



Quality Assurance of Assessment Arrangements in Internal and External Assessments:

Information for centres

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Introduction

We have a responsibility to ensure that the assessment process is rigorous and fair for all learners. For this reason, we must ensure that assessment arrangements are appropriate and only provided to those learners who have an identified difficulty, whether this be a physical difficulty (including medical or sensory difficulty), a behavioural or mental health difficulty, or a learning difficulty.

This guidance will help you ensure that appropriate assessment arrangements are provided for disabled learners and/or those with additional support needs who need them. The information in this guidance document must be read in conjunction with the [Assessment Arrangements Explained: Information for Centres](#) (Publication code: FA6860), which details the key principles that should be followed when making a decision about assessment arrangements.

Colleges and training providers must also read the following documents:

- ◆ [Systems Verification Process: Guidance for Centres](#)
- ◆ [Systems Verification Criteria: Guidance for Centres](#)

Your centre must have an effective internal quality assurance system for identifying and verifying learners' needs for assessment arrangements in all SQA qualifications that you deliver, including National Qualifications. You must ensure that you have read and understood the assessment arrangements guidance on our [website](#), and that your own centre's policies and processes align with this guidance.

Schools

Your school's quality assurance system should include processes to:

- ◆ identify, as early as possible, any difficulty a disabled learner might have in demonstrating their attainment through the published assessment procedures
- ◆ determine the most appropriate assessment arrangement for the learner
- ◆ verify the learner's need for the assessment arrangement in an internal or external assessment
- ◆ authorise assessment arrangements

Colleges

[Quality Assurance Criterion](#) 3.5 requires that your college has policies and procedures in place for managing assessment arrangements for both internal and, where applicable, external assessments.

Your college must also have documentary evidence that demonstrates the implementation of your assessment arrangement policies and procedures, and which specifically covers your processes for:

- ◆ identifying, as early as possible, any difficulty a learner might have in demonstrating their attainment through the published assessment procedures

- ◆ determining the most appropriate assessment arrangement for the learner
- ◆ verifying the learner's need for the assessment arrangement in an internal or external assessment
- ◆ authorising assessment arrangements

All these processes must be documented, implemented and monitored to meet SQA's requirements. There's an explanation of each step in the next section.

The [Assessment Arrangements Toolkit](#) has been created to help you document processes and procedures. At all stages, it is essential that there is professional dialogue between teaching staff (including course lecturers), learning support/equality and inclusion staff, those responsible for quality assurance, and those responsible for submitting assessment arrangement requests to us.

In some cases, evidence from other key professionals, such as therapists, specialist teachers, disability practitioners or educational psychologists, may also form part of your centre's wider evidence base. This type of evidence is not an exhaustive list. It can be varied, and could assist you in deciding whether or not an assessment arrangement is appropriate for an individual learner and, if so, the nature and extent of that arrangement.

In all cases, SQA co-ordinators should work closely with staff in learning support/equality and inclusion to ensure they are aware of the assessment arrangements that may be required for learners.

Partnership agreements

Where there is a school-college or school-school partnership agreement in the teaching of a National Course, the presenting school or college must have access to the evidence used to assess a learner's eligibility for a particular assessment arrangement. This information should be shared securely and must be available during the quality assurance visit.

Assessment arrangements process: schools and colleges

Identify, as early as possible, any difficulty a learner might have in demonstrating their attainment through the published assessment procedures

Wherever possible, a learner's likely difficulties in accessing an assessment should be identified before they embark on a qualification. In some cases, however, the learner's difficulties may only become apparent, or be disclosed, during their course of study. The learner's difficulties could be identified by the learner themselves, by learning support/equality and inclusion staff or by the subject teacher/lecturer or curriculum staff. Further information from the learner's parents or carers may also be relevant, and may form part of your centre's wider evidence base.

Note: For centres with care-experienced learners, this evidence may include letters and/or reports from social work or other professionals highlighting barriers to learning which could be a result of trauma.

Determine the most appropriate assessment arrangement for the learner

This is the stage in your internal quality assurance system where you determine what assessment arrangements will be required. Any arrangements should allow the learner to demonstrate their attainment without compromising the integrity of the assessment. This could be straightforward (for example, the provision of a braille question paper for a blind learner in the external exam) or it could require more detailed discussion with us (for example, where the assessment in a National Qualification or Higher National Unit could potentially be compromised by the proposed assessment arrangement).

Verify the learner's need for an arrangement in an internal or external assessment

This is a key stage in your centre's own internal quality assurance system. It ensures that there is an evidence base that clearly demonstrates the learner's need for the assessment arrangement, and that this evidence has been formally confirmed by your centre.

Documentary evidence of your formal assessment arrangements verification process, and the personnel involved, must be available to us. Verifying the learner's assessment needs is extremely important for two reasons:

- ◆ You need to be assured that your decision to provide, or not to provide, a particular assessment arrangement can be justified, and that it accords with both our guidance and relevant equality legislation.
- ◆ We need to be satisfied that centres have in place their own robust internal assessment arrangements verification system, which ensures that **all** relevant information and evidence has been gathered and fully considered. There is more detail on evidence requirements in the section 'Documentary evidence you will need'.

Authorise assessment arrangements

The head of centre, or a member of senior management, is responsible for authorising the provision of an assessment arrangement in an internal assessment, or for submitting any assessment arrangement request in the external exams by the published deadline date.

When you provide an assessment arrangement in an internal assessment or submit an assessment arrangement request for in an external exam, your centre is confirming that it has followed our quality assurance procedures, that it has met its responsibilities in terms of quality assuring the learner's need for the arrangement, and that it is appropriate.

Your centre is also confirming that it has discussed the assessment arrangements with the learner and made them aware that, as part of the process to request their assessment arrangements, your centre will share information about them and their assessment arrangements with us.

Quality assurance process: SQA

The focus of our quality assurance is on helping you comply with our requirement that you operate an effective internal quality assurance system for providing assessment arrangements.

To this end, centres will be selected for a quality assurance visit based on a number of factors. These might include:

- ◆ the length of time since the last quality assurance visit
- ◆ school size and type
- ◆ how many assessment arrangements requests you have submitted
- ◆ how many late requests you have submitted
- ◆ compliance with closing dates

We will initially contact your SQA co-ordinator to inform you of the proposed visit and to negotiate a mutually convenient date for the visit. We will maintain ongoing contact with your SQA co-ordinator, who is responsible for informing all relevant staff about the date of the visit, requirements for documentary evidence, and arranging for the required staff to be available during the visit.

All documented processes and supporting evidence will be reviewed. Appendix 1 is a blank template that you may wish to use to list the evidence you collate to support the provision of an assessment arrangement.

Verbal feedback will be provided at the end of the visit to the SQA co-ordinator and any other staff you choose to have present. The feedback will cover the findings against each type of evidence requirement, any recommended or required actions, comments on the quality of your evidence and any good practice identified. There should be nothing in our final written report that you were not made aware of on the day of the visit.

- ◆ Recommendations are made so that your centre can enhance your existing processes. The recommendations are not mandatory, and you do not need to act on them.
- ◆ Required actions are given when it is judged that there is either insufficient evidence, little evidence or no evidence. The actions must be taken forward and should also be clear and specific, with an agreed date for completion.

In the unlikely event that your systems and processes do not meet our requirements by the agreed date and as noted in your visit report, we will contact you to discuss the issue further. We may ask you to submit the documented evidence for all learners for whom assessment arrangements are being proposed. We will consider the supporting evidence and make a decision on a case-by-case basis.

Note: Appeals against decisions involving assessment arrangements are covered in our guidance, [*The Appeals Process: Information for Centres*](#) (publication code: AA7708, August 2023).

Your SQA co-ordinator will be sent a link to a feedback questionnaire along with a copy of the visit report. Please take the time to complete this feedback and return it back to us. It provides valuable information to help us make future improvements and to further improve our quality assurance processes.

The documentary evidence you will need

The quality assurance visit is based around seven key types of documentary evidence. Documents may be held electronically or as hard copies but should include evidence of (i) your centre's quality assurance processes and (ii) the evidence used to assess a learner's need for a particular assessment arrangement.

1 Evidence of your centre's internal assessment arrangements verification meetings

You must have documentary evidence of the meetings/discussions at which all relevant learner information and evidence was considered and assessed before providing an assessment arrangement in an internal assessment and/or before submitting the request for an assessment arrangement in an external assessment. This might be the minutes or agreed notes from the verification meetings. They must be signed and dated.

Decisions recorded digitally (for example using an Excel spreadsheet, on an MIS system or electronic document) can be signed and dated electronically. These can also be confirmation emails from the senior management team to learning support/equality and inclusion staff.

The assessment arrangements verification meeting is a key stage in your internal quality assurance procedures. You need to be confident that your decisions to provide, or not to provide, an assessment arrangement in both internal and external assessments are in line with both our guidance and the relevant equality legislation. This is why having a member of senior management staff who is independent of the learning support process in your school is so important; it adds rigour to the process.

2 Evidence that your learners have agreed to the provision of assessment arrangements

You must have confirmation from your learners that they have been involved in discussions about, and have agreed to, the assessment arrangements being provided, and that they intend to use them. Learners' parents/carers can be involved in this discussion. Parent/carers must be involved in the discussions if a learner is under the age of 16.

You must also have confirmation from the learner (and, if they are under the age of 16, their parent/carer) that they have been made aware that information about them and their assessment arrangements will be shared with us as part of the request process. You may wish to use our learner proforma — you can find it [on our website](#).

3 Evidence of your learners' disabilities/additional support needs and how this affects them in the learning and teaching situation

In all cases, there must be documentary evidence of the nature and extent of the learner's disability or additional support need and how this has impacted on teaching and learning. Information, where relevant, from other professionals (for example, therapists, specialist sensory impairment teachers/support staff or educational psychologists) may also be available.

For schools, the evidence might include relevant medical reports, results of screening assessments, minutes of meetings, notes of case conferences, ongoing consultations on current intervention strategies etc.

For colleges, evidence might include a working file (for example a personal learning support plan) containing information about the learner's disability and/or additional support needs (including relevant medical reports, results from screening assessments, minutes of meetings, notes of case conferences, and ongoing consultations on current intervention strategies.) For care-experienced learners, this evidence may include letters and/or reports from social work or other professionals highlighting barriers to learning which could be a result of trauma.

4 Evidence of your learner's current need for support in the classroom, how this is met, and how it relates to the assessment arrangements being requested or provided

In nearly all cases, learners requiring specific assessment arrangements will need similar arrangements to be made during their course to ensure they are not disadvantaged. There must be documentary evidence that links this ongoing support in class to the assessment arrangements needed for SQA assessments. The evidence might include plans and records of support from support-for-learning staff in teaching and learning, including any support provided in the support base, and/or details of support regularly required from subject teachers/lecturers.

The evidence collated about a learner's needs should be reviewed over time to ensure that assessment arrangements provided in one academic year are still appropriate in the next session.

Note: It is important to clarify that it is not necessary to gather evidence with and without support each year.

You do not need to verify the reason a learner requires assessment arrangements each academic year. However, with changes to the level of demand in assessments at different levels of a qualification (for example from National 5 to Higher or SCQF Levels 5 to 6), it is important to confirm whether the assessment arrangements provided in a previous academic year are still appropriate, and whether there are any changes to this provision.

5 Evidence that varying needs across subjects have been taken into account

As needs may vary across curriculum areas, there must be documentary evidence that the need for assessment arrangements has been considered on a subject-by-subject basis. Evidence might include records of consultation and negotiations with subject staff/course lecturers, and their comments and observations taking into account the assessment demands of different courses.

6 Evidence for specific types of assessment arrangement

For some learners, the evidence of their need for a particular assessment arrangement will be well established — for example, for a visually impaired learner using braille or a deaf learner using BSL. However, for some types of assessment arrangement (such as a learner’s need for extra time, a scribe, a reader or for the use of assistive technologies), there must be additional documentary information/evidence of the need for the particular arrangement in the assessment concerned. This is particularly important where the learner is being assessed on particular skills, knowledge and understanding, and providing the assessment arrangement is considered a reasonable adjustment to allow the learner to access the assessment.

Note: Where a learner is entered for a course that does not have timed assessments, evidence of the need for extra time can also be gathered where natural time allocations occur (for example, all learners are given 30 minutes to complete a task, but the learner is unable to complete this in the time allocated due to their difficulty).

7 Evidence of a system for the management of assessment arrangements which is supported by senior management

You must have documentary evidence of a whole-centre approach to the provision of assessment arrangements, for example, as part of wider inclusive practices/policy.

Checklist

This checklist, based around these seven types of evidence, is designed to help you find out if you have the appropriate evidence for the quality assurance visit.

| | |
|--|-----|
| 1 Documentary evidence of the internal assessment arrangements verification meeting | (✓) |
| Do you hold formal assessment arrangements verification meetings to ensure that all relevant information and evidence has been gathered and considered in determining the provision of assessment arrangements for learners in both internal and external assessments? | |
| Do you have a formal minute/note of the meeting that has been signed and dated (electronically or by hand)? | |
| Is it clear which assessments your assessment arrangements verification meeting are for? | |

| | |
|--|--|
| Are the meetings held at an appropriate time in the year? | |
| Are appropriate centre staff present? | |
| Are requests for the provision of assessment arrangements formally authorised by a member of senior management staff? | |
| Is this senior member of staff independent from the learning support/equality and inclusion structure in the centre? | |
| Do you have a procedure for making late decisions? | |
| 2 Documentary evidence of confirmation from the learner that they have agreed to (i) the provision of assessment arrangements, and (ii) the centre submitting the request on their behalf and have been made aware that personal information will be shared with us | |
| If your learner is under 16, has an appropriate adult (for example parent/carer) countersigned for them? | |
| Has your learner signed the documentary evidence in all cases? | |
| Is it clear to your learner which assessments they will receive assessment arrangements for? | |
| Do you have a record of any assessment arrangements a learner has refused? | |
| 3 Documentary evidence of the learner's disability/additional support needs and how this generally affects the learning and teaching situation | |
| Do you have the relevant information/evidence of the nature and extent of the learner's disability or additional support need? | |
| Do you have evidence of how the difficulty has impacted on teaching and learning and that subject teachers/course lecturers are involved in relevant discussions and in recording relevant information? | |
| Is your evidence of how the learner's difficulty impacts on teaching and learning current? | |
| 4 Documentary evidence of need for current support, how this is met, and how it relates to the assessment arrangements requested | |
| Does your evidence show that decisions are made on the proposed assessment arrangement and based on the current support provided in teaching and learning? | |
| Do you have evidence that subject teachers/course lecturers are involved in relevant discussions and in recording relevant information? | |

| | |
|---|--|
| Do you have evidence to show that the assessment arrangement is effective and removes the disadvantage? | |
| Is your evidence that the assessment arrangements provided meet the learner's needs current? | |
| 5 Documentary evidence that varying needs across courses have been taken into account | |
| Do you have evidence available for each course? | |
| Do you have evidence that subject teachers/course lecturers have been involved in gathering evidence? | |
| Do you have evidence that subject teachers/course lecturers support the assessment arrangements proposed? | |
| 6 Documentary evidence for particular assessment arrangements | |
| Do you have appropriate evidence of how a particular assessment arrangement has been determined? For example, for extra time, does this include (i) evidence indicating that extra time is appropriate and (ii) evidence that a specific amount of extra time is appropriate? | |
| 7 Documentary evidence of a whole-centre system for the management of SQA assessment arrangements which is supported by senior management | |
| Do you have evidence that there is a whole-centre policy in relation to the provision of assessment arrangements? | |
| Do you have evidence of dissemination of this policy to all relevant staff? | |

Appendix 1: Suggested checklist for verification of assessment arrangements process

Checklist of evidence to support the provision of an assessment arrangement

| |
|----------------------------------|
| Centre |
| Learner |
| Assessment arrangement(s) |
| Date |

| Types of evidence | ✓ |
|---|----------|
| 1 Documentary evidence of the internal assessment arrangements verification meeting. | |
| 2.a Documentary evidence of confirmation from the learner and/or their parent/carer that they have agreed to (i) the provision of assessment arrangements and (ii) the centre submitting the request on their behalf. | |
| 2.b Documentary evidence that the learner has been made aware that personal information will be shared with SQA as part of the request process. | |
| 3 Documentary evidence of the learner's disability/additional support needs and how this generally affects them in learning and teaching. | |
| 4 Documentary evidence of need for current support, how this is met, and how it relates to the assessment arrangements requested. | |
| 5 Documentary evidence that varying needs across subjects have been taken into account | |
| 6 Documentary evidence for particular assessment arrangements | |
| 7 Documentary evidence of a whole-centre system for the management of assessment arrangements which is supported by senior management | |

Appendix 2: Sources of support

If you have a query about a particular assessment arrangement, please contact the Assessment Arrangements Team on 0345 213 6890 or aarequests@sqa.org.uk.

For further up-to-date information on assessment arrangements, please visit [our website](#).

If you have a general enquiry about SQA or its qualifications, please call our Customer Contact Centre on 0345 279 1000 or by using [our enquiry form](#).