



Quality Assurance Services

Monitoring and Authentication Guide

for

Pre-2016 Apprenticeship Programmes

and

Construction Skills Certificate Scheme & Quarry Skills Certificate Scheme

and

Associated Services



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Introduction

The purpose of this guide is to inform SOLAS collaborating providers, SOLAS Approved Training Organisations [ATOs], SOLAS approved tutors¹ and SOLAS Authorised Monitors about the monitoring and authentication quality assurance processes.

This document describes the main activities of monitoring and authentication to be undertaken by SOLAS under its status as an approved Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Co-ordinating Provider. In addition, this document relates to statutory responsibilities of SOLAS in terms of apprenticeship. Furthermore, it also sets out the roles and responsibilities of the monitored organisations, SOLAS Quality Assurance Services (QAS) Unit and SOLAS Authorised Monitors. This document will also outline SOLAS arrangements pertaining to the monitoring event and the expected outcomes emanating from the monitoring event.

The term “quality assurance” within the education and training sectors is used to describe the processes that ensure the learning environment reaches an acceptable threshold of quality. Quality assurance also describes the enhancement of education and training provision and the standards attained by participants. Thus, in an education and training context, quality assurance focuses on ensuring that:

- a) The education, training and related services delivered by a provider of education or training are fit for their professed purpose
- b) There is trust in the integrity and value of the qualifications awarded or recognised
- c) Education and training programmes are of the required standards and are focused on meeting the needs of the learner and industry
- d) There is accountability, openness and transparency
- e) The standards of awards are appropriate

Quality assurance comprises administrative and procedural activities implemented in a quality system so that requirements and goals for education or training service will be fulfilled. To facilitate this effectiveness, a quality assurance organisation employs a series of measures, such as, standard comparison, monitoring of processes and an associated feedback loop which facilitates error prevention.

As an approved Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Co-ordinating Provider, SOLAS is committed to ensuring its responsibilities are in adherence with QQI requirements. SOLAS is required to have a quality assurance system in place that addresses issues, such as, data collection, curricula development, training and support services. SOLAS must also ensure that its Collaborating Providers adhere to all SOLAS quality assurance systems.

As Co-ordinating Provider of pre-2016 Apprenticeships and CSCS and QSCS², SOLAS is required by its governance obligations to undertake comprehensive independent monitoring and evaluation of programme delivery, including assessment processes, and associated services. Accordingly, SOLAS

¹ The SOLAS legal definition of tutor is anyone who delivers training on a SOLAS programme.

² CSCS: Construction Skills Certificate Scheme
QSCS: Quality Skills Certificate Scheme

has identified the monitoring of collaborating providers and Approved Training Organisations as a priority objective. In this regard, SOLAS established a dedicated QAS Unit.

1.0 SOLAS Quality Assurance Services Unit (QAS)

The objectives of QAS are to operate and manage a systematic monitoring service that validates the effectiveness of the SOLAS quality assurance systems for pre-2016 apprenticeship programmes, CSCS and QSCS. Systematically monitoring reinforces public confidence in SOLAS programmes by ensuring that quality assurance safeguards are being adhered to by both SOLAS and its assigned collaborating provider networks, SOLAS approved training organisations and SOLAS approved tutors. Monitoring also promotes best practices and continuous improvements, which identify and address areas needing improvement or correction.

QAS is committed to a consistent approach and equality of treatment in the operation of monitoring and authentication activities. All activities are independent, transparent and traceable, and monitoring outcomes and determinations are evidence based.

QAS ensures all quality assurance monitoring activities are conducted by SOLAS Authorised Monitors. SOLAS empowers its Authorised Monitors to exercise their professional judgment when engaging in monitoring and are encouraged to balance the need for consistent monitoring with the flexibility needed to respond to each unique circumstance.

2.0 Aims of Monitoring

The aims of monitoring are to assess progress against agreed procedures [and agreements] and to ensure that SOLAS quality assurance standards are being sustained. Monitoring has three main aims:

- a) To give an independent assessment of the
 1. quality and effectiveness of training
 2. standards achieved
 3. administration processes and services
- b) To promote improvement by identifying best practices, strengths and weaknesses
- c) To keep SOLAS informed about the quality and standards of training delivery, assessment processes and outcomes

Monitoring and authentication of the SOLAS Apprenticeship and the Work Based Learning Unit, the SOLAS Construction Services Unit, collaborating providers and SOLAS approved training organisations actively supports and encourages continuous improvement. The effectiveness of monitoring on quality assurance standards can be demonstrated by:

- a) Identifying best practice that can be shared amongst practitioners
- b) Providing feedback on the quality of the service provision delivered by collaborating providers and approved training organisations
- c) Allowing organisations to develop their reputation through continued positive learning experiences and valued and recognisable outcomes

- d) Improving satisfaction and raising standards among collaborating providers, approved training organisations and approved tutors for the benefit of learners, employers, the labour market and the wider public interest
- e) Providing valuable data for inclusion in SOLAS and third party reports

3.0 Service Providers

SOLAS will monitor the SOLAS Apprenticeship and the Work Based Learning Unit and the SOLAS Construction Services Unit. Likewise, all collaborating providers and SOLAS approved training organisations that have signed a Service Level Agreement (SLA) or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with SOLAS. Each collaborating provider and relevant training organisation has been approved by SOLAS to deliver SOLAS pre-2016 apprenticeship programmes or CSCS/QSCS.

Collaborating Providers are classified as the deliverers of pre-2016 apprenticeship programmes on behalf of SOLAS and include the following organisations:

- a) Education and Training Boards
- b) Institutes of Technology / TU Dublin
- c) Irish School of Ferriery

SOLAS approved training organisations and SOLAS approved tutors deliver the CSCS/QSCS portfolio on behalf of SOLAS.

In addition, the National Construction Scheme Unit under the auspices of Tipperary County Council will be subject to monitoring in relation to verification and accreditation processes.

4.0 Approaches to Monitoring and Authentication of Quality Assurance

This guide looks at the types of monitoring and authentication and how collaborating providers, SOLAS approved training organisations will be monitored. This guide maps the processes used before the commencement of the monitoring visit, the processes used during the monitoring visit and the processes used post the monitoring event.

SOLAS uses a variety of monitoring models, ranging from one-day unscheduled visits³ to more in-depth scheduled monitoring that may take a number of days depending on the complexity of the provider's provision.

5.0 Types of Monitoring and Authentication Activities

SOLAS monitoring and authentication activities include "Process" and "Observational" monitoring activities of collaborating providers and SOLAS approved training organisations delivering SOLAS programmes leading to QQI certification. These monitoring activities include areas, such as:

- a) implementation of agreed procedures
- b) administration and service processes
- c) training delivery
- d) implementation of assessment regulations and marking schemes
- e) verification and accreditation processes

³ CSCS/QSCS Assessment Events are subject to unscheduled monitoring events.

SOLAS will schedule its Authorised Monitors to conduct monitoring and authentication visits to collaborating providers during the normal working week and during normal hours of work. SOLAS approved training organisation will be scheduled for monitoring visits by SOLAS from Mondays to Saturdays inclusive.

The types of monitoring that will take place with collaborating providers and SOLAS approved training organisations are:

- a) Process⁴
- b) Observational

Table 1 below provides an overview of the type of monitoring that can be expected to occur for pre-2016 apprenticeship programmes and CSCS/QSCS programmes.

Table1: Monitoring Type by Category

CSCS and QSCS	Apprenticeship
<p>Scheduled</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Process monitoring <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Assessment processes b. Associated quality assurance requirements c. Internal verification processes d. *External authentication processes e. Accreditation processes <p>Unscheduled</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Unscheduled observational monitoring of CSCS/QSCS training and assessment delivery 	<p>Scheduled</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Process monitoring <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Assessment processes b. Associated quality assurance monitoring c. Internal verification processes d. External authentication processes e. Accreditation processes f. self-assessment of training delivery ⁵

* Conducted by the National Construction Scheme Unit [NCSU] on behalf of SOLAS

5.1 Process Monitoring

Process monitoring⁶ is not an event that occurs at the end of a particular process or cycle. Process monitoring is consistent, regular and systematic **monitoring** of actual operational services provided by the SOLAS Apprenticeship and the Work Based Learning Unit, the SOLAS Construction Services Unit, collaborating providers, SOLAS approved training organisations and SOLAS approved tutors⁷ against the expected and required operation of processes and procedures as determined by SOLAS.

Process monitoring is an extremely important management tool for identifying whether relevant organisations, including SOLAS are providing services that are in adherence and compliance with

⁴ Process monitoring includes authentication of assessment results at RAPs events

⁵ This is not a definitive list and is subject to future amendments

⁶ Process monitoring activities:

- a) Apprenticeship, as detailed in the ETB signed SLA and MOU
- b) Apprenticeship, as detailed in the IoT signed MOU
- c) CSCS/QSCS, as detailed in the ATO signed MOU

⁷ CSCS/QSCS tutors

SOLAS policies, procedures and protocols. Process monitoring allows SOLAS to measure, report results, and conduct report analysis, which in turn allows SOLAS decision-makers and influencers to better understand the effectiveness of the SOLAS quality assurance systems and to determine the most effective actions needed to encourage and enhance continuous improvement.

SOLAS Authorised Monitors are required to seek evidence during the monitoring or the external authentication event and to disregard conjecture. The evidence sought will be based on the monitoring instrument and the signed SLA/MOU between SOLAS and the relevant providers of services on behalf of SOLAS.

5.2 Observational Monitoring

Observational monitoring is the regular observation and recording of specific activities undertaken by collaborating providers, SOLAS approved training organisations and SOLAS approved tutors in the delivery of CSCS/QSCS and the delivery of pre-2016 apprenticeship programmes. Collaborating providers, SOLAS approved training organisations and SOLAS approved tutors can normally expect to receive a minimum notice⁸ for a monitoring visit. The visits can be scheduled or unscheduled and will normally last up to one day.

Information is routinely gathered on all aspects of the programme, which allows SOLAS Authorised Monitors to check and observe thoroughly how the training and assessment activities are being delivered. The Authorised Monitor will observe the delivery of programmes, assessment events and result approval processes. In order to reach their findings, the monitor will use a grading criterion (Appendix 1). A monitor will always try to give immediate feedback to the collaborating provider, the SOLAS approved training organisation and/or the SOLAS approved tutor⁹.

Feedback will be specific and constructive. Constructive feedback will allow the service provider to enhance or improve systems and processes going forward. The Authorised Monitor uses information to produce a written report, which is sent to SOLAS and to the relevant service provider for review and actions as required. SOLAS will use the report to make decisions for improving future quality assurance processes, course delivery and improving best process and administrative practices across the FET sector.

Table 2 provides an overview of the dissemination of monitoring reports across an array of collaborating providers and training organisations

⁸ Notification for monitoring visit will depend on the complexity of the provider:

For CSCS/QSCS programmes being observation monitored, these will be unannounced visits.

For Apprenticeship programmes (pre-2016) 2 to 21 days' notice will be given by SOLAS prior to a monitoring visit.

⁹ CSCS/QSCS programmes

Table 2: Collaborating Provider Monitoring Report Dissemination

Monitoring Reports Dissemination		
Construction Approved Training Organisations	Apprenticeship Education and Training Boards*	Apprenticeship Institutes of Technology/ TU Dublin
SOLAS Construction Services Unit	SOLAS Apprenticeship Services Unit	SOLAS Apprenticeship Services Unit
ATO CEO	ETB CEOs	President of the Institute
ATO Training Manager	ETB FET Directors	Registrar
ATO Internal Verifier	ETB Training Centre Managers	Department Head

**The dissemination of monitoring reports for the Irish Fariery School will be similar to the ETB approach*

Table 3 provides an overview of the dissemination of monitoring reports in relation to the SOLAS Construction Services Unit, the Apprenticeship and Work Based Unit and the National Construction Scheme Unit.

Table 3: Internal and NCSU Monitoring Report Dissemination

Monitoring Reports Dissemination		
Construction Services	Apprenticeship and Work Based Learning	National Construction Scheme Unit
Executive Director	Executive Director	Director
Director	Director	Manager
Manager	Manager	xx
Assistant Manager	Assistant Manager	xx

6.0 Selecting and Scheduling Organisations for Monitoring

QAS is responsible for scheduling all monitoring events, including external authentication in relation to pre-2016 apprenticeship programmes. Frequency of monitoring will depend on a number of factors, including the size and complexity of the training or assessment provider and the number and range of products and services provided by the organisation on behalf of SOLAS. As a guide, SOLAS will conduct a number of visits per year¹⁰ based on various aspects of the programme.

SOLAS uses a range of selective indicators. These include the following:

- Frequency and number of courses and assessments delivered
- The scope and scale of services provided by organisations on behalf of SOLAS
- Previous monitoring records
- Self-assessment reports on teaching and learning
- Information provided or concerns raised by employers, trade unions, political representative, government bodies, parents, carers, participants or learners to SOLAS
- Performance data and trends, including assessment outcomes
- Specific areas of activity

Notifications of monitoring visits will be communicated to collaborating providers, training organisations, the internal SOLAS Units and the National Construction Scheme Unit by the SOLAS

¹⁰ Providers include: Approved Training Organisations (CSCS/QSCS), Education and Training Boards (Apprenticeship Phase 2), Institutes of Technology (Apprenticeship Phase 4/6) National Construction Scheme Unit (CSCS/QSCS) results approval.

Authorised Monitors in line with the notification schedule prior to the monitoring event. (See table in Appendix 2.)

7.0 Before the Monitoring Visit

Authorised Monitors will be provided with a monitoring schedule from QAS at least 21 working days in advance of any monitoring event. QAS will update the schedule on a weekly basis in order to ensure amendments to the schedule are recorded.

Authorised Monitors will confirm their availability for visits with the collaborating providers and training organisations no later than 2-5 working days before each scheduled event. To ensure the collaborating provider or approved training organisation understands the process monitoring visit, the Authorised Monitor will hold a telephone planning meeting with the appropriate representative. This will include:

- a) Confirming that they will carry out the monitoring
- b) Commencement time of the monitoring event
- c) Confirmation of the type of monitoring and the area to be monitored
- d) Any relevant documentation to be made available
- e) Health and safety requirements
- f) Arrangements for verbal feedback, evaluation and reporting
- g) Complaints procedure

All monitoring event details as discussed on the telephone planning meeting will be confirmed by the Authorised Monitor to the relevant collaborating provider or approved training organisation via email directly after the conversation.

In the case of Observational Monitoring of CSCS/QSCS, monitoring events will be unannounced.

A similar communication process will be used in the monitoring of the Construction Services, the Apprenticeship and Work Based and the National Construction Scheme Units.

7.1 Cancellations

Collaborating providers, approved training organisations, internal SOLAS Units or the National Construction Scheme Unit that cancel a scheduled monitoring visit, they must notify QAS and provide a rationale for the cancellation by email to SOLAS [QASinfo@solas.ie] at least two working days before the scheduled event.

Cancellation or Rescheduling a Monitoring Event			
Standard Cancellation	Cancellation within 2 working days of receipt of Monitoring Schedule	Notify and provide rationale to QASinfo@solas.ie	QAS will reschedule the monitoring event to a date within 10 days of the original scheduled date
Exceptional Circumstances	Cancellation within 2 working days of the scheduled monitoring date	Notify and provide rationale to QASinfo@solas.ie	QAS will reschedule the monitoring event to a date within 5 days of the original scheduled date

QAS will record all monitoring events cancelled by collaborating providers, SOLAS Approved Training Organisations, SOLAS approved tutors, internal SOLAS units and the National Construction Schemes Unit for reporting purposes.

8.0 During the Monitoring Visit

The duration of the monitoring visit will be determined by scope, scale and complexity of the monitored activity.

During a visit, the Authorised Monitor will:

- a) Arrive punctually
- b) Carry out monitoring activities as agreed with QAS in line with the approved monitoring instruments
- c) Accumulate valid evidence over the course of the monitoring event in order to be able to reach valid and objective findings
- d) Provide verbal feedback on the monitoring event, acknowledging areas of good practice and areas for improvement to the relevant representative
- e) Make a record of any feedback provided and any feedback received from the relevant representative of the location/activity being monitored
- f) Record findings and complete the relevant sections of the monitoring report template
- g) Sign the monitoring instrument with the location/activity representative to confirm that the monitoring event has been completed
- h) Contact QAS if clarification is needed on any aspect of the monitoring event

9.0 Collaborating Provider Interaction with SOLAS Authorised Monitor

The purpose of monitoring is to continuously improve the delivery of SOLAS training programmes, service delivery, processes and support systems.

Representatives of the monitored organisation are requested to:

- a) Apply their own codes of conduct in their dealings with Authorised Monitors
- b) Be courteous and professional, treating Authorised Monitors with respect
- c) Enable monitors to conduct their visits in an open and honest way
- d) Enable monitors to evaluate the provision objectively against the standards
- e) Provide evidence that will enable monitors to report honestly, fairly and reliably
- f) Work with monitors to minimise disruption and stress
- g) Maintain a purposeful dialogue with monitors
- h) Ensure the health and safety of monitors while on their premises
- i) Draw any concerns about the monitoring visit to the attention of the monitor promptly and in a suitable manner
- j) Recognise that sometimes, without the presence of the provider, monitors will need to observe work practice and talk to staff and learners

10.0 Health and Safety

If an Authorised Monitor has health and safety concerns prior to or during a monitoring visit the Authorised Monitor will initiate the appropriate SOLAS procedure, in consultation with the location/activity representatives.

11.0 Verbal Feedback Provided to the Collaborating Provider

Before concluding the monitoring event, the Authorised Monitor will advise the location/activity representative(s) of the following:

- a) The key findings of the monitoring event
- b) Where relevant, the monitor may provide feedback on good practice observed
- c) Where relevant, the monitor may imply that the provider is deemed to require improvement or to be inadequate overall
- d) Where issues or corrective actions are required, the Authorised Monitor will advise the location/activity representative that the SOLAS operational Units¹¹ will be in contact
- e) The main points provided in the feedback, subject to any change, will be referred to in the body of the report, which will be shared with QAS, the relevant SOLAS operational Units and the relevant persons in the monitored organisation - see Table 4.
- f) The complaints procedure

If the quality of training¹² is found to be inadequate during the monitoring event, the Authorised Monitor has the flexibility to allocate further time to obtain a more comprehensive view of the quality and standards.

11.1 Verbal Feedback Provided by the Collaborating Provider

When feedback has been provided by the Authorised Monitor, the organisation being monitored will have the opportunity to respond or to further clarify points raised during the monitoring event. The Authorised Monitor will then document the response in the monitoring instrument, and both parties will sign to confirm the feedback was a fair and true reflection of the monitoring event.

12.0 After a Monitoring Event

Following a monitoring event, the Authorised Monitor will send a completed copy of the report and any supporting evidence to QAS. The report will not deviate from the feedback given to the monitored organisation at the end of the monitoring visit.

The draft monitoring report is restricted and confidential and will not be shared externally or published. The monitoring process is not completed until the final version of the report has been sent to the relevant SOLAS operational Unit and the monitored organisation. The QAS Manager will instruct the Authorised Monitors to conduct monitoring events in accordance with the SOLAS Code of Conduct for Monitors (Appendix 3).

13.0 Quality Assuring the Monitoring Process

The quality of monitoring visits will be assessed by QAS. All monitoring reports will be reviewed by QAS on a quarterly and annual basis for their consistency. QAS will use a variety of Authorised Monitors to conduct monitoring events.

QAS will arrange the peer review of Authorised Monitors, who will observe them carrying out one monitoring visit and provide feedback. Peer review will be conducted by monitors who have been

¹¹ SOLAS Apprentice Services or Construction Services

¹² CSCS/QSCS programmes

independent of the monitoring process. QAS is committed to meeting Authorised Monitors on a quarterly basis for reflective discussion, harmonisation of reporting, briefings, feedback and commentary.

14.0 Online Surveys

QAS will seek feedback on the monitoring experience from organisations that have been monitored. QAS will conduct concise online surveys on a quarterly basis. QAS will collate and analyse the feedback as a mechanism to introduce improvements to the monitoring process.

15.0 Confidentiality

Authorised Monitors are required to respect the confidentiality of the information they are given during a monitoring event. At all times, they are responsible for the security of information supplied by the organisation being monitored.

All monitoring findings are confidential and exclusively available to SOLAS and the monitored organisation. Monitoring findings may be shared with a third party but only with the express approval of the QAS Manager. Such circumstances might occur when clarification is required or when there is a suspicion of fraud or malpractice.

16.0 GDPR

During the monitoring event, monitors collect information by looking at provider records and documents using direct and indirect observation. Some of the information collected may make it possible to identify an individual, whose privacy is protected. While protecting individual privacy, SOLAS uses this information for preparing its reports and for the purposes set out in the data sharing agreements and MOUs signed with Collaborating Providers.

17.0 Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest is any circumstance that might unfairly influence, or appear to influence, the outcome of a monitoring visit. SOLAS undertakes all possible measures to ensure that conflicts of interest do not arise.

Authorised Monitors must decline to take part in any monitoring that involves an obvious conflict of interest, for example:

- a) If the Authorised Monitor was employed by the organisation scheduled for monitoring, to deliver training, to undertake external authentication or other quality assurance related work within 12 months prior to being appointed as an Authorised Monitor
- b) If the Authorised Monitor has a personal relationship or family relationship that could present a conflict or reasonable perception of a conflict of interest with any organisation scheduled for monitoring or its employees

18.0 Reporting

Authorised Monitors will prepare the draft monitoring report in accordance with the monitoring evidence. The monitoring report and, in particular, the detailed monitoring findings will play a role in bringing about improvements by providing the monitored organisation with a sound basis for a post-monitoring action plan.

SOLAS Authorised Monitors will:

- a) Complete a monitoring report
- b) Check that all data used is traceable to a verified source
- c) Make specific recommendations for improvements on any issues and/or corrective actions identified

19.0 Monitoring Findings and Outcomes

Following monitoring events, Authorised Monitors will send draft reports to QAS for processing. QAS will review the monitoring reports, log the reports and record the report findings. QAS will disseminate the reports' outcomes to the monitored organisations and the relevant SOLAS operational units responsible for programmes or services.

QAS will request the SOLAS operational Units to provide notification within 10 working days of its intended actions in relation to the monitoring report findings, as applicable.

QAS will record the planned responses from the operational Units and will maintain a tracking system to monitor the implementation of planned actions.

The SOLAS operational Units will engage with the monitored organisations in response to the monitoring report. In instances where corrective and/or preventative actions have been successfully implemented the SOLAS operational Units will acknowledge this status with the relevant monitored organisation.

On successful completion of the post monitoring report actions the SOLAS operational Units will advise QAS accordingly, which will be recorded by QAS for verification purposes.

20.0 Follow-up Monitoring Visits to Collaborating Providers Considered to Require Improvement

SOLAS Authorised Monitors will carry out monitoring visits to providers who are considered to require improvement between three to six months after the initial monitoring visits. Authorised Monitors will monitor progress on the areas for improvement identified in the original monitoring reports.

Authorised Monitors will provide status reports on the progress made since the previous monitoring visit. This will be contained within the monitoring report and issued to the SOLAS operational unit, collaborating provider and SOLAS Approved Training Organisations.

Table 4 provides an overview of the dissemination of monitoring reports across an array of collaborating providers and training organisations

Table 4: Collaborating Provider Monitoring Status Report Dissemination

Monitoring Status Reports Dissemination		
Construction Approved Training Organisations	Apprenticeship Education and Training Boards*	Apprenticeship Institutes of Technology
SOLAS Construction Services Unit	SOLAS Apprenticeship Services Unit	SOLAS Apprenticeship Services Unit
ATO CEO	ETB CEOs	President of the Institute
ATO Training Manager	ETB FET Directors	Registrar
ATO Internal Verifier	ETB Training Centre Managers	Department Head

**The dissemination of monitoring reports for the Irish Farriery School will be similar to the ETB approach*

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Table 5: Internal and NSCU Monitoring Status Report Dissemination

Monitoring Status Reports Dissemination		
Construction Services	Apprenticeship and Work Based Learning	National Construction Scheme Unit
Executive Director	Executive Director	Director
Director	Director	Manager
Manager	Manager	xx
Assistant Manager	Assistant Manager	xx

21.0 Concerns and Complaints

The ethos of QAS is to oversee the effective administration and operation of monitoring events in a professional manner and without disquiet. If a monitored organisation has concerns about the conduct a monitoring visit, they are advised, in the first instance, to raise their concerns directly with the Authorised Monitor. The Authorised Monitor is advised to respond to the concerns in a professional and open manner and to record the matter and any associated actions in the monitoring draft report.

Similarly, if an Authorised Monitor has concerns about their interactions with the monitored organisation they are advised, in the first instance, to raise their observations with the responsible person for the location/activity being monitored.

If it is not possible for either the monitored organisation or the Authorised Monitor to resolve concerns before the completion of the monitoring visit, the monitored organisation or the Authorised Monitor is entitled to lodge a formal complaint to SOLAS.

Information regarding the complaint process is available at the following:

<http://www.solas.ie/Pages/Complaints-Procedure.aspx>

It is important to note that monitoring event complaints must be submitted to QAS no later than ten working days after the monitoring event.

QAS will manage monitoring event complaints following the principles of natural justice and due process. Consequently, in response to monitoring event complaints, QAS will:

- a) Aim to resolve the complaint in a timely manner
- b) Deal with complaints fairly, thoroughly and objectively
- c) Respect confidentiality as far as possible, both for those who raised the complaint and for those who are the subject of a complaint*
- d) Aim to resolve complaints without the need for the complainant to seek advice from a third party

*Important Note: The source of a complaint will be revealed to the person(s) about whom the complaint was made when a response is essential for resolving issues

22.0 Pilot Monitoring

On occasion, QAS may pilot different approaches to monitoring. QAS will provide specific details in a timely and informative manner to all collaborating providers and approved training organisations, as applicable.

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Appendix 1

Monitoring Grade Descriptors

Grade	Status	Descriptor
Grade 1	Very Good	Quality meets all the expectations of the fully effective organisation, training or assessment location, administration and service provider
Grade 2	Good	Quality meets most of the expectations of a fully effective organisation, training or assessment location, administration and service provider
Grade 3	Satisfactory	Quality is acceptable but scope for improvement. Does not meet most of the expectations of a fully effective organisation, training or assessment location, administration and service provider
Grade 4	Adequate	Quality is acceptable in some areas but with a clear need for improvement in significant areas.
Grade 5	Inadequate	The overall quality is not acceptable. Significant improvements needed in all of the areas evaluated.

Important Note: Grade descriptors are not a checklist.

Appendix 2

Monitoring Notification Schedule

Monitoring Notification Schedule		
Organisation	Description of Monitoring Type	Notification Period
Approved Training Organisation	Process	2-5 days
Approved Training Organisation	Observational	Unscheduled
Education Training Boards	Process	2-21 days
Education Training Boards	Observational	2-21 days
Irish Farriery School	Process	2-21 days
Irish Farriery School	Observational	2-21 days
Institutes of Technology	Process	2-21 days
Institutes of Technology	Observational	2-21 days
National Construction Scheme Unit	Process	2-21 days

Appendix 3

Code of Conduct for Authorised Monitors

Authorised Monitors are expected to:

- 1) Uphold the highest professional standards and treat everyone they encounter during monitoring event fairly and with respect, courtesy and sensitivity
- 2) Carry out all monitoring in accordance with the guidelines contained in the SOLAS Monitoring and Authentication Guide
- 3) Be clear in their communications, making fair judgments based on firm evidence
- 4) Take all reasonable measures to prevent undue anxiety and minimise stress on those facilitating the monitoring event
- 5) Make their evaluations objectively and impartially
- 6) Not accept gifts, gratuities or favours from organisations scheduled for monitoring
- 7) Not compromise their objectivity
- 8) Present an accurate, honest, fair and reliable monitoring report
- 9) Maintain purposeful and productive relationships and dialogue with those being monitored
- 10) Respect the confidentiality of information
- 11) Promptly communicate any important monitoring event observation to the QAS Unit
- 12) Not divulge details of their monitoring schedules unless otherwise directed by SOLAS
- 13) Hold and carry a valid Safe Pass card, hold and carry a valid SOLAS Authorised Monitor card and comply with all relevant Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), when applicable
- 14) Have a good understanding of relevant legislation
- 15) Carry out the monitoring role as an observer without bias and with due consideration to the confidential nature of the events
- 16) Not to participate in the discussion or decision making process of Results Approval Panels (RAPs)
- 17) Clarify or discuss their draft notes and preliminary observations with the RAPs Chairperson and SOLAS representative after the RAPs meeting has concluded
- 18) Record required information in the monitoring instrument from documentation presented at the RAPs meeting
- 19) Documentation from RAPs meetings not to be removed from the premises

References:

1. *OFSTED-Further education and skills inspection handbook: Handbook for inspecting further education and skills providers under part 8 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006*, for use from 12 November 2018
2. *A Guide to Inspection in Post-Primary Schools*, 2016, Department of Education and Skills
3. *OFSTED-Schools inspection Handbook – Handbook for inspecting schools in England* under section 5 of the Education Act, 2005
4. *Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC): Inspection Manual*, RSA, Issue 2

