

NextGen 10s: Assessment

The NextGen: HN team are considering assessment. We are looking to increase confidence in pilot centres to be creative and take advantage of the available flexibility to create learner-centred, relevant assessments which maintain the principles of validity.

- 1. I'm concerned about getting my NextGen: HN assessment right – it's a lot to consider along with getting to know the whole course and all the changes.**

Absolutely understandable – and you're right, it is a lot! But as someone who delivers the new NextGen: HN course, you and your team are in the best possible position to devise excellent assessments – it's only really when subject matter, learning and assessment is fully aligned that good, authentic assessment happens. And you've got that experience at your fingertips.

- 2. So, is assessment any different with NextGen: HN?**

Honestly, the answer is both yes and no. Reducing the assessment load is a stated objective of our NextGen: HN Design Principles so inevitably this requires a fresh look at your assessment strategy. With larger and fewer units, there is already an opportunity to reduce the number of assessments in a way that makes assessment more meaningful to learners. But the principles of assessment have not changed.

- 3. Okay then, remind me of the principles of assessment...**

You'll find all of this covered in SQA's Guide to Assessment ([insert link](#)) but it remains the case that assessments must be:

- valid – assesses only, but sufficiently, what is legitimately intended
- reliable – remains valid across different cohorts and times
- practicable – possible to implement without undue negative impact on learners or delivery staff
- equitable/fair – has no structural or implicit barriers to access

There will be a lot of good assessment practice already in your centre, but it's always worthwhile looking carefully to check that assessments meet this standard.

- 4. Is there anything wrong with assessing unit-by-unit?**

No, not necessarily – it may be, for example that your new course has significantly bigger units, 5 credits for example. So already the assessment experience will be significantly different if you were to assess unit-by-unit. The new challenge may be to break assessments down into projects or engaging tasks that don't overwhelm your learners.

Of course, it now means that there's probably more complexity in the team members both teaching and assessing across large units or across multiple units. In the past, it wasn't uncommon for lecturers to teach a unit in relative isolation, but that approach won't really deliver the benefits of NextGen: HN.

- 5. Hmm. How can we work better as a delivery team to meet this challenge?**

It's all down to the planning. It's essential that, before delivery, the whole team is familiar with the whole course. Only then can you collaborate on devising assessments that combine or integrate

outcomes and evidence requirements and sample, if appropriate. And remember all the many freedoms that are available to you in the forms of evidence that are acceptable.

6. Hold on...lots of terms there that I want to check out: combine, integrate, sample...in fact, let's take them one by one...what's a combined assessment?

Happy to: but remember that these assessment strategies do have things in common and do overlap.

However roughly speaking, combining assessments means you take two assessments and put them together. This works well when you can help the candidate focus on a more meaningful task or project in a way that helps them see relevant connections between units and topics. It also works well when there is no duplication of knowledge or skills. Imagine two big Lego blocks slotted together to make a new combined shape.

7. Got it – and what's the difference then with integrated assessment?

Integrating assessments, on the other hand, is a term you might use when taking items of knowledge or skill sets and bringing them together to create meaningful assessment tasks and to reduce possible over-assessment.

Inevitably there will be overlap or at least good strong connections between knowledge and skills across the entire HNC/D. By integrating assessments, once again you can increase engagement for learners by seamlessly bringing together outcomes or evidence requirements across multiple units. Imagine lots of small Lego blocks all stuck together to form a new integrated shape.

8. And sampling?

Both combining and integrating assessments offer you the opportunity to sample at the same time. Sampling means picking one or more examples of understanding or competence from a body of knowledge, or a skill set that demonstrates sufficient mastery. Based on a valid sample, you can legitimately infer that the learner has overtaken specific items of knowledge or has a competence. Learners shouldn't need to prove the same thing multiple times in repetitive assessments. Repetition for learning is fine and often necessary. But it isn't good practice in assessment.

9. Yes, all of that makes sense. But I'm still nervous about getting it right. What support are you offering us?

A vital part of NextGen: HN is our new approach to external quality assurance. In fact, we've even changed the name, from 'external verification' to 'external quality assurance (EQA)' to communicate a different message about this professional exchange.

Pilot centres are offered several EQA 'touchpoints' throughout the year so that it is no longer end-loaded. The model is one of supportive professional discussion, with advice in the early stages moving to confirmation of standards towards the end of the year.

We must still be confident that assessments are valid and that you are assessing to the right standard. But you now have opportunities to develop an excellent working relationship with your NextGen: HN EQA who will be with you all the way on your journey. And remember, External

Quality Assurers are people with experience and expertise gained from wide engagement across the sector: everybody has something to bring to the table.

10. One last question – I find it helpful seeing what other centres have done. Is that possible?

It absolutely is. Your New Product Development Manager is working with all centres piloting each NextGen: HN award. They will be more than happy to put you in touch with your colleagues across the sector who are also piloting. You could even have a collaboration group for mutual support and sharing approaches. To end on a cheesy note...teamwork makes the dream work.