



**AG30202 VTCT Level 3
Certificate in Assessing
Vocational Achievement
500/9758/1**

TRAINING MANUAL

TO ACHIEVE THIS CERTIFICATE

- Developing realistic plans for learning and assessment with candidates.
- Understanding assessment requirements.
- Planning the assessment process with candidates and other people involved.
- Helping candidates to meet the agreed assessment requirements.
- Reviewing the candidate's level of competence and identifying what they need to be fully competent.
- Key concepts and principles of assessment

CREATING A PORTFOLIO OF EVIDENCE

Cross-referencing evidence to avoid repetition and over-assessment may have previously been met as part of an observation in this or another unit. There is no need for additional evidence to be produced; the same portfolio reference can be used.

There are ranges of assessment methods that can be used to gather evidence for the portfolio. Whilst some examples are provided below, this is not an exhaustive list:

ASSESSING STUDENTS USING A RANGE OF METHODS

- **Observed work:** Watching a learner carry out treatments/services in the workplace to confirm occupational competence or competence of a skill/technique.
- **Examining products of work:** Looking at the finished product of the observation.
- **Questioning / discussion with learners:**
- **Oral questions:** The learner is questioned to clarify knowledge and understanding and/or practical criteria that have not naturally occurred as part of an observation. Whilst a detailed transcript is not necessary for the portfolio, you are required to initial the criteria that have been competently achieved in the relevant section of the record of assessment book.
- **Audio-visual media:** Including podcast, photographs, video footage (CD/DVD), and PowerPoint presentations.
- **Written questions:** can be internal (set by you and your colleagues) or external (set by VTCT) question papers. Variations include multiple choice, long answer, diagrams, online and paper-based formats.
- **Assignments:** This is the generic term for any form of coursework that you or your colleagues have internally devised to gather evidence.
- **Case studies:** Usually an analysis or project completed by the learner on an individual client.

ASSESSMENT KEY PLAYERS

1. **EXTERNAL VERIFIER (EQA)**
2. **INTERNAL VERIFIER (IQA)**
3. **ASSESSOR**
4. **CANDIDATE**

Assessors working with specific needs.

Different types of assessment make different demands on the candidate and will influence whether reasonable adjustments will be needed and the kind of reasonable adjustment, which may be put in place.

The adjustments that are appropriate for a particular assessment will depend upon:

- The specific assessment requirements of the qualification
- The type of assessment
- The particular needs and circumstances of the individual candidate

Candidates will only be eligible for Reasonable Adjustments if their disability or difficulty places them at a substantial disadvantage in the assessment situation, in comparison to a person who is not disabled.

Communication and interaction needs

A candidate with communication and interaction difficulties may have problems with reading or writing, the effects of which could be reduced through the use of a reader, word processor, scribe, BSL/English interpreter, screen reading software or voice activated software. They may also benefit from extra time during assessments that are time constrained to allow them to demonstrate their skills and knowledge.

Cognition and learning needs

A candidate with learning difficulties and difficulties with comprehension may benefit from extra time in time-constrained examinations. They may also need assistance with reading and writing.

Sensory & physical needs

A candidate may need to have assessment material modified for hearing impairment and visual impairment. They may also need to use a BSL/English interpreter, practical assistant, reader and scribe. In addition, they may benefit from the use of assistive technology and extra time to complete assessments.

Behavioral, emotional and social needs

The candidate may benefit from supervised rest breaks and separate accommodation, either within the centre or at an alternative venue. A candidate with attention difficulties may need the use of a prompter.

Candidates for whom English is an additional language

A candidate may benefit from extra time during assessments that are time constrained or the use of a bilingual dictionary.

STUDENT OR CANDIDATE ASSESSMENT APPEALS PROCEDURES

Always check thoroughly the typed assessments in your assessment record book written by VTCT by reading the relevant page of the unit.

If you wish to appeal you must:

- Speak to your tutor
- Speak to your Internal Verifier (IQA)
- Make a clear written statement outlining exactly what you wish to appeal against.
- The Internal Verifier will then discuss the appeal with our Appeals Panel, which consists of all the Internal Verifiers throughout the programme area.
- The Appeals panel will then attempt to find a solution to the appeal within 20 working days.

- The VTCT External Verifier will be notified of both the content of the appeal and the final decision.

Key concepts and principles of assessment

- Why should assessment take place?
- The key concepts of assessment
- Principles of assessment
- VACSR & SMART
- Role & responsibilities of an assessor
- Regulations & legislation relating to assessment
- Policies and procedures

Why should assessment take place?

To ascertain if learning has occurred, for example: the skills, competence, knowledge, understanding and/or attitudes needed at a given point. If you didn't assess, you wouldn't know whether learning had taken place. Assessment can be towards a formal qualification, for example an Award, a Certificate or a Diploma in a particular subject. The qualification could be knowledge based i.e. assessing understanding, or performance based i.e. assessing practical skills. Alternatively, you might be assessing an employee's competence in the work environment. This might be towards a formal qualification, company standards or to prove they can perform the requirements of their job specification.

Assessment should focus on improving and reinforcing learning as well as measuring achievements. It should help your learners realise how they are progressing and what they need to do to improve and/or progress further. Assessment is a regular process; it might not always be formalised, but you will be observing what your learners are doing, asking them questions, and reviewing their progress whenever you are in contact with them. If you also teach or train, your learners will be demonstrating their knowledge and skills regularly, for example through activities, discussions and regular tasks.

You are therefore constantly making judgments about learner progress and how they could improve. You should also be aware of the impact that your comments and grades can have on your learner's confidence when you give them feedback. Comments, which specifically focus on the activity or work produced, rather than the individual, will be more helpful and motivating to your learners.

Assessment should not be confused with evaluation, assessment is of the *learner*, and evaluation is of the *programme* that the learner is taking, for example, a qualification. Assessment is specific towards learners' achievements and how they can improve. Evaluation is a quality assurance monitoring tool. It includes obtaining feedback from your learners and others, for example, employers, line managers and quality assurers to help you improve the overall learner experience as well as your own practice.

The key concepts of assessment

Concepts are the aspects involved throughout the assessment process, for example:

- Accountability
- Achievement
- Assessment strategies
- Benchmarking
- Evaluation
- Internally or externally devised assessment methods (formal and informal)

- Progression
- Transparency
- Types of assessment e.g. initial (at the beginning), formative (ongoing) or summative (at the end)

You need to be **accountable** to your learners and your organisation to ensure you are carrying out your role as an assessor correctly. Your learners should know why they are being assessed and what they have to do to meet the assessment criteria. You will also be accountable to the awarding organisation if you assess their accredited qualifications. You might be accountable to employers if you are assessing their staff in the work environment.

You may be required to analyse **achievement** data and compare this to national or organisational targets. The funding your organisation receives might also be related to your learners' achievements. It's always a useful evaluation method to keep a record of how many learners you have, how many successfully complete their programme and in what timescale.

Following the **assessment strategy** for your subject will ensure you are carrying out your role correctly and holding or working towards the required assessor qualifications.

Benchmarking involves comparing what is the accepted standard for a particular subject area against the current position of your own learners' performance. Using benchmarking data can help inform target setting for individuals or groups. If learners don't achieve the benchmark, an evaluation will need to take place and improvements be implemented. Benchmarking can also be used to compare organisations which provide a similar service, or used within the same organisation to compare performance in different locations.

Evaluation of the assessment process should always take place to inform current and future practice. All aspects of the assessment cycle should be evaluated on an ongoing basis and feedback obtained from all involved.

Internally devised assessments might be produced by you or other staff at your organisation such as: assignments, projects or questions which will also be marked by you. **Externally devised assessments** are usually produced by an awarding organisation, for example, an examination. **Formal** assessments usually count towards achievement of a qualification, whereas **informal** assessments are used to monitor ongoing progress and development.

Progression should be taken into account when assessing learners, i.e. what they are going to do next. It could be another unit of the current qualification, or a different level of qualification, either at your organisation, in the work environment or elsewhere. Progression opportunities should always be discussed with your learner to ensure they are on the right route and that they are capable of achieving.

To assist **transparency**, you need to ensure that everyone who is involved in the assessment process clearly understands what is expected and can see there is nothing untoward taking place. That includes your own interpretation and understanding of the assessment requirements as well as that of your learners. You should be honest with your learners and not let them feel they have achieved more than they are capable of. Auditable records must always be maintained throughout the assessment process.

Types of assessment include initial, formative, and summative as well as diagnostic tests which ascertain a learner's current knowledge and experience. Some types of diagnostic tests can also

identify learners with dyslexia, dyspraxia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, etc. Initial assessment is carried out prior to or at the beginning of a programme to identify your learner's starting point and level. Formative assessment is ongoing, and summative assessment is at the end.

Principles of assessment

Principles are **how** the assessment process is put into practice, for example, being:

- **Ethical** – ensuring the assessment process is honest and moral, and takes into account confidentiality and integrity,
- **Fair** – assessment activities should be fit for purpose, and planning, decisions and feedback justifiable, and
- **Safe** – ensuring the methods used are ethical, there is little chance of plagiarism, the work can be confirmed as authentic, confidentiality was taken into account, learning and assessment was not compromised in any way, nor was the learner's experience or potential to achieve (safe in this context does not relate to health and safety but to the assessment types and methods used).

Two important principles are known as **VACSR** and **SMART**.

VACSR

Valid – the work is relevant to the assessment criteria.

Authentic – the work has been produced solely by the learner.

Current – the work is still relevant at the time of assessment.

Sufficient – the work covers all the assessment criteria.

Reliable – the work is consistent across all learners, over time and at the required level.

Following **VACSR** will help ensure assessment is carried out correctly.

SMART

Specific – the activity relates only to what is being assessed and is clearly stated.

Measurable – the activity can be measured against the assessment requirements, allowing any gaps to be identified.

Achievable – the activity can be achieved at the right level.

Relevant – the activity is realistic and will give consistent results.

Time bound – target dates and times can be agreed.

Planning **SMART** assessment activities will ensure all the assessment requirements will be met by learners, providing they have acquired the necessary skills and knowledge beforehand.

Role and responsibilities of an assessor

Your main role will be to:

- Carry out assessments according to the qualification requirements, or those of the programme or job specification
- Follow all internal and external organisational requirements

Your responsibilities will include:

- Attending meetings

- Negotiating and agreeing assessment plans
- Making best use of different assessment types and methods
- Reviewing learner progress
- Standardising practice with other assessors
- Completing and maintaining records
- Giving constructive and developmental feedback to learners
- Identifying and dealing with any barriers to fair assessment
- Making judgments based on the assessment requirements
- Maintaining CPD
- Supporting learners with special assessment requirements and dealing with sensitive issues in a supportive manner.

Your role as an assessor will also be to inspire and motivate your learners. If you are enthusiastic and passionate about your subject, this will help to encourage and challenge your learners.

Your learners may already be motivated for personal reasons and be enthusiastic and **want** to perform well. This is known as **intrinsic** motivation. They may be motivated by a **need** to learn, for example to gain a qualification, promotion or pay rise at work, known as **extrinsic** motivation. If you can recognise the difference between your learners' wants and needs, you can appreciate why they are motivated and ensure you make their experience meaningful and relevant. Whatever type of motivation your learners have will be transformed, for better or worse, by what happens during their assessment experience.

Regulations & legislation relating to assessment

You will need to follow certain regulations, for example:

- Regulatory bodies such as Ofqual and Ofsted
- Awarding organisations who accredit the qualifications e.g. VTCT, ITEC, CIBTAC, CIDESCO etc.
- Legal aspects such as the Data Protection Act (GDPR), Health and Safety at Work Act, Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act, the Equality Act etc.

Ofqual is the regulator of qualifications, examinations and assessments in England and vocational qualifications in Northern Ireland. They are responsible for maintaining standards, improving confidence in the system and distributing information about qualifications. Ofqual give formal recognition to awarding organisations and bodies that deliver and award qualifications. They also monitor their qualifications and activities, including the fees charged.

Ofsted inspects and regulates services in England which care for children and young people, and those providing education and skills for learners of all ages. They were originally established to inspect schools; however, they now inspect provision in the Lifelong Learning Sector, including teacher training, according to a common inspection framework. Inspections of organisations are carried out and the results are published on their website. The aim of inspections is to promote improvement and value for money in the services inspected and regulated, so that children and young people, parents and carers, adult learners and employers all benefit.

Data Protection Act

This Act is mandatory for all organisations that hold or process personal data

The Act contains eight principles to ensure that data are:

1. Processed fairly and lawfully
2. Obtained and used only for specified and lawful purposes

3. Adequate, relevant and not excessive
4. Accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date
5. Kept for no longer than necessary
6. Processed in accordance with the individual's rights
7. Kept secure
8. Transferred only to countries that offer adequate protection

The DPA 2018 supplements the **EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)**, which came into effect on the 25th May 2018. The GDPR regulates the collection, storage, and use of personal data significantly more strictly.

Additionally, GDPR addresses data protection rules for personal data export outside of the European Union. It also enforces EU data protection laws to guide foreign organisations that process personal data pertaining to residents of the European Union.

GDPR will:

- Increase privacy and extend data rights for EU residents.
- Help EU residents understand personal data use.
- Address the export of personal data outside of the EU.
- Give regulatory authorities greater powers to take action against organisations that breach the new data protection regulations.
- Simplify the regulatory environment for international business by unifying data protection regulations within the European Union.
- Require every new business process that uses personal data to abide by the GDPR data protection regulations and Privacy by Design rule.

Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

This places a legal responsibility upon you, as well as your organisation and your learners. If you see a potential hazard, it is your responsibility to do something about it before an accident occurs, even if this is just reporting it to the relevant person within your organisation.

Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006

Safeguarding is a term used to refer to the duties and responsibilities that those providing a health, social or education service have to perform to protect individuals and vulnerable people from harm. A disclosure and barring service (DBS) is in place and staff can be checked if necessary.

Assessors may need to attend Safeguarding training every three years (some staff every two years depending upon their Safeguarding involvement).

Assessors have a duty of care and a personal responsibility towards all learners and should apply six key elements of appropriate service provision:

- Respect
- Dignity
- Independence
- Individuality
- Choice
- Confidentiality.

A vulnerable adult is defined as *a person aged 18 years or over, who is in receipt of or may be in need of community care services by reason of 'mental or other disability, age or illness and who is or may*

be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation’.

The Equality Act (2010)

The Equality Act (2010) replaced all previous anti-discrimination legislation and consolidated it into one act (for England, Scotland and Wales). It provides rights for people not to be discriminated against or harassed because they have an association with a disabled person or are wrongly perceived as disabled.

Assessment activities should always reflect the diverse nature of your learner group, for example, culture, language and ethnicity. They should not be biased according to the person producing them; otherwise aspects such as terminology or jargon might not be those of the learners, but those of the producer, placing the learner at a disadvantage. You also need to be careful not to discriminate against your learner in any way.

Policies and procedures

You will need to follow your organisation’s policies and procedures, which should include:

- Access and fair assessment
- Appeals and complaints
- Confidentiality of information
- Copyright and data protection
- Equality and diversity
- Health, safety and welfare.

There may be other codes and policies such as:

- Behaviour code bilingualism
- Dress code
- Acceptable use of ICT equipment internal quality assurance
- Learner welfare
- Management of information record keeping.

Planning assessment

- Factors to consider when planning
- Minimising risks
- Occupational expertise of the assessor
- Involving and supporting the learner
- Involving others
- Recognising prior learning
- Range opportunities
- Activities and resources
- Technology
- Equality and diversity
- Action plans and assessment plans

Factors to consider when planning

Think of the five W and one H process e.g.

1. **Who** will be assessed? Learners in a classroom, staff member at work etc.
2. **What** will be assessed? QCF unit in a particular subject, a topic in a classroom etc.
3. **When** will it be assessed? Dates and times.
4. **Where** will it be assessed? Classroom, workplace, workshop, another environment.
5. **Why** will it be assessed? To assess knowledge, skills and understanding. The types e.g. initial, formative or summative.
6. **How** will it be assessed? The methods e.g. observation, assignment, test, oral questions, looking at work products etc.

All assessment activities should be **SMART** – specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound.

Questions to ask yourself when planning include:

- **Can you use holistic assessment** i.e. assessing several aspects at the same time?
- Can self or peer assessment be used?
- Do you need to create assignments, prepare questions, or are materials already provided for you to use?
- Do you know your learner's prior knowledge and experience – how do you know what they already know and can do?

Minimising risks

Aspects to consider when planning to help minimise risks include:

- Health, safety and learner welfare (safeguarding and security)
- Possible plagiarism, collusion, cheating and copying
- Over or under assessing learners
- Using the right types and methods of assessment at the right time
- Language barriers
- Assessor risks e.g. the pressure to achieve certain targets by a set date, unsupportive colleagues, favoritism and bias, or challenges and barriers that could get in the way. There should be equality and diversity in assessments.
- Following clear directives from regulatory bodies on assessments.
- Apply specified criteria and standards and ensure to introduce these standards early in the learners preparations.
- There should be an assessment rationale documented for the marking of assessments. These documents should be standardised across all course assessments in the centre.
- Learner needs should be identified considering reasonable adjustments and special considerations.
- Appeals procedures should be in place and all learners should be made aware of the appeals procedures in advance of the assessments.
- There should be a clear audit trail for evidencing assessment decisions. The assessor should retain all assessment forms and copies may be included within the learner's portfolio if necessary. A tracking sheet should be included in the learner's portfolio so assessments can be tracked. The assessor can also keep an assessment tracker to ensure they can evidence assessments, assignments and completed test papers.

You will need to ascertain if there are any policies and procedures at your organisation which you must follow.

Involving and supporting the learner

The planning process should involve a discussion between you and your learner, with the chance to set realistic dates and targets. This conversation can lead to issues that need to be discussed and resolved e.g. transport, access, communication, particular learner needs, language, bilingualism, physical disabilities, lack of information, shift patterns etc.

Always ask your learners if there is anything you can do to help make their assessment experience a positive one. For example, ensure you face your learners when speaking to assist anyone hard of hearing, or give them written questions instead of asking oral questions (if possible). If you use printed handouts make sure they are in a font, size and colour to suit any particular learner requirements.

Assessment planning should be short term and long term, to allow formative and summative assessment to take place. Including your learners in the planning process will help identify what they know already and/or have learnt and allow for communication to take place to clarify any points or concerns. It can also help highlight that the learner is aware of everything that will occur during the assessment process and that they know what is being assessed and why.

When teaching or demonstrating, you can involve your learners at the commencement of a session by asking them if they have any prior knowledge or skills of the subject as part of initial assessment. In this way, you can draw and build upon their experiences throughout the session. At the end of the session you could involve your learners by using a quiz or other activity as formative assessment.

You could regularly ask your learners how they feel they are progressing; hopefully they will identify any issues before you need to tell them. Assessing vocational subjects and assessing academic subjects will have different ways of involving learners. Any support given to learners must be in accordance with any regulations and not seen as giving an unfair advantage.

Involving others

It's important to communicate with anyone else that might be involved with your learner, to ensure the assessment process runs smoothly. These might include:

- Staff in your own organisation e.g. other assessors, internal quality assurers and support staff.
- Awarding organisation staff – e.g. external quality assurers.
- Witnesses - other people the learner is in contact with who could give a statement as to their competence – e.g. their supervisor.

When assessing learners in their place of work, it is best to plan ahead to arrange your visits according to location, for example, assessing learners in close proximity to ease the time and cost spent travelling. Out of courtesy, notify your learner's employers in advance, in case there is any reason they can't accommodate you on a particular day. You will also need to check travel, transport and/or parking arrangements.

Activities and resources

Assessment activities might be provided e.g. assignments, observation checklists, oral questions etc. If not, you will need to produce your own based on the requirements of what is to be assessed. You may need support with this if you are not familiar with producing activities, therefore you will need to liaise with others in your organisation who can help.

Resources to support assessment can include photocopiers, laptops, cameras etc. You will need to find out what is available for you to use in case you have to reserve something in advance.

Technology

Technology is constantly evolving and new resources are frequently becoming available. It's crucial to keep up to date with new developments and you should try to incorporate these within the assessment process. It's not only about you using technology to help assess your learners, but about your learners using it to complete their assessment activities.

Technology can be combined with traditional methods of assessment; for example, learners can complete a written assignment by word-processing their response and submitting it by email or uploading it to a virtual learning environment (VLE). You can then give feedback via email or the VLE system. Combining methods also promotes differentiation and inclusivity; for example, learners could access assessment materials via the VLE outside the normal learning environment to support their learning.

If you are assessing the work of learners you might not have met, for example, by e- assessment, it can be very difficult to ensure the authenticity of their work. Your organisation might require each learner to attend an interview at some point and bring along some form of photo identification such as a driving license, passport or employee card.

Examples include:

- Digital media for visual/audio recording and playback
- Electronic portfolios for learners to store their work
- Interactive whiteboards for learners to use for presentations and to display their work
- Mobile phones for taking pictures, video and audio clips, and communicating
- Web cameras or video conferencing if you can't be in the same place as your learners and you need to observe a task
- Blogs, chat rooms, social networking sites, webinars and online discussion forums to help learners communicate with each other
- Computer facilities for learners to word process their assignments and save documents and pictures
- Email for electronic submission of assessments, communication and informal feedback on progress
- Internet access for research to support assignments or presentations
- Networked systems to allow access to programs and documents from any computer linked to the system
- Online and on-demand tests which can give instant results, for example, diagnostic, learning styles and multiple-choice tests
- Online discussion forums which allow asynchronous (taking place at different times) and synchronous (taking place at the same time) discussions
- Scanners for copying and transferring documents to a computer
- VLEs (Virtual Learning Environment) to upload learning materials and assessment activities.

Equality and diversity

Equality is about the rights of learners to have access to, attend, and participate in their chosen learning experience. In the past, equality has often been described as ***everyone being the same or having the same opportunities***. Nowadays, it can be described as ***everyone being different, but having equal rights***. Diversity is about valuing and respecting the differences in people, regardless of ability and/or circumstances, or any other individual characteristics they may have. If you have two or more learners, you will experience diversity. Learners are entitled to be treated with respect, with their differences acknowledged and taken into consideration.

Equality of opportunity is a concept underpinned by legislation. The Equality Act (2010) replaced all previous anti-discrimination legislation and consolidated it into one act for England, Scotland and Wales. The Act provides rights for people not to be directly discriminated against or harassed because they have an *association* with a disabled person, nor must people be directly discriminated against or harassed because they are wrongly *perceived* as disabled. Reasonable adjustments must take place during assessment activities to lessen or remove the effects of a disadvantage to a learner with a disability.

There are nine protected characteristics in the Act:

Age: older people, younger people.

Disability: physical or sensory impairments, mental health difficulties, long term medical, conditions, learning difficulties, neuro diverse conditions such as dyslexia, autism, tourettes or Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). For an impairment to be a disability, its effect on normal day-to-activities must be substantial. The Equality Act 2010 now defines substantial to mean *more than minor or trivial*.

Gender: male, female.

Gender identity: transsexual people, transgender people, men and women with transsexual history.

Marriage and civil partnership: married people, people in a civil partnership, single people.

Maternity and pregnancy: pregnant women, people on maternity leave, women who have recently given birth.

Race: nationality, ethnic background, origin or heritage.

Religion and belief: people from different faith groups, people with a philosophical belief, people with no religion or belief.

Sexual orientation: gay and lesbian people, bisexual people, heterosexual/straight people.

When preparing assessment materials and resources, ensure representations of people with protected characteristics are used, as well as those without.

All nine protected characteristics are covered in the employment duties of the Act. However, the protected characteristic of marriage and civil partnerships is not included in the education duties of the Act.

Action plans and assessment plans

An action plan is often used for a full programme or qualification i.e. all the units or aspects to be assessed during the time the learner is with you OR it can be used for academic programmes e.g. assignments.

You will need to find out what documents you are expected to use, and how you should complete them. All action and assessment plans should be agreed with your learners to enable them to know what is expected and by when.

Assessment types

- What is assessment?
- The assessment cycle
- Assessment types: initial, diagnostic, holistic, formative and summative
- Assessment methods

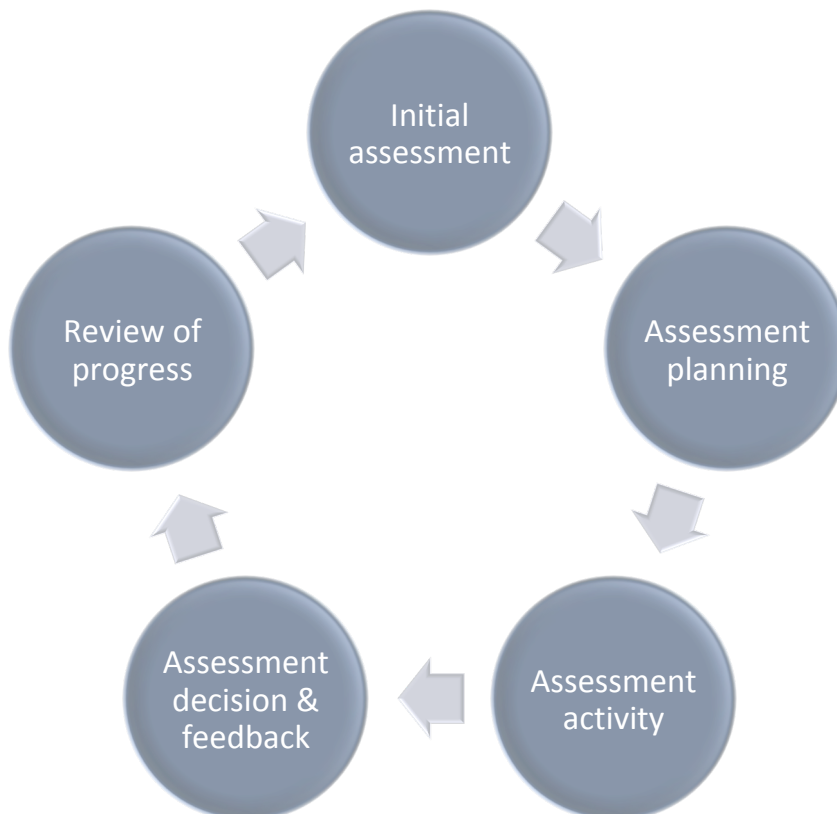
What is assessment?

Assessment is a way of finding out if learning has taken place; it is a process of making a decision regarding your learner's knowledge and/or performance against set criteria. Assessment activities can be **informal** to check progress – known as **formative assessment** (or assessment **for** learning). They can also be **formal** to confirm achievement – known as **summative assessment** (or assessment **of** learning).

Formative assessment checks progress i.e. by using questions, quizzes, discussions etc. and is **ongoing**. Summative assessment confirms achievement (or not) i.e. by using tests, exams, assignments, observations etc. and is usually **at the end** of a unit or programme.

The assessment cycle

Assessment usually follows a cycle:



Initial assessment

Ascertaining if your learner has any previous knowledge or experience of the subject or topic to be assessed. This information can be obtained through application forms and interviews. The results of initial assessment activities will give you information regarding your learners; for example, any

specific assessment requirements they may have, their learning style or any further training and support they may need.

Assessment planning

Agreeing suitable types and methods of assessment with each learner, setting appropriate target dates, involving others as necessary for example colleagues or supervisors, and following relevant organisational guidelines.

Assessment activity

Activities relate to the methods used, i.e. assessor led, for example, observation or questioning; or learner led, for example, completing assignments, writing statements or gathering appropriate evidence of competence. Assessment can be formative (ongoing) and/or summative (at the end).

Assessment decision and feedback

Making a judgment of success or otherwise. Giving constructive feedback and agreeing any further action that may be necessary. Records of what was assessed and the decisions made should always be maintained.

Review of progress

Reviewing progress with your learners will give you the opportunity to discuss any other issues that may be relevant to their progress. Reviewing the assessment activities used will give you the opportunity to amend them if necessary.

The cycle will then begin again with an initial assessment regarding the next topic or unit of the qualification.

Assessment types

Assessment types relate to the ***purpose*** of assessment i.e. the reason assessment is carried out.

Five frequently used assessment types are:

- Initial
- Diagnostic
- Holistic
- Formative
- Summative

Initial assessment

Relevant initial assessment activities will give information regarding learners, for example, any specific assessment requirements or needs they may have, their learning style, or any further training and support they may require. This should take place prior to, or when learners commence a particular programme.

Diagnostic assessment

Diagnostic assessments help identify (i.e. diagnose) a learner's current skills, knowledge and understanding towards a particular subject area. They can also identify English, Maths and information and communication technology (ICT) skills.

Holistic assessment

This is a method of assessing several aspects of a unit, qualification, programme, or job specification at the same time. It should be a more efficient and quicker system as one piece of good quality evidence, or a carefully planned observation could cover several areas. Holistic assessment enables

learners to integrate knowledge and performance, for example, as part of an apprenticeship programme. It should be planned so that the learner knows what they need to demonstrate and/or produce by a certain date. Assessment of a learner's skills, knowledge and understanding can be much more efficient and cost effective if planned correctly, for both the assessor and learner.

Formative assessment

Formative assessment should take place continually. Simply asking questions, and observing actions can help assess ongoing progress. Giving developmental feedback can enable learners to progress further, before a summative assessment takes place. Formative assessment is usually informal and often called assessment *for* learning as it prepares learners for formal assessment.

Summative assessment

Summative assessments usually occur at the end of a session, programme, topic, unit or full qualification. They are usually formal and count towards the achievement of a qualification. Summative assessment is usually formal and often called assessment *of* learning as it assesses learning has taken place.

Different subjects will require different types of assessment. You need to consider *what* type of assessment you need to use and *why*. You can then plan *when*, *where* and *how* this will take place.

For example:

What - an *initial assessment*

Why - to ascertain *subject knowledge & skills* When - at the *beginning of the programme* Where - at the *organisation*

How - by questions and discussion

Whatever type of assessment you use with your learners, you need to ensure you are assessing only what needs to be assessed, i.e. the requirements of a unit from a qualification, aspects of a work role, or progress towards particular topics.

Assessment methods

Assessment *methods* are different to *types*. A method is *how* the assessment type will be used e.g. questions for initial assessment, observation for formative assessment, exam for summative assessment etc. The methods can be formal or informal. Formal methods count towards achievement whereas informal methods check ongoing progress.

Assessment Methods

- What is assessment?
- Initial, formative and summative assessment
- Choosing methods
- Assessment methods: informal and formal
- Holistic assessment
- Strengths and limitations of assessment methods
- Meeting individual needs

What is assessment?

Assessment is a way of finding out if learning has taken place. it is a process of making a decision regarding your learner's knowledge and/or performance against set criteria. If learning has taken place, there will be a change in behaviour i.e. improved demonstration of skills, knowledge, attitudes, and understanding.

Assessment can take place before or when a learner commences, whilst they are progressing, and when they complete their learning programme. These are known as *assessment types* and include initial, formative and summative assessment.

Initial assessment can ascertain prior learning, it can also be used to find out learning preferences, and current skills and knowledge. It can be a diagnostic tool to ascertain specific skills of learners and any learner requirements that may need support, such as dyslexia.

Initial, formative and summative assessment

- **Initial assessment** can ascertain prior learning, learning preferences and current skills and knowledge.
- **Formative assessment** checks ongoing progress, usually by informal methods devised by the assessor.
- **Summative assessment** confirms achievement (or not) usually by formal methods devised by an awarding organisation.

Examples of formative assessment methods are using questions, quizzes, discussions etc. This is known as assessment *for* learning as it prepares learners for formal assessment.

Examples of summative assessment methods are using tests, exams, assignments, observations etc. This is known as assessment *of* learning as it assesses learning has taken place.

Choosing methods

There are many methods you can use to assess your learners; these will depend upon *what* you are assessing and *where*. They can be *informal* to check ongoing progress and/or *formal* to confirm achievement. The methods you choose will be influenced by whether you are assessing vocational skills or academic knowledge.

If learners are assessing towards an accredited programme, the assessment methods are often stated in the qualification handbook or syllabus. Assessment activities such as assignments might also be provided along with guidance towards decision making and grading.

If none are provided, you will have to devise activities based upon the requirements of the programme or what is being assessed.

Assessment methods

Assessment **methods** are different to assessment **types**, a method is **how** the assessment type will be used e.g. questions for initial assessment, observation for formative assessment, an exam for summative assessment etc.

The method can be formal or informal, formal methods count towards achievement whereas informal methods check ongoing progress. Sometimes, informal methods could also be formal methods depending on the situation.

Formal assessment methods	Informal assessment methods
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assignments • case studies • essays • examinations • multiple-choice questions • observations • professional discussions and questions • projects • tests • witness statements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • crosswords • discussions • gapped handouts (sentences with missing words) • journals/diaries • peer and self-assessment • puzzles and crosswords • practical activities • questions: oral, written, multiple choice • quizzes • role plays • worksheets

If you are assessing a programme where the assessment activities are provided, for example tests or exams, there is often the tendency to teach purely what is required to achieve a pass. Learners may therefore not gain valuable additional skills and knowledge. Teaching to pass tests does not maximise a learners' ability and potential.

Holistic assessment

This is a method of assessing several aspects of a qualification, unit, programme or job specification at the same time. It should make evidence collection by the learner. Quicker and easier as one piece of evidence could cover several aspects. Assessment of a learner's skills, knowledge and understanding can be much more efficient.

Strengths and limitations of assessment methods

Depending upon what subject you are assessing and the methods you choose, there will be positive and negative aspects of each, these are known as strengths and limitations. What may be a strength for one subject might be a limitation for another, for example:

Assignments - strengths:

Consolidates learning
 Several aspects of a qualification can be assessed at once
 Assignments might be set by the awarding organisation who will give clear marking criteria

Assignments - limitations:

Everything must have been taught beforehand
 Questions can be misinterpreted if written by someone else
 Can be time consuming
 Must be individually assessed and written feedback given
 Assessor might be biased when marking

Observation - strengths:

Enables skills to be seen in action
 Learners can make a mistake (if it is safe) enabling them to realise their errors
 Can be holistic and assess several aspects at the same time

Observation - limitations:

Timing must be arranged to suit each learner
 Communication needs to take place with others (if applicable)
 No permanent record unless visually recorded or copious notes taken

Questions must be asked to confirm understanding

Assessor might not be objective with decision

Learner might put on an *act* for the assessor which isn't how they normally perform

A comprehensive table of assessment methods and activities is available on pages 37-45 in Gravells A (2012) *Achieving your TAQA Assessor and Internal Quality Assurer Award* London Learning Matters.

Meeting individual needs

If you have learners with any particular needs or requirements, you should consider how you could help meet these. Always check with your organisation regarding what you can and can't do as you may need approval to make any reasonable adjustments.

Some examples of meeting your learners' needs include:

- Adapting or providing resources and equipment for a learner who is partially sighted
- Adapting the environment for a learner who is physically disabled
- Allowing extra time for a learner with dyslexia
- Arranging to use another language such as British Sign Language with a learner who is partially deaf
- Changing the date and/or time for a learner who works shifts
- Liaising with others who could offer advice regarding financial concerns
- Providing specialist support staff to improve English and Maths skills
- Providing the assessment information in an alternative format such as spoken instead of written for a learner who has impaired vision
- Using a different location which is more accessible to learners who have to travel far
- Using different assessment activities to suit individual learning preferences
- Using new and emerging technologies to help improve confidence with computer skills
- Using larger print, Braille, or other alternative support mechanisms for learners with particular needs.

Making assessment decisions and giving feedback

- How to make a decision
- Factors influencing decisions
- Appeals and complaints
- What is feedback?
- Different feedback methods
- How to give feedback
- Feedback hints

How to make a decision

It is quite a responsibility to make a judgement and confirm achievement (or otherwise) as it can affect your learner's motivation, personal and professional development. You must only make a decision based on what you have assessed i.e. the requirements of the unit, qualification or aspect being assessed, along with any prior knowledge or skills. There may be various internal and external regulations, requirements and pressures which can impact upon assessor decisions.

Factors influencing decisions

All VACSR points should be met to judge if a learner has been successful and has achieved the requirements:

- **Valid** – the work is relevant to what has been assessed
- **Authentic** – the work has been produced solely by the learner
- **Current** – the work is still relevant at the time of assessment
- **Sufficient** – the work covers all the assessment requirements
- **Reliable** – the work is consistent across all learners, over time and at the required level

Decisions should be fair, safe and ethical:

- **Fair** – the assessment type was appropriate to all learners at the required level, is inclusive, i.e. available to all, and differentiates for any particular needs.
- **Safe** - the methods used were ethical, the work can be confirmed as authentic, confidentiality was taken into account, learning and assessment was not compromised in any way, nor was the learner's experience or potential to achieve (safe in this context does not relate to health and safety).
- **Ethical** – the assessment took into account confidentiality, integrity, safety, security and learner welfare.

Records must be kept e.g. a tracking sheet can be maintained which shows all learners and grades/dates of achievement. A separate feedback and action record should be completed to formalise the decision, feedback given and any resulting action points. A copy should be given to the learner, either manually or electronically. Assessment plans can be updated once decisions have been made. Keeping records ensures achievements are documents, internal and external quality assurers, and funding and inspection bodies may need to see these.

The following are factors to consider when making a decision.

Assessment requirements – have both you and your learner interpreted these in the same way?

Cheating – have any learners colluded together, cheated in any way or copied someone else's work?

Consistency – are you being fair to all your learners or are you biased towards some learners more than others?

Methods of assessment – have you used appropriate or alternative methods, for example, asking oral questions rather than issuing written questions for a dyslexic learner?

Plagiarism – have any learners copied work from others or the internet, or not referenced their research adequately? You could type a sentence of their work into a search engine to see if it already exists elsewhere.

Pressure – do you feel under pressure to pass learners who are borderline, perhaps due to funding measures, targets, inspectors or employer expectations?

Risk assessments – are any of your learners likely to leave, or do they need extra support for any reason? Don't feel obliged to give too much support, to the extent that your learner's work becomes your own.

Trends – is there a pattern, i.e. are most learners making the same mistakes? If so, it could be that they have misinterpreted something or you have misinformed them or been vague or ambiguous. If this is the case, you could summarise the trends and discuss them with your learners, you could also discuss aspects of good practice to further their development.

Type of assessment – i.e. formal or informal assessments – you might be more lenient with informal assessments to encourage them. However, you do need to be fair and ethical with all your methods and decisions, for example, regarding safety and confidentiality.

You should:

- Ensure all the relevant aspects or criteria have been met
- Take into account any naturally occurring activities which weren't planned for
- Ensure you are accurate and consistent
- Point out errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation to help your learner's literacy skills

Decisions should only be based on the requirements being assessed i.e. the knowledge or performance standards or qualification. Objectivity is the key when making a decision. If your learner can have another attempt, you could refer them and then set another date for re-assessment to take place.

If you assess a programme which requires grades to be given to learners, you will need to analyse the data regarding their achievements. The grades could be expressed as:

A, B, C, D, E Achieved/not achieved competent/not yet competent distinction, credit, pass, refer, fail percentages, e.g. 80%

Analysing the results will help you see not only how well your learners have done, but whether there were any trends. For example, if all your learners received an average of C, but another assessor's group achieved an average of B, is there a fault on your part?

Appeals and complaints

Learners are entitled to make an appeal against a decision you have made, if they feel this is justifiable – there will be an appeals procedure at your organisation to follow. If a learner has made an appeal about a decision you have made, you should not feel you must pass them for other assessments if they have not met the requirements. Make sure you follow your organisation's procedures and keep records of your decisions.

Learners can also complain if they are not happy with an aspect of the assessment process e.g., they feel you have not been fair to everyone. If a learner has made a complaint about a particular assessment method or the way you have treated them, you must remain objective and not take anything personally. You should not let this influence any future decisions; however, you could ask if another assessor could take on this learner if you feel uncomfortable with the situation.

What is feedback?

Feedback is information regarding progress and achievement. All learners need to know how they are progressing, and what they have achieved. Feedback regarding their progress and achievements will help encourage and motivate them. This can be given formally after an assessment, for example, in writing, or informally by talking to your learner

The advantages of giving feedback are:

- it creates opportunities for clarification, discussion and progression
- it emphasises progress rather than failure
- it can boost your learner's confidence and motivation
- it identifies further learning opportunities or actions required
- your learner knows what they have achieved
- your learner knows what they need to improve or change.

Different feedback methods

Descriptive – describes examples of what could be improved and why, and is usually formal. Using this method lets you describe what your learner has done, how they have achieved the required assessment requirements and what they can do to progress further.

Evaluative – usually just a statement such as *well done* or *good*. This method does not offer helpful or constructive advice and is usually informal. It does not give learners the opportunity to know what was done well or how they could improve.

Constructive – is specific and focused to confirm your learner's achievement or to give developmental points in a positive and helpful way.

Destructive – relates to improvements which are needed and is often given in a negative way which could demoralise your learner.

Objective – clearly relates to specific assessment requirements and is factual regarding what has and has not been met.

Subjective – is often just a personal opinion and can be biased, for example, if the assessor is friendly with the learner. Feedback might be vague and not based on the assessment requirements.

How to give feedback

- Be honest, unambiguous, factual, constructive and detailed
- Directly state what was good and/or what needs to be changed
- Identify strengths and limitations
- Be positive and developmental focusing on how your learner can improve
- Ask questions to check they understand what you are saying
- Be clear and genuine
- Be helpful and supportive
- Don't base it on opinions
- Be specific towards the requirements
- Keep focused on the activity not the person
- Document it – keep records

Always identify if further action is needed i.e. if the learner has not met all the requirements. It could be that questions could be asked to fill in any gaps or another assessment activity might need to take place.

Feedback hints

Often, the focus of feedback is likely to be on mistakes rather than strengths. If something positive is stated first, any negative comments are more likely to be listened to and acted upon. Starting with a negative point may discourage learners from listening to anything else that is said.

Feedback should always be adapted to the level of learner i.e. don't use higher level words or jargon when their level of understanding is lower. Be aware of noisy environments and distractions when giving feedback.

- Ask the learner how they feel they have done before giving the feedback
- Use eye contact, speak clearly and allow time for learner questions and clarification
- State something positive first to maintain attention
- Own your statements by beginning with 'I'
- Use the word 'however' instead of 'but'

Example:

Start with something positive e.g.

I really liked the way you delivered your session; you came across as very confident.

Link with 'however' to anything that needs improving e.g.

...however, I feel if you had faced the learners a bit more rather than looking at the screen, I could have heard your voice better.

End on a positive or developmental note e.g.

It was a very interesting topic and I feel I've learnt something new.

This is known as the 'praise sandwich' OR 'feedback sandwich'.

Assessment Records

- Record keeping
- Examples of assessment records
- Reasons for keeping assessment records
- Data Protection Act
- Confidentiality
- RARPA

Record keeping

Records must be maintained to satisfy internal and external requirements. For example, if a learner lost their work, what records would you have to prove they actually did it? Full and factual records will help maintain an audit trail of progress. Quality assurance procedures will require assessment records to be sampled.

Examples of assessment records

- Initial and diagnostic results
- Assessment plans
- Assessment tracking
- Observation checklists
- Feedback records
- Review records
- Formative and summative grades and results

Reasons for keeping assessment records

Internal

- To keep track of learner achievements
- for standardisation and quality assurance purposes
- to review learner progress
- to document planning and feedback
- in case of complaints or appeals

Internal records are those required by the organisation at which the learners are attending. This can be for auditing purposes, accounting reasons e.g. funding and information gathering purposes.

There may be a standardised approach to completing the records, for example, the amount of detail which must be written, or whether the records should be completed manually or electronically. Some organisations now use handheld devices to directly input information, and support their learners to produce their work electronically, for example an e-portfolio of evidence.

Keeping full and accurate factual records is also necessary in case a learner appeals against an assessment decision.

External

- Learner information and statistics for auditors, inspectors and regulators
- External quality assurer's reports for comments and action points

External can be those required by organisations such as Ofsted, Awarding Organisations and the Skills Funding Agency. These can be for auditing and financial purposes. All relevant external organisations should be aware of the systems for record-keeping as they may need to approve certain records or storage methods and time periods beforehand.

When registering a learner for a qualification, their enrolment number, and/or unique learner number (ULNs) should be kept safe. Using these numbers will make accessing their details easier in future.

Records, data, information and statistics can help inform organisational policies such as:

- Assessment
- Equality and Diversity
- Health & Safety
- Quality Assurance
- Teaching and Learning

Information can help measure and track attendance, achievement, learning, progress, retention and destinations. Keeping accurate and up to date records can help inform organisational policies and practice. This should be from the moment a learner applies to attend, throughout their programme and after they leave.

Records should always be accurate and legible; they should be kept safe, secure and confidential. Most records can be kept manually or electronically, usually for three years. To satisfy everyone involved in the assessment process you must be able to show a valid audit trail for all your decisions, from learner commencement to completion.

It is fine to give copies to learners, as it is harder to forge a copy than an original. Sadly, there are learners who do this; therefore, keeping the originals will ensure records are authentic.

When learners submit work, for example an assignment, it is good practice to issue a receipt. If not, a learner might say that they have submitted their work when they haven't. When completing any records, if signatures are required, these should be obtained as soon as possible after the event if they cannot be signed on the day.

Any signatures added later should have the date they were added, rather than the date the form was originally completed.

All data should be stored in line with the Data Protection Act (GDPR) 2018.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality should be maintained regarding all assessment information and data kept in an organisation. However, it can be shared with others where it will help support a learner, for example, if they are dyslexic. You may need to communicate with others, for example, supervisors at the learner's place of work who could provide a witness testimony.

RARPA

If you are assessing a programme, which is not accredited by an awarding organisation, you should follow the requirements *for recognising and recording progress and achievement in non-accredited learning* (RARPA).

There are five processes to RARPA

1. **Aims** – these should be appropriate to the individual or group of learners
2. **Initial assessment** – this should be used to establish each learner's starting point
3. **Identification of appropriately challenging learning objectives** – these should be agreed, renegotiated and revised as necessary after formative assessment, and should be appropriate to each learner
4. **Recognition and recording of progress and achievement during the programme** - this should include assessor feedback, learner reflection and reviews of progress
5. **End of programme** – this includes summative assessment, learner self- assessment and a review of overall progress and achievement. This should be in relation to the learning objectives and any other outcomes achieved during the programme.

If you are assessing a qualification, which is accredited by an awarding organisation, you should follow their guidelines for record keeping.

Standardising Assessment Practice

- What is standardisation?
- Benefits of standardisation
- Standardisation activities
- What is internal quality assurance?

What is standardisation?

Standardisation ensures all assessors interpret the assessment requirements in the same way. It helps ensure all assessors are consistent and fair to all learners throughout their time with your organisation.

VACSR is often used as a basis to standardise and confirm assessment decisions.

- **Valid** – the work is relevant to what has been assessed
- **Authentic** – the work has been produced solely by the learner

- **Current** – the work is still relevant at the time of assessment
- **Sufficient** – the work covers all the assessment requirements
- **Reliable** – the work is consistent across all learners, over time and at the required level.

Benefits of standardisation

- A consistent experience for all learners
- Accountability to awarding organisations and regulatory authorities
- Confirming your own practice
- Sharing good practice
- Spotting trends or inconsistencies
- Meeting quality assurance requirements
- A contribution to continuing professional development
- All assessment decisions are fair for all learners
- An opportunity to discuss changes and developments
- Clearly defined roles and responsibilities
- Compliance with relevant codes of practice
- Consistency and fairness of judgments and decisions
- Empowerment of assessors
- Ensuring the assessment requirements are followed
- Re-assessment can spot errors or incorrect decisions by assessors, or even plagiarism or cheating by learners
- Succession planning if assessors are due to leave
- To maintain an audit trail of aspects standardised
- To give assessors time to formally meet
- To set action plans for the development of systems and staff
- Upholds the credibility of the assessment process and practice.

Standardisation activities

Standardisation activities can include events such as meetings of assessors to:

- Re-assess work and discuss decisions
- Compare how assessment documents have been completed
- Interpret the qualification/programme requirements
- Design or revise assessment documents
- Judge evidence as a team rather than by one assessor.

The difference between team meetings and standardisation meetings is that standardisation activities are not team meetings; the latter are to discuss issues relating to the management of the programme, for example, awarding organisation updates, targets, success rates and learner issues.

Over a period of time, all aspects of what has been assessed should have been standardised by all assessors. This ensures everyone has interpreted the requirements in the same way.

Other standardisation activities can include:

- New staff shadowing experienced staff
- Peer observations and feedback
- Role play activities such as assessment planning; making a decision; giving feedback; dealing with a complaint
- Writing assessment materials e.g. assignments, and questions with expected responses.

Records should be maintained of all standardisation activities. The internal and external quality assurer will want to view them (if applicable).

Technology can be used for standardisation i.e. meetings via Skype or webinars, completion of documents online, and the visual or aural recording of activities which could be upload to the intranet or virtual learning environment (VLE) for viewing again later, or for access by anyone that could not attend.

If there is only one assessor at your organisation for a particular subject, there will be no one else to standardise your practice with. However, your IQA should be sampling your work to ensure you are consistent with their approach. Sometimes, networks can be set up which include individual assessors from different organisations meeting to discuss and standardise their practice. Some awarding organisations facilitate these types of events; therefore you could check to see what is on offer to support you.

What is internal quality assurance?

Internal quality assurance (IQA) relates to the monitoring of the learner journey throughout their time with your organisation, and of the assessment processes and practice.

It includes:

- Sampling training and assessment activities by observing training sessions, assessment planning and feedback given
- Sampling assessed decisions and records
- Facilitating standardisation meetings
- Chairing team meetings
- Talking to learners and others who may be involved
- Supporting assessors and monitoring CPD

An internal quality assurer should be appointed to carry out the IQA role within an organisation where there are assessment activities taking place.

As a minimum, the internal quality assurer should:

- Have a strategy to plan what will be monitored, from whom and when
- Observe trainer and assessor practice and give developmental feedback
- Sample assessment records, learners' work and assessor decisions
- Meet with learners and others, for example, witnesses
- Facilitate the standardisation of assessor practice
- Supporting and giving feedback to assessors
- Check all learners have been roistered with an awarding organisation (if applicable)
- Monitor continuing professional development (CPD).

The IQA process can also include issuing questionnaires or surveys to learners and assessors to obtain feedback. The results of these should always be circulated and any action points followed up.

If IQA does not take place, there are risks to the accuracy, consistency and fairness of assessment practice. This could lead to incorrect decisions and ultimately disadvantage the learners.

If there is no external formal assessment taken by learners, there has to be a system of monitoring the performance of assessors. If not, assessors might make incorrect judgments, or pass someone who hasn't met the requirements perhaps because they were biased towards them.

Assessment systems should be monitored and evaluated continuously to identify any actions for improvement, which should then be implemented.

The IQA process is different to standardisation in that it is carried out by staff that oversee and support the assessors; however, they might also be assessors themselves. Standardisation ensures all assessors are working in a similar way to give fair and consistent support to learners.

Evaluating assessment practice, and continuing professional development

- Why evaluate assessment practice?
- How to evaluate assessment practice
- What is reflective practice?
- What is continuing professional development? (CPD)
- Planning and maintaining CPD

Why evaluate assessment practice?

To ensure:

- A professional service is given to learners
- The assessment process is fair to all learners
- You are meeting organisational and regulatory requirements
- You can learn from any incidents

You should always give a good service to your learners, and maintain and improve on this where possible.

How to evaluate assessment practice

Evaluation is not another term for assessment; evaluation is of the *programme*, whereas assessment is of the *learner*. You can obtain feedback from your learners and others involved in the assessment process e.g. by talking to them or using surveys or questionnaires.

Obtaining the views of your learners and others will greatly assist you when reflecting upon your role as an assessor, and aid the standardisation process. You could ask your learners directly after an assessment activity how they felt the process was. However, some learners might feel confident enough to tell you, but others might not. When evaluating your own practice, you need to consider the views of your learners and others in order to improve. How you do this will depend upon the type of feedback you have obtained and how useful it will be.

Feedback from your learners might impact upon your role by enlightening you to other aspects, for example, the types of questions used in an assignment were too complex, some activities might not have been challenging enough, or a multiple-choice test confused a dyslexic learner as they mistook a *b* for a *d*.

The views of your learners and others should have an impact upon your own role by helping you improve the assessment experience for your learners. Always make sure you do something with your findings, which will lead to an improvement.

- You can evaluate aspects such as:
- Did the learner struggle in any way? If so, why, and can anything be changed?
- How effective were the assessment types and methods used?
- How relevant were the activities?
- How useful were the resources?

- How effective was I at planning, assessing and giving feedback?
- Analyse statistics such as enrolment, retention, achievement and destinations
- Analyse appeals and complaints
- Look for trends or patterns and find out why they are occurring

Always do something with your findings, which will lead to an improvement in practice. You should evaluate the full assessment process for each programme or qualification you assess. You could evaluate the resources you used, for example handouts, to ensure they are inclusive, promote equality and engage with diversity. There might have been some equipment, which was faulty and will need to be fixed or changed. You could evaluate whether the assessment types and methods you used were successful or if there were any trends or patterns, which need addressing.

You will need to ensure the activities you used to assess were valid and reliable, and that you only assessed the criteria you were meant to assess. You will need to ask yourself if you assessed fairly and ethically, or if you had a favorite learner to whom you gave more attention, or were lenient with for any reason.

You could visually record an assessment activity and feedback (with the learner's permission) and then play this back later to see how you performed, and what you could improve.

What is reflective practice?

It is an analysis of your actions, which should lead to an improvement in practice. It can be written down, or just thought through.

Reflective practice is a form of self-evaluation and is a good way of ensuring you are carrying out your role effectively. When evaluating your own practice, you need to consider how your own behaviour has impacted upon others and what you could do to improve.

A straightforward method of reflection is to have an **experience**, then **describe** it, **analyse** it and **revise** it (EDAR) Gravells (2014). Use EDAR to help you reflect

- **Experience** – a significant event or incident you would like to change or improve.
- **Describe** – aspects such as who was involved, what happened, when it happened and where it happened.
- **Analyse** – consider the experience deeper and ask yourself how it happened and why it happened.
- **Revise** – think about how you would do it differently if it happened again and then try this out if you have the opportunity.

As a result, you might find your own skills improving, for example giving more effective, constructive and developmental feedback to your learners. Part of reflection is about knowing what you need to change. If you are not aware of something that needs changing, you will continue as you are until something serious occurs. You may realise you need further training or support in some areas therefore partaking in relevant CPD should help.

What is continuing professional development? (CPD)

It is a process of ensuring your professional skills and knowledge are up to date, as well as those of your specialist subject and advances in new technology.

You will need to plan what CPD you need to do, carry it out, and then reflect on how it has impacted upon your role as an assessor.

As a professional, you need to continually update your skills and knowledge. This knowledge relates not only to your subject specialism, but assessment methods, the types of learners you will be assessing, and relevant internal and external requirements.

CPD can be formal or informal, planned well in advance or be opportunistic, but it should have a real impact upon your job role and lead to an improvement in your practice. CPD is more than just attending events; it is also using critical reflection regarding your experiences, which result in your development as an assessor.

Keeping up to date with developments in your subject area, changes in legislation, changes in qualification standards and developments with ICT will assist your knowledge and practice.

Planning and maintaining CPD

Feedback from others and your own reflections will help you realise what CPD you need to undertake. This should be planned for, e.g. short, medium- and long-term targets.

There may be opportunities in-house or you could attend external events, you could shadow colleagues to observe how they assess, join professional associations, and carry out Internet research regarding your specialist subject.

Activities could include:

- Attending events, meetings, standardisation activities and training programmes
- E-learning activities
- Evaluating feedback from peers and learners
- Improving skills such as language, literacy, numeracy and ICT
- Membership of professional associations or committees
- Observing and shadowing colleagues
- Researching developments or changes to your subject and/or relevant legislation
- Self-reflection
- Studying for relevant qualifications
- Subscribing to and reading relevant journals and websites
- Visiting other organisations
- Voluntary work
- Work experience placements
- Writing or reviewing books and articles.

Records must always be kept of any CPD undertaken to be shown to funding, awarding organisation or regulatory bodies if requested. Reflecting upon assessment practice, taking account of feedback from learners and others, evaluating practice and maintaining CPD will all contribute to becoming a more effective assessor.

The practice of assessment has been recognised as a professional activity by the granting of Chartered Status to the Institute of Educational Assessors (CIEA). Their aim is to improve the quality of assessment in schools and colleges by working with educational assessors to develop their knowledge, understanding and capability in all aspects of educational testing and assessment.

Reading list

- Principles and Practices of Assessment: A guide for assessors in the FE and skills sector. (2021) Author: Ann Gravells. Learning Matters; Fourth edition
- Gravells A (2014) *Achieving your Assessment and Quality Assurance Units (TAQA)* (2nd Edn) London Learning Matters SAGE
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- Read H (2011) *The Best Assessor's Guide* Bideford Read On Publications
- Roffey-Barentsen J & Malthouse R (2009) *Reflective Practice in the Lifelong Learning Sector* (2nd Edn) Exeter Learning Matters
- Wilson (2012) *Practical Teaching: A Guide to Assessment and Quality Assurance* Hampshire Cengage Learning
- Wood J & Dickinson J (2011) *Quality Assurance and Evaluation in the Lifelong Learning Sector* Exeter Learning Matters

Website list

Assessment resources – www.excellencegateway.org.uk and www.questionmark.co.uk

Evaluation - <http://www.businessballs.com/kirkpatricklearningevaluationmodel.htm>

Reflective practice - <http://www.learningandteaching.info/learning/reflecti.htm>

Surveys & questionnaires (free program) - www.surveymonkey.co

Ann Gravells Website <https://www.anngravells.com/>