ programme validation/periodic review panel.

Insert 7: Validation/Periodic Review guidance – panel responsibilities

In addition to the normal responsibilities of a validation/periodic review panel, in the case of HTQs, panels will be responsible for:

- Judging that the programme and its modules provide appropriate preparation for an HTQ graduate to meet the required KSBs of the aligned Skills England occupational standard, and in doing so, to be occupationally ready;
- Judging that the programme and module learning outcomes appropriately reflect the KSBs of the occupational standard;
- Judging that the course is appropriately employer-endorsed, and considering plans for continued employer engagement during the operation of the programme;
- Identifying any modules shared with other programmes and noting any changes that may need to be made as part of the HTQ validation/periodic review process, to ensure that potential impacts are mitigated. This may, or may not, lead to the module(s) in question being updated for all programmes they contribute to;
- Ensuring there are opportunities to formatively assess HTQ students' progress against the required KSBs, to underpin student success.
- Judging that summative assessment plans, sample assessment tasks and marking criteria adequately align to the KSBs of the occupational standard;
- Ensuring that the programme offers adequate Sample Assessment Materials (SAMs) in a format that is suitable to for submission to the DfE for HTQ approval.
- Ensuring that any conditions arising from validation or periodic review are appropriate and achievable, in order not to unnecessarily delay DfE HTQ approval.
- Ensuring that any recommendations arising from a validation or periodic review event will not adversely affect the prospects of the programme as a registered HTQ.

Insert 8: Validation/Periodic Review Panel Report Checklist

Important note: any items on this list that receive the answer 'no' may require specific timebound conditions to be set in order that they can be fully addressed before a validated course is submitted to DfE for HTQ approval.

HTQ Validation/Periodic Review Panel Alignment Checklist	Yes	No
The programme and its modules provide appropriate preparation for an HTQ graduate to meet the required KSBs of the aligned Skills England occupational standard		
Programme and module learning outcomes appropriately reflect the KSBs of the occupational standard		
The panel are assured that HTQ modules are flagged to minimize the impact of module changes on new or ongoing HTQ status		
The programme is appropriately employer-endorsed		
Assessment plans, sample assessment tasks and marking criteria adequately align to the KSBs of the occupational standard		
Sample Assessment Materials (SAMs) are ready, and appropriate for DfE HTQ approval		
Panel recommendations will not impact adversely on the approval of the programme as an HTQ		

Quality Management Process Prompts

The following prompts are provided to support you to identify ways in which your development content, validation, monitoring and change and periodic review quality management processes. These questions are reproduced from the toolkit's overarching HTQ Quality Management Readiness Checklist, and letters and numbers relate to the original section in which each question is situated.

Development Stage Consent

B2: Alignment to Occupational Standard(s)

- a. Do programme development consent/planning processes and paperwork include the expectation for all programmes in relevant areas to identify relevant occupational standards - irrespective of whether the programme is planning to gain HTQ approval?
- b. Are programmes required to state why they are not considering HTQ approval?

B4: Employer Market Demand - Do development consent/planning processes and paperwork have a required section asking for HTQ-compliant employer demand evidence, as well as student market demand?

Validation Stage

C2: Alignment to Occupational Standard(s)

- a. Do programme specification documents have required sections which ask for the identification of and alignment to relevant Occupational Standard(s) at the relevant level of study?
- b. Do module specification documents have a required section identifying whether the module is validated as part of an HTQ programme? NB. This process flag is important as any changes to a module may impact on *eligibility for initial or continuing DfE HTQ approval*.

C4: Employer Engagement Evidence - do validation processes require additional evidence of appropriate HTQ-compliant employer engagement as well as student market demand?

C16: Validation Panel Recruitment and Training

- a. Do HTQ validation panel composition requirements include internal and external expert membership with experience and/or knowledge of the HTQ approvals process?
- b. Does HTQ validation panel composition include the requirement for employer representation?
- c. Do the published responsibilities of the HTQ Validation Panel include HTQ-specific information?

C17: Validation Event Reporting – Does the Validation Panel reporting form include a section where HTQ alignment and employer engagement and endorsement is explicitly discussed?

Periodic Review Stage

E2: Alignment to Occupational Standard(s)

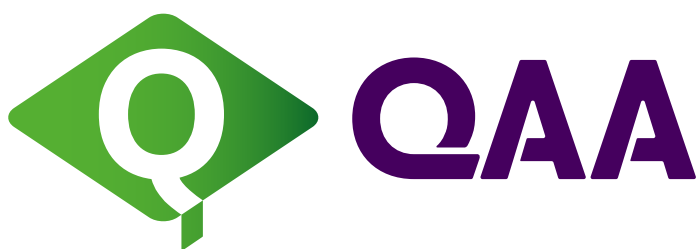
- a. Do HTQ PR processes and paperwork include the expectation for non-HTQ programmes in relevant areas to identify potentially relevant occupational standards for the programme(s) under review?
- b. Are these programmes required to state why they are not considering HTQ approval, as they revalidate?

E5: Employer Engagement Evidence - Do HTQ PR processes and paperwork include a prompt for programme teams to evidence continuing HTQ-compliant employer engagement with the programme?

E12: PR Panel Recruitment and Training

- a. Do HTQ PR Panel composition requirements include internal and external expert membership with experience and/or knowledge of the HTQ accreditation process?
- b. Does HTQ PR panel composition include the requirement for employer representation?
- c. Do the published responsibilities of the HTQ PR Panel include HTQ-specific information?

E13: PR Panel Reporting - Does the HTQ PR Panel reporting form include a section where occupational standard alignment and employer engagement and endorsement is explicitly discussed?



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