Assessment handbook

Introduction |

The aim of this document is to provide guidance on the assessment requirements of AIM qualifications. It sets out the expectations for the achievement at each level and provides guidance on a range of assessment methods and activities. This document also sets out our assessment regulations for both internal and external assessments.

What is assessment?

Assessment is "the process of testing, and making a judgement about, someone's knowledge, ability, skills, etc." (Dictionary.cambridge.org, 2019)

Learners must generate and collect evidence of their knowledge, skills and behaviours against standards. Assessment is the judgement made of this evidence against the defined standards.

Document version history

3	24/08/2018	Clarification of evidence requirements regarding Observation of Learner Practical Ability (page 33); evidence must consist of an observation report from the assessor and it is good practice to provide supplementary evidence, as it helps to authenticate the assessment, but it's not essential.
5	14/06/2019	Full update of assessment definitions. Clearer guidance about assessment regulations. Insertion of Access to HE specific guidance. Retitled.

AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group

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What does an AIM qualification look like?

Each qualification is made up of components. Each component has standards, which are the requirements of that component. Learners must provide evidence to meet all the standards in the component.

Standards can be of two types:
- Competence/skills-based
- Knowledge-based

Competence/skills-based standards generally begin with 'Be able to'. All competence/skills-based standards within the component must be observed by the assessor, evidenced by annotated photos, videos or assessor statements as defined in the component specification. Other assessment methods may be used to provide additional evidence.

Knowledge-based standards generally begin with 'Know' and 'Understand' and the evidence can be recorded by means other than observation, although observation may also be a valid method.

Each standard is usually accompanied with assessment requirements. These set out the recommended knowledge and/or skills required to achieve the standard. Learners must evidence all the assessment requirements to successfully achieve the standard, unless otherwise stated. For some qualifications the assessment strategy is described in the handbook rather than at component level.

Please note, Access to HE qualifications use different terminology:
- *Component = unit*
- *Standard = learning outcome*
- *Assessment requirements = assessment criteria*

Ofqual level descriptors

Each qualification and component is assigned a level from Entry Level 1 to Level 8. The Ofqual level descriptors provide a general shared understanding of learning and achievement at each level. The descriptors are intended to measure the outcomes of learning and not the process of learning or the method of assessment.

Each level descriptor is divided into two categories: knowledge and understanding; skills. Further detail is provided in Appendix 1.

Who is involved in the delivery and assessment of AIM qualifications?

What is an assessor?

An assessor is a person who is competent in interpreting standards and levels and is knowledgeable in the subjects in which they are assessing. An assessor provides objective assessment of a learner's understanding, knowledge and/or skill.

What is a tutor?

A tutor is knowledgeable and competent to train or tutor a learner, but not necessarily able to assess the learner against the standards. They may, however, be able to provide a witness statement eg if they are a

skilled plasterer and can attest to the standard achieved by the learner by providing relevant written feedback on observed learner practice. In many cases, the assessor and tutor may be the same person.

What is an Internal Quality Assurer (IQA)?

An IQA is a person whose main responsibility is to monitor assessment practices, including ensuring all assessors are applying the standards consistently throughout all assessment activities. A vital IQA role is to check that assessment tasks are fit for purpose and afford learners the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and/or skills against the standards. IQA's will also verify the assessment processes used, provide support, advice and guidance to assessors through several activities, such as moderation, standardisation and where necessary, giving or arranging training/CPD.

Staffing requirements

Requirements of staff assessing and internally verifying components are dependent on the qualification. These requirements will be detailed in the specific qualification handbook and must be evidenced to AIM for every qualification approval.

Principles of assessment |

This section provides guidance on designing assessments and is aimed at the tutor, assessor and IQA in order that they can create tasks that meet the standards of components.

Principles of assessment

All assessment must be:
a) valid: the assessment evidence meets all standards and additional requirements
b) authentic: the work is the learner's own evidence
c) reliable: assessment evidence is consistent and generates outcomes that would be replicated where the assessment is repeated
d) current: up-to-date evidence is used
e) sufficient: enough work is available to enable a consistent and reliable judgement about the learner's achievement
f) comparable: assessment evidence is comparable in standard between assessments within a component/qualification and between learners of the same level
g) manageable: the assessment(s) places reasonable demands on learners
h) fair and minimise bias: assessments are fair to all learners irrespective of their characteristics (eg age, gender, etc.)

Understanding the difference between formative and summative assessment

Summative assessment

The assessment evidence submitted for AIM qualifications must be from summative assessment tasks completed by learners at the conclusion of a period of learning. This is often referred to as high stakes assessment, may arrive at a grade and contributes to the overall result of the qualification.

The purpose is to recognise that the learner has developed knowledge and/or skills to a recognised level as set out in the component specification - a marker of achievement, asking 'has the learner learned what they were supposed to learn?'.

Formative assessment

This describes the classroom tasks and homework given to learners to assess their progress during the period of learning. It is designed to provide learners with feedback on progress and inform development.

Designing assessments

Where AIM do not set assessments for the component/qualification, centres must design appropriate assessments which will enable learners to provide the evidence of the standards set. All centre set tasks must be approved by the IQA before use. **Appendix 2** contains detail about many methods of assessment and provides guidance about when they could be used.

Where AIM do set the assessments, these **must** be used by centres. Full details will be set out in the qualification handbook.

The key areas to consider when designing assessments are:
- appropriate, valid assessment methods
- ensuring assessment requirements can be interpreted consistently by assessors
- ensuring assessment tasks cover the abilities set out in the component specification
- the type and nature of evidence that may be presented, assuring its authenticity
- available resources
- staff expertise
- facilities
- timetabling
- how and when assessment fits into a scheme of work
- planning assessment deadlines to ensure learners are not overworked at certain times

Learners must be assessed in English in England, English or Welsh in Wales and English or Irish in Northern Ireland (unless the qualification is specifically about learning a foreign language).

It is not necessary for centres to design assessment tasks to assess each standard separately. An assessment task can be used to meet more than one standard. Each assessment task must be mapped to the standards to allow centres to monitor that all outcomes of all components are being met. This mapping must also be provided at internal and external verification.

Assessment tasks must be approved by the centre's IQA prior to use, to ensure they are fit for purpose. Evidence of this must be available at external verification and sample forms to support this are available on our website.

Recording achievement

Assessors must make it clear to the IQA and EV where achievement of each standard has been evidenced. Our component forms allow recording of achievement for this purpose. These must be provided at internal and external verification.

Portfolios of evidence

Where the qualification requires a portfolio, all completed summative learner work must be mapped against the standards of the component(s) and must be collated into a portfolio of evidence to present to the external verifier. A completed portfolio of evidence must include:
- a statement of authenticity

- learner evidence, mapped against the standards of the component(s)
- feedback from assessor to learner
- evidence of assessment (for example ticks and comments on the work)
- complete internal verification documentation (where completed)

Feedback

AIM expect assessors to provide both formative and summative feedback to learners. Any verbal feedback must also be documented.

Feedback given on **formative** assessment tasks should help them prepare for their summative assessment tasks at the end of the period of learning by:

- describing how learners could improve the work
- being clear about the standard of work expected
- clearly identifying gaps in evidence and explaining how they may be improved
- explain strengths as well as areas for developing by qualifying praise
- be written in plain simple English
- not contain personal comments

Feedback given on **summative** assessment should:

- state how well the learner has achieved the tasks
- provide feedforward for how they can improve in the future
- contain positive as well as constructive comments
- be written in plain simple English
- not contain personal comments

It is not appropriate to give feedback leading to an opportunity to improve the work, this is known as grade polishing.

For example, the following extract from feedback for a piece of summative work would not be permitted: "Well done Dimitri. This is a good piece of work but in order to reach a distinction grade you need to add more detail to the section about how the internet has changed the way games are sold to consumers. Please resubmit by next Friday."

However, this feedback could be changed to: "Well done Dimitri. This is a very good piece of work that clearly meets the Merit criteria. For future submissions you need to demonstrate you understand how changes in technology impact on consumer behaviour".

When providing feedback for graded assessments it is important to use correct terminology, from the grading criteria in the mark scheme. For example, it would not be appropriate to use 'excellent' in feedback to a learner that has got a pass instead of a distinction.

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AIM qualifications assessment regulations |
Assessing and verifying AIM qualifications
Assessing tasks

Assessors must assess learner evidence against the standards of the component to ensure that it is at the correct level and is sufficient, appropriate, and authentic. Centres must ensure that learner evidence is generated by that learner, ie that plagiarism does not occur.

Assessors must judge and identify whether each standard is either achieved or not achieved according to the assessment principles set out above. Components are achieved when the assessor has confirmed that all standards of that component have been achieved and identified the location of the evidence to back up these judgements. All reasonable steps must be taken to avoid any part of the assessment of a learner (including verification) being undertaken by any person who has a personal interest in the result of the assessment.

For some qualifications we will set the assessment tasks, whereas for others the assessment tasks can be devised by centres. This is clearly set out in the qualification handbook and must be adhered to.

Grading and marking

The majority of AIM qualifications are not graded beyond pass or fail. However, whether further grading is applied or not, the main role of assessment is to make a judgement on whether a learner has achieved the required standard. These judgements are **criterion-referenced judgements**, made against the assessment criteria, standards or grading criteria supplied by AIM, rather than judging learners' achievements based on each other (norm-referenced). The two are defined below:

- Criterion-referenced assessment compares a learner's knowledge or skills against a predetermined standard, learning goal, performance level, or other criterion. With criterion-referenced tests, each learner's performance is compared directly to the standard, without considering how other learners perform on the assessment. The criterion set by AIM are directly referenced to the Ofqual level descriptors.

- Norm-referenced assessment compare a learner's knowledge or skills against the knowledge or skills of the norm group. The composition of the norm group depends on the assessment. For some assessments, the norm group is often a nationally representative sample of several thousand learners at the same level (and sometimes, at the same point in the school year). Norm groups may also be further narrowed by age, socioeconomic level, race/ethnicity, or many other characteristics. Norm-referencing can be used to set pass marks for national assessments, such as GCSEs.

Grading learner work for RQF qualifications

Where an AIM qualification is graded the exact grading model will be described in the qualification handbook and in most cases, we will have set the assessment tasks. For these graded tasks we will set the criteria for a pass, a merit and a distinction so it is imperative that centres use our mark sheets. Our grading model works by assigning points to each grade, and these points are added together to arrive at a final point score and therefore overall qualification grade.

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Grading learner work for Access to HE qualifications

Our Access to HE Diploma qualifications comprise graded and ungraded units. Ungraded units are marked as either achieved or not achieved, whereas graded units are graded as pass, merit or distinction.

Full details about the grading process for Access to HE qualifications is contained in **Access to HE: the student's guide to grading on the AHE** available on the AIM qualifications website.

Recording achievement

Assessors must make it clear to the IQA and external verifiers (EVs) or external moderators where achievement of each standard has been evidenced - our component forms allow recording of achievement for this purpose. Once the evidence has been assessed and confirmed as meeting the standards by the assessor, final feedback should be provided to the learner. Following this, centres will submit their learner achievements via the online portal.

AIM provides an online grade recording system, called Gradetraka, for Access to HE centres to use to record achievement. Grades from this must be ratified by an awards board meeting before a claim can be made.

Internal verification of assessment decisions

The completed assessed evidence should be presented to the IQA for sampling according to the centre's internal verification plan. This plan will reflect the IQA's risk rating of the qualification and its assessors. It must cover all internally assessed components, including the observation of assessors assessing practical activities. AIM provides sample internal verification documentation available to centres on our website.

These sample forms include:
- IQA approval of assessment task
- Assessment and internal verification plan
- Internal verification of assessment decisions
- IQA report of observed assessor performance

Once this process has been completed, the IQA must verify the claim through the online portal to confirm their approval of learner achievement.

External verification/moderation

Once learner evidence has been completed, assessed and internally (verified according to
the centre's internal verification plan), the work should be presented for external verification/moderation or to the direct claim verifier internally if applicable.
The external verifier or moderator will expect to be able to see all completed and assessed learner evidence for which a claim is being made. They will review:
- records of assessment
- internal verification documentation
- feedback to learners
- evidence of standardisation (planned and completed)
- the appropriateness of staff delivering and assessing the qualification
- any records of reasonable adjustments applied

If the EV/moderator is satisfied with the standards they will confirm the claim and learners will be certificated. Moderators may suggest changes to grades.

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Recognition of prior learning (RPL)

RPL is a process of assessing and validating learning or achievement that has been certificated or accredited previously that can be used towards the qualification being studied. A proportion of qualification achievement can be submitted via an RPL claim – this is called exemption. RPL is a negotiated process between the learner and assessor, and the learner must provide evidence of prior work, learning or achievement to fully satisfy the components. The full RPL policy can be accessed on the AIM website.

Resubmission and referral policy for externally assessed tasks

Examination dates and deadlines for externally marked work are set by AIM. Repeat submissions are not allowed. Learners who fail to achieve the required pass mark or are deemed to have underperformed, are permitted ONE retake opportunity. The retake must be at a different sitting and it is expected that further teaching/tuition would have taken place.

Retake external assessments will be a new task.

A learner may submit a personal mitigating circumstances application if there are reasons they could not attend or performed below their abilities.

Resubmission and referral policy for ungraded, internally assessed tasks (flexibilities qualifications and Access to HE ungraded units)

For ungraded internally set tasks, the centre should set their own timeframes, communicate with learners and follow their internal procedure for late submissions. Non-graded tasks are marked as achieved or not yet achieved.

Resubmission and referral policy for graded, internally assessed tasks (professional and technical qualifications)

Deadlines for graded assessments (for internally set tasks only)

Deadlines for internally marked tasks may be set by the centre and must be clearly communicated to learners on the assessment brief/task sheet.

Late submissions for graded assessments (for internally set tasks only)

A late submission is capped at a pass unless an extension is agreed as outlined below. All first submissions must be made before the end of the course.

Extensions for graded assessments (for internally set tasks only)

Tutors may agree an extension period of up to two weeks by negotiation and where genuine reasons can be evidenced. In exceptional circumstances, the learner may be granted longer than two weeks to submit, however that would need to be supported by the personal tutor/ course leader. The personal tutor will be notified of extensions and will monitor these in order to ensure that the learner is coping with the demands of their qualification.

Resubmission for graded assessments (for internally set tasks only)

A first submission that fails to meet the pass criteria may be returned to the learner (with feedback) for resubmission. Feedback must relate to the pass criteria and standards without reference to any grading criteria. Resubmission should be within a few days (no longer than a week) and be proportionate to the degree of non-achievement. A timely resubmission that meets all the pass criteria is considered for further grading.

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Referral for graded assessments (for internally set tasks only)

A learner whose resubmission (submission two) fails to meet the pass criteria may request a referral ie the opportunity to make a second resubmission (submission two). The request is made to the assessor and IQA who collate evidence and subsequently convey the request to the external verifier or to the centre lead (CL) for Access to HE qualifications. Even if the assessor and IQA believe the situation doesn't warrant a referral, it should still be referred to the EV/CL for confirmation or challenge. The EV/CL informs the IQA and the assessor of the decision. If approved, conditions of referral are set by the EV/CL and conveyed to the centre. Decisions about referrals made by the EV must include:

- whether or not a second resubmission opportunity should be offered
- the nature and extent of the requirements for second resubmission
- compliance with the relevant requirements for first resubmissions.

Referrals undergo assessment by the assessor, internal verification and external verification. If the pass criteria are met, achievement is capped at a pass. If the pass criteria are not met, the result is a fail.

Reasonable adjustments

Reasonable adjustments are adjustments made to an assessment of a qualification to enable a learner to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding. The nature of any reasonable adjustments depends on the particular requirements as well as the qualification and assessment methods. Reasonable adjustments are generally not appropriate where the learner's particular difficulty directly affects performance in the actual attributes to be assessed. Please refer to the specific qualification handbook for any qualification specific guidance on reasonable adjustments.

Special considerations

Special consideration is consideration to be given to a learner who has temporarily experienced:

- an illness or injury, or
- some other event outside of their control

which has had or is reasonably likely to have had an effect on their ability to take an assessment or on their level of attainment in an assessment. Special consideration is not appropriate for a minor illness or a minor disturbance.

It may not be possible to apply special consideration where an assessment requires the learner to demonstrate practical competence. In some circumstances it may be more appropriate to offer the learner an opportunity to take the assessment at a later date rather than apply special considerations. Please refer to the specific qualification handbook for any qualification specific guidance on special considerations.

Personal mitigating circumstances

If there are valid, evidenced reasons why a leaner could not submit or attend for assessment then they may submit a Personal Mitigating Circumstances (PMC) form alongside evidence for consideration by the PMC Panel. The role of the panel is to ensure that assessment opportunities are fair to all.

It is recognised that during a course, some will have to cope with a range of illnesses and experiences which are part of the normal course of events in life. In many cases these circumstances will have little or no noticeable effect on assessment performance. However, there may be serious circumstances of a medical or personal nature, which affect apprentices for a significant period of time during the end-point assessment period, which are beyond their control and which have a recognisable effect on their performance.

AIM does not define those circumstances which are serious and which are not. However, the following are examples of circumstances which will probably not be taken into account:

- Circumstances over which a learner has some control through prior planning (eg moving house, getting married, computer problems, workload)
- Circumstances experienced by all or most learners (eg financial difficulties)
- Minor illnesses of a short-term nature
- Circumstances which have already been appropriately provided for by special assessment arrangements.

Malpractice/maladministration

Confidentiality of assessment papers, mark schemes and learner work, must be maintained at all times. Centres must ensure that they inform AIM of any potential breach of confidentiality. Further details on malpractice can be found on the AIM website.

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Appendix 1 – level descriptors |

Level descriptors for assessment at Entry Level
Expectations for assessment at Entry Level 1

| Knowledge and Understanding

The learner…	Progresses along a continuum that ranges from the most elementary of achievements to beginning to make use of knowledge and/or understanding that relate to the subject or immediate environment
Skills

The learner can… | Progress along a continuum that ranges from the most elementary of achievements to beginning to make use of skills that relate to the subject or the immediate environment |

Expectations for assessment at Entry Level 2

| Knowledge and Understanding

The learner… | Has basic knowledge or understanding of a subject and/or can carry out simple, familiar tasks and

Knows the steps needed to complete simple activities |
|---|---|
| Skills

The learner can… | Carry out simple, familiar tasks and activities

Follow instructions or use rehearsed steps to complete tasks and activities |

Expectations for assessment at Entry Level 3

| Knowledge and Understanding

The learner… | Has basic knowledge or understanding to carry out structured tasks and activities in familiar contexts and

Knows and understands the steps needed to complete structured tasks and activities in familiar contexts |
|---|---|
| Skills

The learner can… | Carry out structured tasks and activities in familiar contexts

Be aware of the consequences of actions for self and others |

Verbs for assessment at Entry Levels 1, 2 and 3
We have provided a list of assessment verbs which may be used when designing assessments to meet standards at these levels.

Please note: this list is not exhaustive and centre-devised assessment tasks must be internally verified by the centre's IQA prior to use.

Verbs	Explanation of verbs for assessment at Entry Levels 1, 2 and 3
Access	Obtain or retrieve information
Carry out	Complete a task or activity
Communicate	Share or exchange information
Contribute to	Give ideas or opinions about the topic
Define	Give the meaning of a word or phrase
Demonstrate	Complete a task or activity to show competence
Give (an example of…)	Provide a relevant example for the topic
Give ways	Provide information to show understanding of the topic
Identify	List or name the main points

Indicate	Point out or show
Label	Give the correct term to the topic, object or activity
List	Make a list of items, words, statements or comments
Locate	Find, identify or show where
Name	Give the correct words which identify the object or activity
Order	Arrange in a logical way
Outline	Identify briefly the main points
Perform	Carry out or do an action or a task
Plan	Think about and organise information
Produce	To make, bring or find
Recognise	Acknowledge; know from before
Respond to	Reply or answer in words, actions or diagrams
Select	Choose
Show	Give or demonstrate information or knowledge
State	Give brief information about the topic in words, actions or diagrams
Suggest (ideas)	Propose an idea
Use	Apply knowledge to demonstrate understanding

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Level descriptors for assessment at Level 1

Expectations for assessment at Level 1

Knowledge and Understanding The learner…	Has basic factual knowledge of a subject and/or knowledge of facts, procedures and ideas to complete well-defined routine tasks and address simple problems and Is aware of aspects of information relevant to the area of study or work
Skills The learner can…	Use basic cognitive and practical skills to complete well-defined routine tasks and procedures Select and use relevant information Identify whether actions have been effective

Verbs for assessment at Level 1

We have provided a list of assessment verbs which may be used when designing assessments to meet standards at these levels.

Please note: this list is not exhaustive and centre-devised assessment tasks must be internally verified by the centre's IQA prior to use.

Verbs	Explanation of verbs for assessment at Level 1
Assemble	Gather together for a common purpose; fit together the separate parts
Carry out	Complete a task or activity
Collect	Gather together
Communicate	Share or exchange information
Compare	Looking at similarities and differences
Demonstrate	Complete a task or activity Show an understanding of the topic
Describe	Write or speak about the topic or activity
Develop	Build on a topic or activity
Give (examples of)	Provide relevant examples for the topic
Give ways	Provide information about how to support the topic
Identify	List or name the main points
Illustrate	Give clear information with examples (eg spoken, written, pictures, diagrams etc)
Indicate	Point out or show using words, illustrations or diagrams
List	State or make a list of items, words, statements or comments
Locate	Find, identify or show where
Outline	Identify briefly the main points
Perform	Carry out or do an action or a task
Produce	To make, create, bring or find
Show	Give or demonstrate information or knowledge
State	Give the main points in brief, clear sentences
Suggest	Propose an idea or ways of doing
Summarise	Briefly present an abstract of the main points
Use	Apply knowledge to demonstrate understanding

Level descriptors for assessment at Level 2

Expectations for assessment at Level 2

Knowledge and Understanding The learner…	Has knowledge and understanding of facts, procedures and ideas in an area of study or field of work to complete well-defined tasks and address straightforward problems Can interpret relevant information and ideas Is aware of a range of information that is relevant to the area of study or work
Skills The learner can…	Select and use relevant cognitive and practical skills to complete well-defined, generally routine tasks and address straightforward problems Identify, gather and use relevant information to inform actions Identify how effective actions have been

Verbs for assessment at Level 2

We have provided a list of assessment verbs which may be used when designing assessments to meet standards at these levels.

Please note: this list is not exhaustive and centre-devised assessment tasks must be internally verified by the centre's IQA prior to use.

Verbs	Explanation of verbs for assessment at Level 2
Apply	Link existing knowledge to new or different situations
Assess	Consider information in order to make decisions
Agree	Arrive at a mutual understanding with people
Be responsive	Show sensitivity to people or events Take actions to support people or events
Carry out	Complete a task or activity
Contribute to	Give ideas or opinions about the subject Take part in activities or work roles
Classify	Organise according to a specific criteria
Confirm	Give approval to, verify
Compare	Examine the subjects in detail looking at similarities and differences
Comply	To conform to something for example, a rule, law, policy, or regulation
Define	State the meaning of a word or phrase or process
Demonstrate	Apply skills in a practical situation Show an understanding of the topic
Describe	Write or speak about the topic or activity giving information
Develop	To identify and build on a topic
Differentiate	Identify the differences between two or more things
Distinguish	Show or recognise the difference between items, ideas or information
Enable	Empower, aid, support or help people to make decisions Take part in processes or undertake tasks
Encourage	Support people to achieve
Establish	Secure acceptance for

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	Come to an understanding of
Estimate	Give an approximate decision or opinion using previous knowledge or experience
Explain	Make clear Give reasons for
Evaluate	Examine strengths and weaknesses Make points for and against
Give (positive and negative points…)	Provide information showing the advantages and disadvantages of the subject
Give an example of…	Provide a sample or model relevant to the topic
Give reasons	Provide information to show why
Give ways	Provide information to show how
Identify	Provide brief information about a subject, specific process or activity
Illustrate	Give clear information or descriptions with examples (eg spoken, written, pictures, diagrams etc)
Indicate	Point out or point to Direct attention to
Interact	Work together with Make a working relationship with
Intervene	Be involved with people to have an effect on their actions
Justify	Validate the chain of events leading up to, how something has occurred, make clear the reasons why something has occurred, account for the logic behind any reasoning, name the theoretical premise that underpins any law, system or thought pattern, be answerable for actions and decisions made
Locate	Find, identify or show where
Maintain	Keep up or continue in current condition
Make	Construct, compose, produce
Manage	Be able to deal with
Observe	Watch
Order	Place information in a logical sequence
Outline	Identify or briefly describe the main points
Plan	Think about and organise information in a logical way
Perform	Carry out or do; take an action; follow an instruction
Present	To introduce; to bestow; to offer to view
Produce	Make, create, bring or find through learning or creative ability
Protect	Safeguard, keep safe
Provide	Supply relevant information, products or resource
Record	Keep information in writing or by other methods
Reflect	Learners should look at their actions, experiences or learning and think about how this could inform their future action, learning or practice
Report	Make an official or formal statement Put information together for others
Respond to	Take action Reply or answer

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Review and revise	Look back over the topic or activity and make or identify adjustments, changes or additions that would improve the topic or activity
Select	Choose for a specific purpose
Share	Give information to others Let others have information or resources
Show	Give or demonstrate information or knowledge
State	Give the main points in brief, clear sentences
Suggest	Propose an idea or ways of doing
Summarise	Briefly present an abstract of the main points
Support	Uphold or back up people's decisions Give help or advice
Use	Take or apply an item, resource or piece of information as required
Use (a range of…)	Provide information relevant to the task or topic
Work (with others)	Engage with people or in tasks Operate

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Level descriptors for assessment at Level 3

Expectations for assessment at Level 3

Knowledge and Understanding The learner…	Has factual, procedural and theoretical knowledge and understanding of a subject or field of work to complete tasks and address problems that while well-defined, may be complex and non-routine Can interpret and evaluate relevant information and ideas Is aware of the nature of the area of study or work Is aware of different perspectives or approaches within the area of study or work
Skills The learner can…	Identify, select and use appropriate cognitive and practical skills, methods and procedures to address problems that while well-defined, may be complex and non- routine Use appropriate investigation to inform actions Review how effective methods and actions have been

Verbs for assessment at Level 3

We have provided a list of assessment verbs which may be used when designing assessments to meet standards at these levels.

Please note: this list is not exhaustive and centre-devised assessment tasks must be internally verified by the centre's IQA prior to use.

Verbs	Explanation of verbs for assessment at Level 3
Analyse	Break the topic down into separate parts and examine each part Show how the main ideas are related and why they are important, relating to recognized sources/theories
Apply	Explain how existing knowledge can be linked to new or different situations or in practice
Assess	Estimate or make a judgment
Carry out	Complete a task or activity
Clarify	Explain the information in a clear, concise way
Classify	Organise according to specific criteria
Collate	Collect and present information arranged in sequence or logical order
Compare	Examine the subjects in detail looking at similarities and differences
Comply	To conform to something for example, a rule, law, policy, or regulation
Conduct	Carry out
Confirm	Give approval to, verify
Consider	Ponder, contemplate, study in order to make a decision
Co-ordinate	Organise people, information or a situation so that there is an effective outcome
Critically compare	Examine the subjects in detail looking at similarities and differences
Critically review	In detail, revisit and consider the merit of
Demonstrate	Apply skills in a practical situation or show an understanding of the topic

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Describe	Write or speak about the topic or activity giving detailed information
Develop	To identify and build on a topic, plan or idea
Diagnose	Identify the cause based on valid evidence
Differentiate	Identify the differences between two or more things
Discuss	Give a detailed account including a range of views or opinions
Distinguish	Explain the difference between two or more items, resources or pieces of information
Draw conclusions	Identify outcomes which could lead to recommendations
Engage	Work in conjunction with, or work together with, or ensure participation in
Establish	Secure acceptance for Come to an understanding of
Estimate	Give an approximate decision or opinion using previous knowledge or experience
Evaluate	Review evidence from different perspectives and come to a valid conclusion or reasoned judgment
Explain	Make clear detailed information giving reasons, and showing how or why
Extrapolate	Identify relevant points using the information available
Illustrate	Give clear information or descriptions with examples (e.g. spoken, written, pictures, diagrams etc)
Implement	To fulfil, perform or carry out a plan, action, task or procedure
Interpret	Explain the meaning
Investigate	To examine, study or inquire systematically
Judge	Form an opinion or make a decision based on evidence
Justify	Give a satisfactory explanation for actions or decision; provide a clear rationale behind the thinking especially with regard to risk and any possible consequences, validate how cause and effect work for a particular scenario
Listen	Hear what is said
Monitor	Watch the progress of
Perform	Carry out or do; take an action; follow an instruction
Plan	Organise information in a logical way using an appropriate format
Practice	The application or use of an idea, belief, or method, as opposed to theories relating to it
Prepare	Get ready
Present	To introduce; to bestow; to offer to view
Produce	Make, create, bring or find through learning or creative ability
Provide	Supply relevant information, products or resource
Recognise	Acknowledge validly of; know from before
Record	Preserve in writing or by other methods
Reflect	Learners should look at their actions, experiences or learning and think about how this could inform their future action, learning or practice
Report	Produce a detailed account or statement describing an event, situation or activity
Respond to	Take action; reply or answer
Review and revise	Look back over the topic or activity and make or identify adjustments, changes or additions that would improve the topic or activity
Suggest	Propose an idea or ways of doing

Summarise	Briefly present an abstract of the main points
Supervise	Have responsibility for overseeing people's performance whilst offering support
Undertake	Agree to take on and carry out the task
Use a range of	Provide information relevant to the task or topic

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Level descriptors for assessment at Level 4

Expectations for assessment at Level 4

Knowledge and Understanding The learner…	Has practical, theoretical or technical knowledge and understanding of a subject or field of work to address problems that are well defined but complex and non-routine Can analyse, interpret and evaluate relevant information and ideas Is aware of the nature of approximate scope of the area of study or work Has an informed awareness of different perspectives or approaches within the area of study or work
Skills The learner can…	Identify, adapt and use appropriate cognitive and practical skills to inform actions and address problems that are complex and non-routine while normally fairly well-defined Review the effectiveness and appropriateness of methods, actions and results

Verbs for assessment at Level 4

We have provided a list of assessment verbs which may be used when designing assessments to meet standards at these levels.

Please note: this list is not exhaustive and centre-devised assessment tasks must be internally verified by the centre's IQA prior to use.

Verbs	Explanation of verbs for assessment at Level 4
Analyse	Break the subject or complex situations into separate parts and examine each part in detail; identify the main issues and show how the main ideas are related to practice and why they are important; reference to current research or theory may support the analysis
Assess	Use available information to make a judgement
Clarify	Explain the information in a clear, concise way
Classify	Organise accurately according to specific criteria
Collate	Collect and present information arranged in sequence or logical order which is suitable for purpose
Consider	Ponder, contemplate or study in order to make a decision
Critically analyse	This is a development of 'analyse' which explores limitations as well as positive aspects of the main ideas in order to form a reasoned opinion
Critically compare	Examine in detail, consider and contrast similarities and differences and identify the positive aspects and limitations
Critically evaluate	This is a development of 'evaluate' where the learner debates the validly of claims from the opposing views and produces a convincing argument to support the conclusion or judgement
Demonstrate	Apply skills in a practical situation and/or show detailed understanding of the topic
Describe	Provide a broad range of detailed information about the topic or item in a logical way
Differentiate	Identify the differences between two or more things

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Discuss	Give a detailed account including a range of views or opinions which includes contrasting perspectives
Draw conclusions (which…)	Make a final decision or judgment based on reasons which could lead to recommendations
Evaluate	Examine strengths and weaknesses, arguments for and against and/or similarities and differences; judge the evidence from the different perspectives and make a valid conclusion or reasoned judgment; apply current research or theories to support the evaluation when applicable
Explain	Apply reasoning to account for how something is or to show understanding of underpinning concepts; responses could include examples to support the reasons
Illustrate	Give clear information or descriptions with examples (eg spoken, written, pictures, diagrams etc)
Judge	Form an opinion or make a decision based on evidence
Justify	Give a detailed explanation for actions or decision; provide a clear rationale behind the thinking especially with regard to risk and any possible consequences /validate how cause and effect work for a particular scenario
Reflect	Learners should consider their actions, experiences or learning and the implications of these in order to suggest significant developments for future action, learning or practice
Review and revise	Look back over the topic or activity and make or identify adjustments, changes or additions that would improve the topic or activity based on additional information or experience
Summarise	Briefly present an abstract of the main points

Level descriptors for assessment at Level 5
Expectations for assessment at Level 5

Knowledge and Understanding The learner…	Has practical, theoretical or technological knowledge and understanding of a subject or field of work to find ways forward in broadly defined, complex contexts
	Can analyse, interpret and evaluate relevant information, concepts and ideas
	Is aware of the nature and scope of the area of study or work
	Understand different perspectives, approaches or schools of thought and the reasoning behind them
Skills The learner can…	Determine, adapt and use appropriate methods, cognitive and practical skills to address broadly defined, complex problems
	Use relevant research or development to inform actions
	Evaluate actions, methods and results

Verbs for assessment at Level 5

We have provided a list of assessment verbs which may be used when designing assessments to meet standards at these levels.

Please note: this list is not exhaustive and centre-devised assessment tasks must be internally verified by the centre's IQA prior to use.

Verbs	Explanation of Verbs for assessment at Level 5
Act (as a role model)	Serve as a good model in a particular behavioural or social role for another person
Analyse	Break the subject or complex situations into separate parts and examine each part in detail; identify the main issues and show how the main ideas are related to practice and why they are important; reference to current research or theory may support the analysis
Apply (standards) (data)	Explain how existing knowledge, practices, standards etc. can be linked to new or different situation Use information to determine outcomes/conclusions/recommendations
Assess	Use available information to make a judgement
Clarify	Explain the information in a clear, concise way showing depth and understanding
Collaborate	Work jointly with
Communicate	Convey, receive or exchange spoken or written information
Compare	Examine the subject in detail looking at similarities and differences
Compare and contrast	Examine the subjects in detail, identify similarities and differences, consider these from different perspectives
Conduct	Carry out
Critically analyse	This is a development of 'analyse' which explores limitations as well as positive aspects of the main ideas in order to form a reasoned opinion

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Critically evaluate	This is a development of 'evaluate'. Examine strengths and weaknesses, arguments for and against and/or similarities and difference; consider the evidence and discuss the validity of evidence from opposing views; produce a convincing argument to support the conclusion or judgment
Define	State or show clearly and accurately
Demonstrate	Apply skills in a practical situation and/or show an understanding of the topic
Describe	Provide an extended range of detailed factual information about the topic or item in a logical way
Develop	Identify, build and extend a topic, plan or idea
Discuss	Give a detailed account including a range of views or opinions which includes contrasting perspectives
Distinguish between	Discuss identified differences between more than one item, product, object or activity
Enable	Supply with the means, knowledge, or opportunity; make able
Encourage	Give support to enable actions, ideas, processes
Evaluate	Examine strengths and weaknesses, arguments for and against and/or similarities and differences; judge the evidence from the different perspectives and make a valid conclusion or reasoned judgment; apply current research or theories to support the evaluation when applicable
Explain	Apply reasoning to account for how something is or to show understanding of underpinning concepts (responses could include examples to support the reasons)
Explore	Investigate or examine a range of issues from different perspectives
Facilitate	Make easier; assist the progress of
Formulate	Draw together; put together in a logical way; express in systematic terms or concepts
Give constructive feedback	Provide commentary which serves to improve or advance; be helpful
Identify	Ascertain the origin, nature, or definitive characteristics of
Implement	Put into practical effect; carry out
Initiate	Originate/start a process
Intervene effectively	Change an outcome
Investigate	Detailed examination or study; enquire systematically
Justify	Give a comprehensive explanation of the reasons for actions and/or decisions; provide a clear rationale behind the thinking especially with regard to risk and any possible consequences /validate how cause and effect work for a particular scenario
Mentor	Serve as a trusted counsellor or teach to another person; help others succeed
Monitor	Maintain regular surveillance
Negotiate	Discuss with a view to finding an agreed settlement
Outline	Identify accurately and describe clearly – the main points
Promote	Encourage the use of or the development of practice, knowledge, theory
Provide	Identify and give relevant and detailed information in relation to the subject

Recognise	Acknowledge or agree the validity of Use own knowledge to accept a view, idea, principle
Recommend	Use conclusions to suggest ways forward; revisit and judge the merit of; endorse a proposal or course of action; advocate in favour of
Reflect on	Consult with oneself, recognising implications of current practice with a view to changing future practice
Represent views of…	Acts as an Advocate; speak, please or argue in favour of
Research	A detailed study of a subject to discover new information or reach a new understanding
Resolve	Solve; settle; explain
Review	Revisit and consider the merit of
Review and revise	Revisit, judge the merit of and make recommendations for change
Secure	Make safe; obtain (information or evidence)
Select and apply	Make informed choices and link to specific situations
Set objectives	Identify the outcomes required
Summarise	Select the main ideas, arguments or facts and present in a precise, concise way
Support	Strengthen, support or encourage; corroborate, give greater credibility to
Triangulate	Identify three aspects to ensure validity
Work in partnership	Work in association with two or more persons (this may include stakeholders, service users and/or carers)

Level descriptors for assessment at Level 6

Expectations for assessment at Level 6

Knowledge and Understanding The learner…	Has advanced practical, conceptual or technological knowledge and understanding of a subject or field of work to create ways forward in contexts where there are many interacting factors Understands different perspectives, approaches or school of thought and the theories that underpin them Can critically analyse, interpret and evaluate complex information, concepts and ideas
Skills The learner can…	Determine, refine, adapt and use appropriate methods and advanced cognitive and practical skills to address problems that have limited definition and involve many interacting factors Use and, where appropriate, design relevant research and development to inform actions Evaluate actions, methods and results and their implications

Verbs for assessment at Level 6

We have provided a list of assessment verbs which may be used when designing assessments to meet standards at these levels.

Please note: this list is not exhaustive and centre-devised assessment tasks must be internally verified by the centre's IQA prior to use.

Verbs	Explanation of verbs for assessment at Level 6
Act (as a role model)	Serve as a good model in a particular behavioural or social role for another person
Analyse	Break the subject or complex situations into separate parts and examine each part in detail; identify the main issues and show how the main ideas are related to practice and why they are important; reference to current research or theory may support the analysis
Apply (standards) (data)	Explain how existing knowledge, practices, standards etc. can be linked to new or different situation Use information to determine outcomes/conclusions/recommendations
Assess	Use available information to make a judgement
Clarify	Explain the information in a clear, concise way showing depth and understanding
Collaborate	Work jointly with
Communicate	Convey, receive or exchange spoken or written information
Compare	Examine the subject in detail looking at similarities and differences
Compare and contrast	Examine the subjects in detail, identify similarities and differences, consider these from different perspectives
Conduct	Carry out
Critically analyse	This is a development of 'analyse' which explores limitations as well as positive aspects of the main ideas in order to form a reasoned opinion

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Critically evaluate	This is a development of 'evaluate'. Examine strengths and weaknesses, arguments for and against and/or similarities and difference; consider the evidence and discuss the validity of evidence from opposing views; produce a convincing argument to support the conclusion or judgment
Define	State or show clearly and accurately
Demonstrate	Apply skills in a practical situation and/or show an understanding of the topic
Describe	Provide an extended range of detailed factual information about the topic or item in a logical way
Develop	Identify, build and extend a topic, plan or idea
Discuss	Give a detailed account including a range of views or opinions which includes contrasting perspectives
Distinguish between	Discuss identified differences between more than one item, product, object or activity
Enable	Supply with the means, knowledge, or opportunity; make able
Encourage	Give support to enable actions, ideas, processes
Evaluate	Examine strengths and weaknesses, arguments for and against and/or similarities and differences; judge the evidence from the different perspectives and make a valid conclusion or reasoned judgment; apply current research or theories to support the evaluation when applicable
Explain	Apply reasoning to account for how something is or to show understanding of underpinning concepts (responses could include examples to support the reasons)
Explore	Investigate or examine a range of issues from different perspectives
Facilitate	Make easier; assist the progress of
Formulate	Draw together; put together in a logical way; express in systematic terms or concepts
Give constructive feedback	Provide commentary which serves to improve or advance; be helpful
Identify	Ascertain the origin, nature, or definitive characteristics of
Implement	Put into practical effect; carry out
Initiate	Originate/start a process
Intervene effectively	Change an outcome
Investigate	Detailed examination or study; enquire systematically
Justify	Give a comprehensive explanation of the reasons for actions and/or decisions; provide a clear rationale behind the thinking especially with regard to risk and any possible consequences /validate how cause and effect work for a particular scenario
Mentor	Serve as a trusted counsellor or teach to another person; help others succeed
Monitor	Maintain regular surveillance
Negotiate	Discuss with a view to finding an agreed settlement
Outline	Identify accurately and describe clearly – the main points
Promote	Encourage the use of or the development of practice, knowledge, theory
Provide	Identify and give relevant and detailed information in relation to the subject

Recognise	Acknowledge or agree the validity of Use own knowledge to accept a view, idea, principle
Recommend	Use conclusions to suggest ways forward; revisit and judge the merit of; endorse a proposal or course of action; advocate in favour of
Reflect on	Consult with oneself, recognising implications of current practice with a view to changing future practice
Represent views of…	Acts as an Advocate; speak, please or argue in favour of
Research	A detailed study of a subject to discover new information or reach a new understanding
Resolve	Solve; settle; explain
Review	Revisit and consider the merit of
Review and revise	Revisit, judge the merit of and make recommendations for change
Secure	Make safe; obtain (information or evidence)
Select and apply	Make informed choices and link to specific situations
Set objectives	Identify the outcomes required
Summarise	Select the main ideas, arguments or facts and present in a precise, concise way
Support	Strengthen, support or encourage; corroborate, give greater credibility to
Triangulate	Identify three aspects to ensure validity
Work in partnership	Work in association with two or more persons (this may include stakeholders, service users and/or carers)

Appendix 2 – Assessment types and methods |

Information below sourced from Federation of Awarding Bodies: The Qualification Manager's Handbook.

Multiple choice test
Description
Multiple choice tests assess knowledge and understanding by responding to written questions, either on paper or via an online system. The test will take place at a pre-arranged time and location and will be invigilated. Multiple choice questions (MCQ) consist of a stem - a statement that introduces the problem, a correct answer which is called a key and distractors which are a set of incorrect solutions. Most MCQs are context-free, involving a simple thought process for testing factual knowledge. However, well-constructed MCQs can be used to test problem-solving skills as well.

Key design requirements
- Objective questions need to be designed to have items with an appropriate stem and key which are pre-determined, correct answer/s to be selected from a given list of possibilities (distractors)
- When assembling items, the order needs careful thought, for example, to provide no clues which lead learners/apprentices to the correct answer

What it assesses well
- Retention of knowledge
- Factual recall
- Time management

What it assesses less well
- Inappropriate for assessing practical skills and behaviours
- Not good practice for assessing higher-order cognitive abilities such as synthesis

Quality control/assurance
- Use of subject experts trained and skilled in item writing; robust editing/vetting of questions; testing and statistical analysis of how items perform
- Externally set and marked either on paper or on computer
- Security of items and tests must be protected at all stages (production, application, transportation, storage)
- Taken under controlled conditions, strictly supervised
- Item bank needs to be large enough to adequately cover the subject matter and number of assessment occasions

Examination
Description
An examination is a formal test of a person's knowledge. Examinations are usually taken under controlled conditions in order that learner responses are their own work. Some examinations are open book, allowing learners/apprentices to use certain reference information, but most are not.

Key design requirements
- Can include one or more question types
- Constructed questions can be designed to require short-answers and/or extended answers/essay-type responses. These need to be carefully written bearing in mind coverage of the standards; need for grading and extent of compensation, if any
- Clear, unambiguous instructions needed on how to answer the questions
- Learners/apprentices may be offered a choice of questions

What it assesses well
- The extended-answer/essay questions are good for assessing higher-order cognitive abilities such as analysis, argument, synthesis of complex issues
- Can be used to assess the ability to handle/interpret data
- Time management

What it assesses less well
- Inappropriate for assessing practical skills and behaviours
- Challenging for some learners/apprentices, for example, those who require reasonable adjustments
- Can create stress/anxiety when stakes are high which may impact on the performance of learners

Quality control/assurance
- Papers externally set and rigorously checked for quality, including presentation of paper, eg for clarity, appropriate use of language, any bias or pre-requisite cultural knowledge required
- Externally marked by trained markers using a clear marking scheme; standardisation of marking
- Security of papers and tests must be protected at all stages (production, application, transportation, storage)
- Taken under controlled conditions, strictly supervised
- More difficult to achieve consistency in marking for extended answers and essays (rely more on subjective judgement of marker) than, say, for responses to multiple choice questions

Oral examination/test

Description

This is the use of specific, open or closed questions for immediate response. They can range from formal questions, eg an oral test or Q&A, to formative assessment such as a quiz. This allows response and questioning from learners/apprentices and immediate feedback from the assessor. This assessment is designed to be one to one.

Key design requirements

- Design should consider the structure/ordering of questions
- Thought needs to be given to how to record answers and criteria for assessment, any differentiation/grading
- Guidance needed to help learners/apprentices prepare for the examination/test

What it assesses well

- Oral examinations/tests are good at assessing knowledge and understanding

What it assesses less well

- Practical skills
- Large groups, because of the time it can take to assess each learner individually

Quality control/assurance

- Trained, skilled question writers
- Rating scale for marking, with clear guidance on acceptable responses
- Can be conducted by external examiner under controlled conditions
- Possible to make recordings so that consistency of marking can be assessed
- Security arrangements need to be in place for learner responses
- Need to consider scope for reasonable adjustments for those with speech/language difficulties

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Interviews/oral questioning

Description

The structured interview is a verbal assessment. Assessors will have specific questions prepared in advance to assess the learner's knowledge, skills and behaviours in order to assess particular knowledge or behaviours.

Key design requirements

- Decide on degree of structure for questions and use language appropriate to learners' ability level
- Consider scope for reasonable adjustments for those with speech/language difficulties
- Decide on how responses will be recorded, criteria for assessment

What it assesses well

- Decision making processes
- Understanding of procedures
- Underpinning knowledge in support of performance-based assessments
- Filling gaps in evidence relating to particular aspects of the standards

What it assesses less well

- Practical skills and competences

Quality control/assurance

- Having set questions with follow-up probes bring a measure of consistency
- Code of practice and training for interviewers/questioners to minimise bias, put learner at ease, ask questions in an appropriate manner
- Possible to make recordings so that consistency of marking can be assessed
- Security arrangements need to be in place for learner responses
- The relative formality or informality of the assessment intervention needs to be factored in and consistently applied
- Can be used as an alternative to written responses (where these are recorded) opening up access for those with a visual disability or motor control problems affecting clarity and/or speed of writing

Professional discussion

Description

A professional discussion is a pre-planned and in-depth discussion between the learner and assessor to evidence knowledge and understanding and/or competence in relation to standards. The professional discussion is formally recorded by the assessor.

Key design requirements

- Clarity of purpose needed with identification of required outcomes
- Contribution of the professional discussion to an overall grade (if applicable) needs to be thought through at the design stage
- Questions/discussion topics need to be designed to elicit responses of an appropriate depth
- Method of recording the discussion decided, eg paper, video, audio
- Guidance needed for learners on what to expect: format; timing; areas/points to be covered; any supporting documentation required such as a portfolio

What it assesses well

- A holistic approach to assessing knowledge and understanding and in establishing how a learner is performing
- Analytical and decision-making abilities, problem solving in response to challenge from the assessor
- A good way of testing the validity of a learner's evidence, confirming any grading decisions

What it assesses less well

- Practical abilities
- Less articulate learners/apprentices

Quality control/assurance

- Skills training for assessor in professional discussion techniques to keep the discussion focused, avoiding leading questions
- Code of practice for conducting the discussion
- Can be recorded so that consistency in marking can be assessed
- Clear referencing of evidence from the discussion to standards/assessment criteria to enable verification
- A record of the discussion should be produced to show how the points (relating to the standards of the component) have been covered. There are various options for recording professional discussion; audio or video taping or paper-based logging. If using an audio/video tape, it is important to agree this with the learner first to ensure they are comfortable with this method of recording
- Whatever recording method selected, the assessor needs to ensure that the evidence resulting from the discussion is clearly referenced to the standards. Forms are available on our website
- It is good practice point for the IQA to witness the presentation/interview etc

Group discussion
Description
This is a discussion of a topic or situation selected by the assessor or by learners/apprentices, to enable learners/apprentices to share knowledge and thoughts and to assess their learning.

Key design requirements
- Clarity of purpose of discussion needed with identification of required outcomes
- Contribution of the individual to the discussion and how an overall grade will be allocated (if applicable) needs to be thought through at the design stage
- Method of recording the group discussion decided, eg paper, group, video, audio
- Guidance needed for learners/apprentices on what to expect: format; timing; areas/points to be covered; any supporting documentation required such as a portfolio

What it assesses well
- A holistic approach to assessing knowledge and understanding and in establishing how a learner is performing individually and, in a group
- Analytical and decision-making abilities, problem solving in response to challenge from the assessor
- A good way of testing the validity of a learner's evidence, confirming any grading decisions

What it assesses less well
- Practical abilities
- Less articulate learners/apprentices

Quality control/assurance
- Details of the topic/tasks must be set and provided. Evidence of **each** learner achieving the standard covered by the group discussion task(s) must be provided. Evidence must include the following:
  - transcript or video of responses
  - learner log/evaluation
  - peer observation report
  - detailed witness statement explaining what each learner contributed and how they behaved during the discussion(s)
- Assessors must provide constructive useful feedback to learners/apprentices on their contributions
- Can be difficult to manage to ensure each learner responds

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Assignments/essays

Description

An essay is an analytic, interpretative, or critical literary (concerned with books and literature) work usually much shorter, less systematic and less formal than a dissertation. An essay deals with its subject from a limited point of view.

Key design requirements

- Clearly constructed brief, or choice of brief, required and marking scheme.
- Consideration needs to be given to any requirements regarding conditions under which it is to be taken, such as a real or realistic working environment, permissible resources and support
- As with other methods, the relationship this assessment has with others within the overall approach needs to be worked through at the design stage
- Can be time-consuming and resource intensive to produce

What it assesses well

- Can be designed to assess cognitive abilities and/or practical competences
- Problem-solving and analytical skills (if scenario/brief, or resources are supplied for interpretation)
- Research skills, planning and task/time management

What it assesses less well

- Can be challenging to write and mark if target proficiency is capable of being demonstrated in multiple contexts

Quality control/assurance

- The level of quality control will depend on whether it is externally or internally set and who does the marking. For example, high control is possible if externally set and marked. For internally devised assignments, guidance can be provided on design requirements; they can be pre-checked by the Awarding Organisation before use
- Can be taken under controlled conditions, such as a specified assessment window with timing and place specified
- Reliability in marking is a prime concern when internally marked. Requires standardisation of marking and external moderation of assessment decisions

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Dissertation

Description

A dissertation is a substantial paper that is typically based on original research and that gives evidence of the learner's mastery both of their own subject and of scholarly method. In comparison to an essay, an essay is relatively shorter, and learners/apprentices are told clearly what to do, whereas a dissertation is a subject chosen by the learner. A dissertation will not only examine a subject but will review different points of view about that subject.

Key design requirements

- A brief or proposal needs to be designed which is learner generated, with approval process controlled by the assessor
- The nature of the formative assessment and any on-programme assessment needs to be made clear. This is to avoid learners departing too far from its focus or required standard over what can be a protracted period for generating assessment evidence
- Time and resource heavy because of the marking involved and the support needed before submission
- Normally needs to be supported by a viva or professional discussion

What it assesses well

- High-order analytical skills
- Original thought and self-expression
- Research skills
- Complex ideas and extended argument

What it assesses less well

- Practical skills (other than those involved in research)

Quality control/assurance

- Quality control is needed in shaping the process, so the learner keeps on track regarding the target proficiency (without undue influence)
- Matching of learner subject with assessor interest is important
- Corroboration of marking is needed, for example blind second marking

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Case study analysis

Description

A case study or scenario is a consideration of a particular, relevant situation or example which enables learners/apprentices to apply knowledge to specific situations. This may be used as a collective/group activity and discussed in a group of learners/apprentices, once discussed in a group then assessment questions can be set that individuals have to answer using points from their discussion and their own analysis of the case study. It may also be used with individual learners/apprentices as a discussion or written activity through case study materials and learner responses.

Key design requirements

- Often used to allow a learner to demonstrate application of knowledge and skills by showing understanding of events in a specific context. This means that given the potential variety of context, the purpose of the case study and its relation to the key qualification aim needs to be clear
- Clarity of purpose will then help underpin consistency in the marking process. This method is likely to be accompanied by other methods and the relationship and interaction between each method needs to be clear and purposeful

What it assesses well

- Problem solving and analytical skills
- Application and transfer of knowledge and understanding
- Initiative, responses to complex ideas
- Synoptic assessment of target proficiency
- Useful in establishing real life scenarios and problems without the real time issues

What it assesses less well

- Practical skills

Quality control/assurance

- The resources and related tasks need to be aligned with the higher order qualification aims and assessment objectives
- Clear marking criteria are needed
- Marking and standardisation is important given the risk of variation in responses to the assessment task
- Evidence could include assessor observation, summary of discussion, written work and audio/video records

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Report
Description
A report is a record of an activity and/or a summary of research which presents information in a structured way; this does not include opinion but may include analysis or evaluation. Unlike an essay, there is no discussion of theories. A report is written for a clear purpose and to a particular audience. Specific information and evidence are presented, analysed and applied to a particular problem or issue. The information is presented in a clearly structured format making use of sections and headings so that the information is easy to locate and follow.

Key design requirements
- Guidance around the design of the report must be issued, eg section headings

What it assesses well
- Knowledge
- Analytical skills

What it assesses less well
- Skills
- Evaluation of theories

Quality control/assurance
- Clear marking criteria are needed
- Marking and standardisation is important given the risk of variation in responses to the assessment task

Coursework/portfolio of evidence

Description

A portfolio of evidence is a collection of documentation that is collated during a course, training programme or apprenticeship that demonstrates the knowledge, skills and behaviours that you have learnt and developed.

Key design requirements

- This would tend to be set and marked by the assessor, but exemplars and sample assessment tasks provided by the awarding organisation may help to provide an indication of the level and nature of the assessment tasks that should be set
- Clarity of which aspects can be evidenced this way is needed
- Where coursework is in response to nationally set assessment tasks, tasks need to be clearly defined and controls set for resources and timing. A marking scheme or checklist of assessment objectives need to be produced (as applicable)
- Can be resource and time intensive both at centres and externally

What it assesses well

- Knowledge and understanding
- Skills (depending on the nature of the coursework)

What it assesses less well

- Summative assessment leading to final certification
- How well a learner can combine skills and knowledge

Quality control/assurance

- IQA check of assessment task needs to ensure coursework is useable as an assessment
- Centre assessment will need moderation processes to quality assure outputs. For objective related assessments, learner work can be sampled to provide evidence of attainment. For unstructured coursework assessments, an analytical mark scheme can be used
- May be difficult to be certain the work is the learner's own work

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Project/work-based project

Description

A project is a specific task involving private study, work and/or research for individuals or groups. For work-based projects, the project will be set or agreed with the employer. Projects involves selection of a topic, planning, finding information and presenting results orally or in writing. Submissions usually include evaluative reports alongside evidence of work completed during the project.

Key design requirements

- Project briefs need to be carefully created and the relationship with the assessment objectives and other assessment methods made clear
- Depending on the amount of centre or AO devised setting and assessment, different guidance material will be needed to ensure consistency in approach
- Time consuming to prepare, carry out and assess, but encourages innovation and self-expression
- Group projects are good for assessing teamwork, but more difficult to assess each learner's contribution (which impacts on reliability)

What it assesses well

- Application of knowledge; work skills; practical skills
- Able to assess large parts of the programme in a holistic way
- Time management and self-directed learning

What it assesses less well

- Underpinning knowledge
- Process (unless development work is present)

Quality control/assurance

- Centre assessment needs quality assurance processes in place to ensure reliable marking and comparability of standards across assessors
- External markers should have training to ensure consistency across a range of permitted contexts
- Evidence may include learner notes, logs, plans, reports and audio and video records

Production of a product/artefact

Description

This is the production of a relevant product or artefact selected by the assessor or by learners/apprentices, which enables learners/apprentices to demonstrate skills and to apply knowledge. Products or artefacts can be engineered products, software programming, media products, documentation, artwork, compositions etc

Key design requirements

- The range of suitable products from different contexts and over a set time period all need to be identified
- The extent to which production of the artefact addresses the target proficiency needs to be clarified
- The amount of autonomy and limits to support in producing the product/ artefact need to be set out in guidance
- Procedures for authenticating evidence need to be considered

What it assesses well

- Naturally occurring evidence
- Quality of the product/ artefact
- Application of knowledge and skills
- Competence, hand skills, production skills (depending on artefacts)

What it assesses less well

- Process of artefact production, underpinning knowledge and the reasons for decisions taken

Quality control/assurance

- Acceptable and unacceptable evidence, as well as what constitutes sufficient evidence, must be defined
- Sufficiency in both what the product/artefact should demonstrate, and quality expected must be clearly communicated to learners, assessors
- Checks on authenticity of evidence required
- Standardisation of assessment decisions across assessors
- Learner evidence must include:
  - details of the tasks set for the learners/apprentices to complete, mapped against the knowledge, skills and behaviours assessed
  - a learner's declaration that all work produced is their own
  - the product or artefact (unless this is impractical, for example if the product is consumable, in which case several photographs, audio or video recordings is acceptable evidence)

Assessment handbook

Observation/workplace observation

Description

This is a practical demonstration of skills/situations to enable learners/apprentices to demonstrate their application of skills and knowledge. A workplace observation is a chance for a learner to show how they meet the criteria during their everyday work. The date and time will be arranged in advance to give the learner time to prepare, as some planning ahead of the day will allow them to best showcase their work and skills to meet the criteria.

Key design requirements

- The method of recording what is observed needs to be decided, for example, use of observation, schedule/scale and logistics of its use
- Guidance produced for learners on what to expect
- Practical considerations such as: where opportunities suitable for observation will be available; agreement on time and place; permissions for site access
- Care needs to be taken about overly 'staged' performance

What it assesses well

- Competence, skills and behaviour; application of knowledge
- Opportunity for holistic assessment (substantial assessment task)

What it assesses less well

- Underpinning knowledge and understanding

Quality control/assurance

- Training for observer on how to minimise their influence and possible bias; how to use the recording method
- Code of practice for conducting the observation
- Details of what is to be assessed, and assessment decisions across assessors, are standardised
- Borderline performance or unseen aspects of performance followed up via questioning, professional discussion and/or further observation
- Evidence must be provided of the learners/apprentices individually and actively completing tasks that demonstrate achievement of the knowledge/skills/behaviours. Evidence may be assessed by direct observation of performance
- Evidence could consist of:
    - an observation report
    - annotated photographs and witness statements
    - detailed witness statements
    - video (with narration or written log)
    - learner log/evaluation
    - Expert witness description - a record written by an expert witness, such as a qualified professional, who has the opportunity to see the learner working in situations where it would not be possible for an assessor to observe the learner's practice

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Simulation

Description

This is the use of a situation selected by the assessor or by learners/apprentices, to enable learners/apprentices to apply skills and to explore attitudes.

Key design requirements

- Design to replicate as closely as possible real-life conditions relating to the target proficiency. The closer to the actual workplace task the better able the simulation is to address the target proficiency
- Produce clear assessment instructions and marking schemes
- Guidance needed for learners/apprentices on what to expect
- Cost needs to be considered in setting up the simulation and weighed against the importance of the evidence being collected in this way
- Realistic work environment might be a training salon (hairdressing) or training restaurant. There may be site access requirements for assessors
- Ability to scale and replicate the simulated environment or conditions needs to be considered, as well as any access and conflict of interest issues

What it assesses well

- Large elements of a practical target proficiency
- Application of skills, knowledge and understanding, behaviours
- Useful in assessing critical, but infrequent activities

What it assesses less well

- Understanding of the wider knowledgebase beyond the focus of the test

Quality control/assurance

- Training for assessors, including that on how to use marking scheme and recording method and to ensure they have a clear sense of the impact of any variations in simulated environment or methods across different contexts
- Use of authentic materials, tools and equipment to reflect up to date practice in the workplace.
- Standardisation of assessment decisions across assessors, especially if different assessment sites are used
- External verification
- Evidence may include assessor records of observation of session, learner notes, plans, learner log and audio or video records

Skills test/synoptic activity

Description

A skills test requires the learner to undertake a specific task set by the assessor or awarding organisation. The task will be typical of the work the learner would do in the workplace. The learner will not know the requirements of the task till the day of the assessment and will have a set amount of time to complete the activity. This test is often followed by a question and answer or professional discussion.

Key design requirements

- Purpose of test and relationship of the simulated conditions need to be identified
- Assessment control conditions need to be set, together with levels of questioning and support, tools and techniques that can be used
- Guidance for learners/apprentices on what to expect
- Decisions made on specificity of marking scheme and recording method
- Time and resource intensive
- How best to support the skills test with complementary forms of assessment like questioning, witness testimony or work logs

What it assesses well

- Skills and certain competences

What it assesses less well

- Understanding of the wider knowledgebase beyond the focus of the test

Quality control/assurance

- Training of assessors, including how to use marking scheme/recording method
- Set control conditions for conducting the test and supervision
- Use of authentic materials, tools and equipment to reflect up to date practice in the workplace
- Standardisation of assessment decisions across assessors, especially if different assessment sites are used

Reflective log/journal

Description

The reflective log/ journal is a piece of work where learners/apprentices should consider their actions, experiences or learning and the implications of these in order to suggest significant developments for future action, learning or practice.

Key design requirements

- Production of best practice guidance
- Areas of the programme able to be evidenced this way needs to be communicated, with guidance on levels of permissible support
- Relationship with other assessment methods needs to be clear and explained

What it assesses well

- Process and decision making, understanding; problem solving, self-evaluation skills
- Useful in supporting other assessment methods

What it assesses less well

- Practical skills

Quality control/assurance

- Assessor training needed to help support the range of potential formats and contexts
- Evidence must be accessible and assessment brief must set out where the evidence should be located, amount of evidence required, etc

References:

Federation of Awarding Bodies. 2017. *The Qualification Manager's Handbook*. London: FAB, pp 213-221

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