

INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE (IQA) POLICY

INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE:

A system implemented by an organisation to confirm the quality assurance of all aspects of the provision including preparation, delivery, assessment, documentation and certification.

Internal quality assurance is an integral part of Tir Coed's accreditation process. Reviewing of systems, processes and procedures is a standard part of the Tir Coed internal quality assurance cycle. Constantly adapting and changing to meet the needs of the beneficiaries, the charity, its funders, Agored Cymru and new legislation is key.

It is a supportive cycle of constant feedback and review which not only details the individual processes and stages of each course, but ultimately confirms the quality of all provision whilst helping to improve it.

All Tir Coed policies are reviewed by the board of trustees on a 2-year cycle. If changes are required to any policy within this period, they are reviewed, updated and approved at the next available quarterly trustee meeting.

AIM

Tir Coed aims to embrace and enhance a comprehensive quality assurance process which covers all aspects of our centre's accredited course provision. As such, the internal quality assurance process:

- is evident at all stages throughout each course
- seeks to ensure that all trainees are assessed accurately, fairly and consistently to the required standard
- is a method of continuous review of all related procedures from course development through to the recommendation and application for the award of credits/qualifications
- is a system for promoting good practice
- seeks to protect and promote high-quality standards.

STRUCTURE

Agored Cymru applies a risk-based approach to quality assurance to enable effective management and maintenance across the breadth of their awarding function; and through a self-evaluation review process directs, monitors and regulates Tir Coed to ensure compliance.

Contributions to the development of Tir Coed's accredited courses and to the high standard of the internal quality assurance system come from a variety of sources:

- Tir Coed's quality assurance system maintains and improves standards in line with Agored Cymru and regulatory requirements
- The accreditation team monitors developments in the woodland sector to ensure compliance with current legislation and best practice
- A curriculum manager oversees, monitors and assesses the standard of all internal quality assurance and accreditation processes
- Tir Coed project coordinators are directly involved at all stages (planning, delivery and review)
- Tutors/assessors contribute through planning, delivery, feedback, review and standardisation

- Trainees comment on delivery through feedback and review
- Qualified internal quality assurers (IQAs) visit individual courses to assess the delivery of tasks by tutors/assessors
- Reviews of courses include feedback from trainees, tutors/assessors, IQAs and external visitors
- Standardisation occurs across courses and sites through a process of IQA visits and the sampling of trainee's workbooks
- Tir Coed supports 100% sampling whilst trainee numbers per course are small
- New courses and new tutors are given added support and monitored closely to ensure compliance with IQA standards
- Accreditation and IQA issues are discussed and reviewed at monthly team meetings
- The accreditation team track and monitor all accreditation delivery processes
- IQAs attend external standardisation events regularly to maintain approved centre status
- Only staff holding approved IQA status are authorised to make claims for awards
- Internal standardisation events involving tutors/assessors are organised regularly.

INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE PLAN: EXPECTATIONS & REQUIREMENTS

IQAs must make evidence-based judgements using the following principles of assessment to check:

VALIDITY

The method of assessment and the evidence must demonstrate achievement of all learning outcomes and the related assessment criteria.

- If evidence does not meet assessment criteria the trainee does not achieve the learning outcome.

AUTHENTICITY

The evidence must clearly be the trainee's own work.

- Clear guidance must be given to trainees and tutors to ensure compliance
- Tutors must monitor trainee's evidence collection
- Authentication sheets included in trainee's course workbooks provide both a trainee and tutor declaration to confirm that the evidence is an accurate and true reflection of the individual's work, and that all required assessment criteria and learning outcomes have been met which is then signed off by an IQA.

FITNESS FOR PURPOSE

The method of assessment must be fit for purpose and the evidence should match the assessment criteria.

- Assessment methods should be relevant to the target trainee group
- Assessment methods should be relevant to the unit title, learning outcomes and assessment criteria
- Assessment should be integrated with learning processes.

INCLUSIVENESS

Should fit with best practice in equal opportunities (see Equal Opportunities Policy on website).

- Assessment should be based on trainee needs and not exclude individuals

- Assessments are not held under exam conditions, giving greater flexibility to be responsive to individual trainee needs
- Assessment activities and methods are designed to allow trainees to demonstrate attainment
- Alternative methods of assessment may be needed to allow trainees to achieve regardless of their social or economic circumstances, health or disability.

RELIABILITY & CONSISTENCY

Delivery of all course processes must be transparent.

- Processes should ensure that valid and consistent judgements can be made by different assessors and quality assurers on different occasions
- Processes should ensure that evidence creation is consistent and generates outcomes that would be replicated were the assessment repeated
- Standardisation is of utmost importance to ensure consistency so that any trainee completing a unit or qualification develops the same skills and/or knowledge and are assessed in a similar way to any other person going through the same unit or qualification.

PROCESS FOR INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

Tir Coed uses the internal quality assurance package provided by Agored Cymru which identifies the steps and processes needed for a successful system.

The internal quality assurance flowchart ([appendix 1](#)) outlines the steps that centres must take to implement an effective internal quality assurance process. Forms, checklists and reports referred to in the flowchart are designed by Agored Cymru as examples. The information and guidance provided ensures that the requirements of internal quality assurance for Agored Cymru are met. Tir Coed has adopted and adapted these forms to ensure a robust quality assurance process is in place.

IQAs must keep accurate written records of the outcomes of the following steps:

Pre-course delivery review of units and/or qualifications

- The IQAs check the validity and suitability of the units and/or qualifications selected by assessors
- If the units are no longer suitable (due to the needs of the trainee cohort or because the units have expired etc.) alternatives are sourced from the Agored Cymru unit database or qualification database
- If units are not fit for purpose, then Tir Coed will follow the process for updating and approving changes or submitting new units

Pre-course delivery internal quality assurance

- The IQA reviews all assessment materials, tasks and methods to ensure they are fit for purpose

Internal quality assurance

- The IQA develops a sampling plan linking to the assessment plan
- The IQA selects a sample of trainees' assessed work to check that assessors are assessing trainees' work accurately, fairly and consistently
- The IQA also checks the consistency of assessment decisions across units and/or qualifications, sites and tutors

Internal quality assurance of assessment decisions

- The IQA regularly reviews assessors' assessment judgements
- Mid-course internal quality assurance identifies any issues and provides the opportunity for corrective action to be taken before the award of credit is compromised
- The IQA reviews assessors' judgements with reference to the principles of assessment

Internal quality assurance of practical activities

- The IQA observes practical assessments where appropriate (i.e. where there is no written or tangible evidence generated by the trainee) to observe, monitor and assess trainee responses
- An IQA 4 feedback form is filled out during week 6 of each training course after an IQA visit to observe practical assessments have been undertaken. A copy of the IQA 4 feedback form is kept on record.
- Aiding this process the Tir Coed internal quality assurance plan checklist must be completed by the IQA and will relate to a specific Tir Coed course. This can be used as evidence for internal standardisation and development as well as for External Quality Review (EQR) purposes.

ROLE OF THE INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURER

The role of the IQA is to ensure that:

- Assessment is appropriate, consistent, fair and transparent and does not unintentionally discriminate against any trainee
- Tutors/assessors receive ongoing advice and support, for example in designing assessment activities
- Trainees clearly understand assessment requirements and are given opportunities to achieve against the assessment criteria
- Trainees' work is presented in a manner which enables effective quality assurance to take place
- Evidence of trainee achievement is clearly mapped to the assessment criteria
- Course tutors are consulted to identify trainees' work for sampling
- Reviews of work are carried out in line with the Agored Cymru sampling framework
- Recommendations for the award of credit are valid, reliable and consistent.

IQAs must have good knowledge and understanding of:

- the units and qualifications on offer
- assessment requirements
- internal quality assurance requirements.

IQAs should ensure that the principles of assessment are checked thoroughly as part of the process of standardisation. The purpose is to confirm that there are systems and processes in place and that evidence, assessment and guidance information is appropriate. IQAs must collect appropriate evidence.

IQAs cannot internally quality assure their own assessment materials, tasks or assessment decisions. Consequently, Tir Coed ensures that more than one member of staff is trained to undertake internal quality assurance activities. This gives the centre more flexibility and avoids over-reliance on any one person.

SAMPLING OF ASSESSMENT

To ensure accuracy and equity in trainee achievement it is vital that checks are applied to the outcomes of the assessment process. Checks must be made to confirm that reasonable adjustments are appropriate and that the form and level of assessment is as rigorous, and the outcomes as secure, as those for other trainees assessed. These checks are applied via the internal and external quality assurance processes through sampling:

- Tir Coed supports 100% sampling whilst trainee numbers per course are small. If enrolment numbers, quantity and frequency of courses, or the number of sites, increase significantly, then a **square root ratio** will be enforced. The sample must take into account the variety of experience and ability of assessors, overall group size, the range of levels being assessed and methods of assessments in use
- The minimum number for sampling in any internal quality assurance process should be three pieces of work and should include work that is borderline in achievement, average in achievement for the group and above average
- Assessments offered through Welsh and English must be covered in the sample, if applicable.

The sample is not selected at random, or by tutors/assessors - the IQA makes the final decision.

ACCESS TO FAIR ASSESSMENT

Tir Coed promotes systems and procedures that ensure judgements relating to assessment are valid, reliable and consistent whilst adhering to equal opportunities and delivering best practice. The needs of the individual trainee are a key focus and these are considered in Tir Coed's trainee support agreement and reasonable adjustments will be made as necessary to reflect these needs.

A reasonable adjustment is any action that helps to reduce the effect of a disability or difficulty that places the trainee at a substantial disadvantage in the assessment situation. Reasonable adjustments must not affect reliability and validity of the assessment outcomes, but may involve:

- changing usual assessment arrangements, for example allowing a trainee extra time to complete the assessment activity
- adapting assessment materials, such as providing materials in Braille
- providing assistance during assessment, such as a sign language interpreter, translator, reader and/or transcriber to support variations in learner needs
- changing the assessment method, for example from a written assessment to a spoken assessment.

Tir Coed prides itself in being a centre that accommodates differing tutor and trainee needs: it has produced a colour-coded system to enable both dyslexic learners and tutors to access the Agored Cymru unit outlines and understand the layout of learner workbooks and the tutor's daily log.

Reasonable adjustments are approved or set in place before the assessment activity takes place; they constitute an arrangement to give the trainee access to the unit/qualification. The work

produced by the trainee will be marked in the same way as the work of other assessed trainees. Special consideration will be given to trainees who experience temporary illness, injury or indisposition at the time of an assessment and alternative arrangements will be made which allow trainees to demonstrate a level of achievement. All requests for 'reasonable adjustment' or 'special consideration' must be approved by Agored Cymru.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

This IQA policy outlines all procedures in relation to accreditation processes that are required to fulfil the centre approval standards set by Agored Cymru.

The purpose of the statement is to protect the integrity of the charity: to enable Tir Coed's trustees, funders, awarding bodies, partners, referral agencies, staff, trainees and volunteers to have confidence in the organisation's decision making and quality assurance processes; and to safeguard the reputation of all involved.

In relation to accredited training courses, conflicts of interest may arise between the interests of the charity on one hand, and the personal, professional and business interests of individuals on the other, therefore:

- Tir Coed staff, tutors, trustees and trainees commit to manage any conflicts of interest (actual or perceived) to ensure that Tir Coed's integrity as an approved centre is maintained and protected
- Trust and professional integrity is fundamental to this process. It must be relied upon in relation to the declaration of any conflicts of interest
- Behaviour, attitude and assessment processes are monitored closely by all visiting staff (project co-ordinator, mentor and IQA) to ensure validity, authenticity, inclusiveness, relevance, reliability and consistency and to confirm that no individual is treated or assessed differently
- If any issues arise, Tir Coed will investigate on a case-by-case basis and follow the most appropriate course of action to guarantee that the trainee receives unbiased treatment and members of staff receive fair support.

MALPRACTICE:

Non-compliance with the regulations pertaining to the assessment procedures which may adversely affect the integrity of a qualification or award of credit.

Tir Coed is committed to providing a fair, consistent and accurate approach to the assessment and award of credit awards and qualifications.

Tir Coed does not tolerate attempts to perform, or instances of malpractice by trainees or staff relating to the award of Agored Cymru units or qualifications.

Tir Coed trainees must read and sign an authentication declaration sheet in their course workbook declaring that the evidence contained in it is an accurate reflection of their own work. This is confirmed and signed off by the course assessor and a Tir Coed IQA at the end of a training course.

Tir Coed understands that using or copying the work of others (whether written, printed or in any other form) without proper acknowledgement in any coursework is plagiarism and it will not be tolerated.

Agored Cymru has the right to impose sanctions on Tir Coed as a centre or on staff or trainees where attempts or instances of malpractice have been confirmed or during the investigation of reported accusations of malpractice.

Tir Coed aims to be vigilant about assessment malpractice and will be open to and prompt in reporting possible instances of malpractice to Agored Cymru and, where appropriate to other awarding organisations. Tir Coed will put in place an appropriate investigation process for all cases of suspected malpractice.

Tir Coed will train staff to conduct fair and robust assessment: to assure that work being assessed is that of the trainee; to monitor, through a robust internal quality assurance process, that assessment is being conducted appropriately; and to support the role of the internal quality assurer responsible for direct claims, thereby securing the validity of the award of units or qualifications.

Suspected malpractice will be reported in accordance with the Agored Cymru Malpractice and Maladministration Policy <http://www.agored.cymru/File/3681>

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Tir Coed commits to dealing with complaints in a fair, transparent and timely manner. Tir Coed does not hold a separate complaints policy but the procedure for lodging a complaint is found within this document as is outlined below, as well as within the trainee support agreement. All trainees are entitled to lodge a complaint about treatment which they consider to be unfair or to appeal against assessment of unit.

Step 1 - Speak with a Tir Coed member of staff (e.g. tutor, project mentor, project coordinator)

If not satisfied with this outcome:

Step 2 - Speak with the Tir Coed accreditation team

If not satisfied with this outcome:

Step 3 - Write a letter outlining your complaint to the chair of Tir Coed trustees

Timescales for response:

Steps 1 & 2 - Tir Coed will provide a response (written or verbal) within 7 working days

Step 3 - The chair of Tir Coed trustees will provide a written response within 30 days.

CENTRE STANDARDISATION

STANDARDISATION: *A process to ensure that assessment criteria for a qualification, unit or component are applied consistently by assessors, moderators and quality assurers.*

Tir Coed will ensure that standards set by Agored Cymru are consistent across all projects by planning and delivering internal events and attending annual external standardisation events; enabling internal and external quality assurers to compare outcomes of assessment

Attending standardisation events allows Tir Coed to:

- compare and confirm standards across different project provision
- compare and confirm standards where different types of assessment are used to evidence the achievement of a unit e.g. question and answer, oral presentation, photographic or written
- compare and confirm standards where units are offered in English and Welsh
- identify and share good practice
- identify issues to be addressed either by amendments to units or development of new units or qualifications
- compare and confirm standards applied by internal and external quality assurers
- compare and confirm standards over time.

Consistency of standardisation is maintained by:

- ensuring record-keeping is efficient and up-to-date
- having a common understanding about what is required within the centre's IQA strategy
- continually reflecting and reviewing own practice and sharing best practice ideas
- considering, comparing and reflecting on IQA decisions, quality judgements and practice to ensure consistency and highest quality standards are maintained throughout
- tracking, recording and monitoring trainee and tutor feedback
- ensuring tutors/assessors are working to a quality standard by reinforcing key elements of standardisation at pre-course meetings.

All IQAs are required to give feedback to tutors/assessors, co-ordinators or other relevant persons. Where good practice is identified it will be disseminated throughout Tir Coed via monthly team meetings and standardisation events. Any issues will be discussed at team meetings and if appropriate, action plans drawn up and subsequently monitored to record progress.

Tir Coed has systems in place to respond appropriately and effectively to conditions, recommendations, guidance, support and training issued by Agored Cymru. This will be monitored through the External Quality Assurance (EQA) process.

In order for the centre to retain 'direct claim status' all IQAs will contribute regularly to the standardisation process. Attendance at standardisation events is a condition of centre approval and will be confirmed and monitored through the EQR process.

RECORD KEEPING

All accreditation and internal quality assurance materials and information will be stored in line with Tir Coed's General Data Protection Regulation Policy (accessible on website) – therefore, storing all

trainees' assessed work on a secure cloud server (G-suite), with limited access by authorised personnel only. Exemplars of trainee's work should be kept as best practice.

An Agored Cymru Privacy Statement (appendix 4) is given to all trainees completing accredited courses alongside Tir Coed's Trainee Privacy Statement.

All internally assessed materials will be retained by Tir Coed until such time as the external quality assurer has completed the internal quality assurance process.

As an approved centre Tir Coed is advised to retain materials for 28 working days, subject to any appeals made against assessment and quality assurance decisions.

Materials will occasionally be provided for Agored Cymru standardisation training events. Names will be removed to preserve anonymity.

The material considered at standardisation events will be scanned and retained by Agored Cymru for the life of the qualification or for 5 years for non-qualification based standardisation.

AWARDING ORGANISATION CONTACTS

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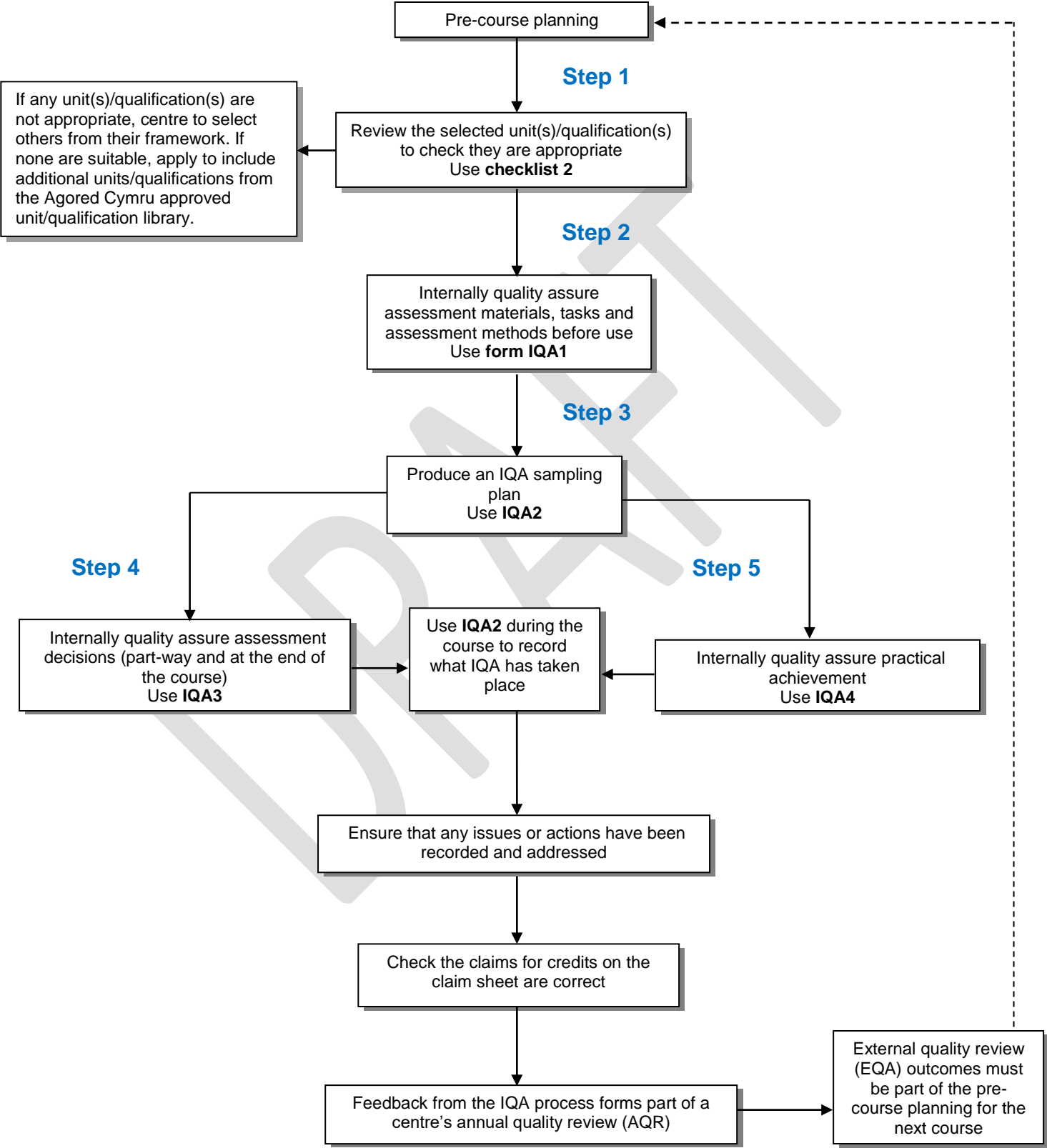
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APPENDIX 1: Agored Cymru Internal Quality Assurance





LAST REVIEWED

DATE:

SIGNED:

POSITION:

SIGNED:

POSITION:

on behalf of Tir Coed board of trustees