



Ixion Group Policy & Procedure
Quality & Assurance Framework



Policy Statement

The Ixion Group (Ixion) is committed to raising the standard of provision by putting our clients at the heart of everything we do. We will meet our obligations to partners and key stakeholders and enhance customer satisfaction, by delivering services and provision that meets the requirements of all clients.

We are dedicated to:

- creating a culture of continuous improvement within our company and the organisations with whom we work.
- investing in the continual professional development of our staff to ensure emerging best practice is adopted across our operation and our approach remains current and relevant.
- complying with recognised quality standards and promoting best practice within the industry.
- providing a professional service that exceeds expectation.
- ensuring our services are delivered efficiently, effectively and consistently, meeting the individual needs of our customers.
- continually improving and developing our own service and standards to meet the changing needs of customers, partners and commissioners.

Underpinning this is the commitment to comply with the requirements of the ISO9001 standard, and to continually improve the effectiveness of our Quality Management System.

Communication

This policy will be communicated to staff as part of their staff induction, training in service delivery, and via the Ixion Cloud shared drive. As changes are made, staff will be notified through team meetings, email and/or news updates.

This policy applies across Ixion's delivery, including the services provided by subcontractors and other partners on our behalf. All subcontractors are expected to have a quality policy and relevant procedures that reflect the standards as a minimum. Where Ixion holds quality accreditation e.g. Matrix, we will encourage and support subcontractors to achieve the same accreditation within six months of contract start. The standards in this policy will be reflected within the subcontract or service level agreement.

Associated Policies

This Policy and associated procedures should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Skills Quality Strategy
- Performance Management
- Supply Chain Management Framework



Key Principles

Our Quality Assurance Framework reflects the eight principles of the ISO9000 standard:

Customer Focus: Ixion's customers include our programme beneficiaries, our funders/ commissioners, the partners with whom we work, and our internal customers. It is important that we understand current and future customer needs, in order that we are able to meet these needs. We achieve this through fully understanding contractual requirements, involving customers in service design and development, actively seeking feedback about our service and acting on the results, and using our Internal Customer Centric Group to monitor and drive improvements within the internal service relationships.

Leadership: While considering the needs of all customers, our financial stakeholders, and wider communities in which we operate, Ixion's management team has a clear vision of the organisation's future. The management team will set challenging goals and targets and create an environment in which these can be readily achieved, by providing the resources, training and encouragement needed to inspire staff.

People Involvement: Ixion is committed to developing a culture of continual improvement and learning and fostering creativity and innovation. Staff will be accountable for their own performance and for actively seeking opportunities to further their own development. Through our performance management activities Ixion will ensure staff understand their contribution to the organisation, share knowledge and experience and work together to solve problems and promote continual improvement.

Process Approach: Ixion will systematically define the activities needed to meet customer requirements as part of our contract implementation processes, ensuring we identify and put in place the resources, working practices and tools needed to meet all contractual and legal obligations and implement recognised good practice. Documented processes will identify those responsible and accountable for managing activities and provide clear instruction for staff in delivering activities to the required standards; providing the framework for us to analyse and measure our performance.

Systems Approach to Management: Individual processes need to be effectively integrated so that they work together to achieve our objectives in an efficient way, and that staff understand the interdependencies of these processes. All parts of our business need support from other people and functions to succeed. We will measure the performance of our overall system alongside individual processes to continually improve the systems approach.

Continual Improvement: Ixion is committed to continual improvement of performance in the outcomes we achieve and how effectively we meet customer requirements. We will apply improvement planning processes through structured quality assurance and monitoring activities to embed this approach throughout all aspects of our service. This includes actively seeking and sharing best practice from within and outside the organisation.

Factual decision-making: All business decisions will be taken based on factual analysis of available data. We will effectively capture data regarding all relevant aspects of our service delivery and business performance, putting in place data integrity and validation checking processes to ensure this is accurate and reliable.



Mutually Beneficial Supplier Relationships: Ixion works in partnership with a range of suppliers and stakeholders in the delivery of our service through informal partnership, joint-working to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes, and via formal contracted supplier arrangements. Ixion aims to achieve the Merlin Standard to recognise and promote sustainable excellence and positive partnership working within supply chains.

Quality Assurance Framework

The following activities constitute Ixion's quality assurance framework:

Contract-specific operating/management procedures and process maps against which staff activity is monitored. These will provide clear and easy to understand instructions for effective implementation of our delivery models, ensuring consistent standards are achieved throughout our service delivery. The package will include work instruction for specific delivery activities, guidance on expected standards in different areas of work, compliance checklists, templates and documents that will assist compliance. In developing these procedures we will pay due regard to the assurance requirements of commissioners e.g. the Department for Work & Pensions Assurance Framework and other relevant standards.

Ongoing quality awareness training for staff through induction, one-to-one coaching and training, structured meetings and events.

Risk-based internal audit programme focussing on quality of service/compliance in relation to individual contract requirements and recognised best practice, including themes of equality and safeguarding. Audits undertaken by relevant quality assurance personnel (contract-specific or central team) against contract-specific pre-defined standards, will result in a risk-rating for the site/contract and clear corrective and preventive actions to continually improve delivery.

Regular observation of delivery will be undertaken for all members of staff involved in direct service delivery. An annual observation schedule will be produced by each contract-specific quality assurance team and updated to record observations completed through the year. Trained staff will assess the overall quality of customer service and compliance with company processes – observation of vocational training delivery will only be conducted by staff qualified in the subject area. Outcomes of observation will inform contract and company wide improvements as well as individual staff development activity.

Independent/Peer Assessment including peer review of service outputs and standardisation activities, offer opportunities to share learning and best practice, maintain knowledge on emerging working practices, and help ensure that customers receive a consistent service.

Robust data validation and analysis against key quality and performance indicators will highlight areas improvement. Systematic reporting and analysis of data through our performance management regime will drive achievement against targets. Reporting will be against contractual targets e.g. Skills Funding Agency national Minimum Standards of Performance for Adult Skills and European Social Fund (ESF) delivery.



Benchmarking and comparative data analysis will identify contract/business-wide trends to support identification and sharing of best practice

Monitoring of customer satisfaction through:

- intervention-specific questionnaires
- annual evaluation surveys
- face-to-face interviews
- online feedback form
- participant comment cards available within delivery sites
- focus groups convened to consult specific participant groups or consult about specific aspects of service delivery/development

Customer feedback will be reviewed and analysed by the Contract Manager and Quality Assurance staff and feed into Continuous Improvement Plans and Self Assessment process. Contract wide trends will result in changes to systems and processes, introduction of new services, supply chain and partnership review, staff training etc. Feedback will be shared with stakeholders to inform wider improvements within the sector.

Annual self-assessment is at the heart of quality improvement and evaluation for all contracts. It is crucial that we undertake robust and honest reflections of performance and progress to build on our strengths and turn our areas for improvement into strengths. We will utilise the Ofsted Common Inspection Framework as the basis of our self-assessment to satisfy the requirements of Skills Funding Agency and other commissioners. Where a service is not subject to Ofsted inspection the team will produce a similar framework against which they contract is assessed, ensuring contractual requirements are met.

Continuous improvement plans will drive forward improvement activity as a result of self-assessment, and will also encompass ongoing internal audit/external evaluation activity. Our organic, contract-specific Improvement Plans are key to Ixion's Quality Assurance and set out the time frame, monitoring milestones and action plans for all aspects of the business. Improvement Plans will be reviewed monthly and updated with progress.

Clear triggers to instigate formal improvement measures form part of Ixion's staff and subcontractor performance management frameworks. Individual contracts may have their own variation depending upon commissioner requirements.

External evaluation relevant to our service delivery includes Ofsted inspection, DWP Provider Assurance Team audits, SFA minimum standards of performance, formal commissioner-procured project evaluation, ESF audits. Ixion will further undertake an independent external audit programme to review and support quality throughout the business.

Achievement of relevant quality standards including Matrix for Information Advice and Guidance service delivery; Merlin Standard for supply chain management.

Communication – a standing agenda item within team, contract and organisational level meetings (including Employment and Skills) will be used to promote continual improvement of the quality management system.



Responsibilities

All staff have a responsibility to uphold the commitments in this policy. Specific responsibilities are as follows:

- Chief Executive – overall responsibility for ensuring that sufficient resources are available to facilitate the effective implementation and maintenance of this policy; accountable to the Ixion Holdings Board.
- Quality Assurance Staff– responsibility for driving quality across Ixion delivery to identify and minimise potential areas of risk, ensuring that all processes and procedures are in place to promote quality across the Company, continually review and assess our performance, be pro-active in improving the quality of the service that we offer, reviewing quality and compliance on a monthly basis and reporting outcomes to the Board Audit Committee.
- Contract Managers – responsible for owning quality for their contracts and ensuring quality is embedded across contract and service delivery by all members of their teams.
- All employees – responsible for following quality processes and procedures.

Monitoring & Review

Quality Assurance staff meet regularly to review quality assurance outcomes, controls and processes within the business, and reports outcomes to the Board Audit Committee. This includes reviewing client feedback, audit reports, observation reports and continuous improvement plans.

The Board Audit Committee meet on a quarterly basis and seek assurances from quality staff that effective systems and controls are in place and that Ixion are meeting the requirements of all clients.

This policy will be reviewed annually under the direction of the Group Finance & Corporate Services Director, and the Board Audit Committee (or more frequently, if legislation and best practice make it necessary) in order to ensure its continuing relevance to the business, commissioner requirements, and ISO9001 standards.