Verification Toolkit for Accomodation Providers

nationalcode

Toolkit Overview

This toolkit covers:

- Verification and Self-Assessment Overview
- Before The Visit - How to Prepare
- During The Visit - How this is Undertaken
- After The Visit - Understanding and Processing the Visit Report

Quick Links

- SAQ System User Guide
- Audit Panel & Verifiers
- National Code Online Training
- Key Membership Documents
- National Code Student Complaints Process
- About the Self-Assessment Process

Verification and Self-Assessment Overview

This overview shows in simple terms the start-to-end process of a verification visit.

1. Site self-assessment questionnaire (SSAQ) is allocated centrally - an automated email will be sent to you outlining which site is being visited and who the verifier is

2. Liaise with the verifier to agree a date for the visit to take place - the verifier must then input the date into the assessment to allow you to complete

3. Providers will complete the SSAQ, utilising the user guide to aid completion

4. Once the SSAQ has been completed the veifier will review this. SSAQs should be submitted no later than 10 days prior to the visit taking place.

5. The verifier will undertake the site visit to assess compliance against the SSAQ answers provided.

6. The verifier will write a report based on their findings and assign any relevant actions to against SSAQ points and send this via the portal to the provider.

7. Providers will go through the report and either accept/dispute the actions raised by the verifier and then approve the overall report.

8. Once the report is accepted, you can begin completing actions. Please send evidence of action completion directly to the verifier

9. The verifier will begin signing off actions via their portal and report progress to the Audit Panel.

10. Once actions are complete the visit will be signed off centrally on the database

Before The Visit

1) You will be assigned a verifier to conduct your visit/s, who will make contact with whoever you appoint as the appropriate member/s of staff (also known as the Site Manager) for such visits in order to arrange a suitable date and time for the verification to take place. It is important to note that the nature and focus of the verification visit will depend on its purpose, whether it might be an application for membership, a change of operational management, a cyclical visit, following the receipt of a complaint or one of the several other reasons.

2) The verifier will schedule the visit to take place not less than 10 working days from the date of the first contact with the Site Manager.

3) The verifier will stipulate where within the development/s they wish to visit and will discuss with the Site Manager the arrangements for getting access to rooms/flats and the tenants within those developments.

4) In addition to examining the responses and documentation that has been uploaded via the SSAQ, the verifier will stipulate what documentation they wish to examine during the visit, and will expect this to be available either on site during the visit OR provided to them in advance of the visit taking place. Although the verifier's decision as to what they will wish to look at will be determined in part by their analysis of your self-assessment return, it is likely that they will ask to look at items from the **Document Checklist** (*see next page*)

5) Once a date for a verification visit has been agreed between a Site Manager and the verifier, five working days' notice will be required for any cancellation or postponement of that visit by the provider. A fixed cancellation fee will be charged in situations where the requisite notice is not given.

6) The verifier will expect the staff who are to be involved directly with the verification visit to have had sight of the provider's Company self-assessment questionnaire response and would expect the Site Manager to have completed the Site self-assessment questionnaire so that they are completely familiar with all areas that will be assessed.

Document Checklist

General Documentation

- Details of any nominations agreements that exist and copies of information sharing agreements linked to those
- Documentation in relation to any Data Sharing agreement in place with a university
- Documentation in regard to any process in place regarding interactions with university student welfare services procedure (and information relating to neighbourhood and being good neighbours)

Policy and Procedure

- Equality and Diversity Policies
- Procedures for dealing with emergency situations (e.g. flood, power failures, infectious disease)
- Emergency and Disaster Management Plan
- Fire alarm system inspection, testing certificate and log book
- Security Plan & advice to students
- Emergency lighting system inspection & testing certificate
- Lift maintenance logs and emergency procedures (where appropriate)
- Waste storage and collection plan
- Complaints reporting & dispute resolution procedure
- If the visit is a result of late building delivery, the procedures followed and communications sent to students and universities.

Tenancy & Support Related Information

- Tenancy agreement/contract
- Evidence that deposits have been protected (where relevant)
- List of staff contact details for student residents
- Mail delivery and distribution procedures
- A link to information detailing student support and sources of help relating to wellbeing and mental health
- Energy efficiency advice to residents
- The offer for disabled students

Staffing

- List of staff contact details for student residents
- Information on any training courses that members of staff attend (e.g. aims and objectives and list of staff who have attended the training)

During The Visit

1) The verifier will wish to look in a number of bedrooms/flats, arrangements for which will have been discussed with the Site Manager in advance. This could include a selection of rooms chosen by the Site Manager themselves, either in advance or on the day of the visit.

2) The verifier will also want to talk to some of the current tenants in order to gain from them an understanding of their experiences of living in the development/s.

The verifier may stipulate in advance of the visit specific arrangements they would wish you to make to facilitate these discussions, or they may decide to interview tenants as they conduct their tour. The Site Manager (and any other staff associated with the development and/or the management company who accompany the verifier on the visit) are advised to withdraw at this stage.

3) Throughout the visit the Verifier will ask questions regarding what is done to enhance the student experience beyond the standard requirements of the Code.

4) At the end of the visit the verifier will brief the Site Manager and other management staff of the Provider who may choose to be on site for the visit on their findings and highlight any action points that have been identified. Providers may invite Site Managers from other developments within their portfolio to attend such briefings.

After The Visit

1) The verifier completes their balanced draft report reflecting both good practice identified as well as any shortfalls in compliance and submits this online. The report will consist of:

- Building Synopsis
- General Commentary & Remarks
- Tenant Feedback
- Advisory Matters
- Any relevant actions assigned

2) Once the verifier has completed and submitted their draft report, any user that is assigned via the SAQ portal to the building being verified will receive an automated email notifying them of this, with a request that the provder review the draft report and any actions to ensure accuracy. The nominated provider contact should go through the report to review the actions assigned. *Please note the verifier will notify the NCA if they do not receive an acknowledgement of the report within 14 days.*

3) The report should will outline each specific Action Point with set deadlines for completion and uses a traffic light system to track status:

Green	Indicates action point has been completed (or not action has been assigned)
Red	Indicates an action has been assigned and is outstanding/ongoing. Verifiers report progress of these to the Audit Panel and highlight will track where deadlines lapse/no action is taken.

3) Providers will then go through the report to accept/dispute each individual action (if there are any). Where no actions are disputed, providers will accept all actions listed in each section of the report, and then submit the overall report to convert from draft to final format. **This step is essential as draft reports cannot physically be approved via the central system.**

There will be some instances where there are either no actions assigned at the visit or there are actions that providers want to dispute:

Where there are no actions assigned by the verifier:

- Providers should simply read and review the report content, and then accept the overall report

Where there are actions disputed:

- If a provider wishes to dispute an action within the report, they must select dispute and state why this is being disputed and their preferred resolution

- Providers & verifiers should engage in dialogue to address and resolve disputes in the first instance (*please see the User Guide for further assistance on disputes*)

4) Once the report is finalised, providers can begin completing any assigned actions and reporting progress to the verifier who will sign them off via their own portal. Providers should send evidence of completed action to the verifier via email.

5) The verifier will monitor progress and report on this to the Audit Panel, where the verifier can make recommendations dependent on progress:

- Sign visits off once actions are complete
- Report progress to provide assurance
- Recommend deadlines for actions be extended
- Request Audit Panel Chair action where providers are not meeting the required actions/are non responsive
- Recommend a site/provider be suspended from the Code

Key Contacts

Email:
nationalcodes@unipol.org.uk

Office Phone Number:
0113 243 0169 (Option 5)

Verfier Emails
Please request via the Code team on central email above

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