Assessment guidance for centres during Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Business Skills

Final arrangements for assessment:
Guidance for Business Skills Levels 1-3 Competency-based and Apprenticeship-related qualifications

Last Updated 18th June 2020
Overview

In response to the recent Covid-19 (Coronavirus) outbreak Pearson has been working closely with Ofqual to determine alternative assessment methods to ensure that learners are not disadvantaged during this time.

We have prepared this guidance to support remote standards verification and detail our position on assessments for qualifications in the Business Skills sector.

Ofqual have agreed that assessment should continue or be adapted in the event learners have been prevented from completing due to Covid-19. This is only available to learners who were expected to complete in Summer 2020, and were prevented from gaining a result due to Covid-19.

All approaches have been put in place to support progression. However, it is important to recognise that some assessments must be retained where criteria are critical components of occupational or professional competence. In these circumstances, adaptation may not be appropriate or available, and therefore assessments will have to be delayed until restrictions have been lifted or it is safe to continue with assessments.

Summary of changes

We have added a statement on malpractice and maladministration.

This guidance includes the following topics:

- Guidance on adapting assessments
- Onscreen and paper-based assessments
- Standards verification
- Equalities and Objectivity
- Malpractice and Maladministration
- Appendix A: Qualifications this guidance applies to
Guidance on adapting assessments

Guidance on assessment adaptations contained within this document are also applicable to SVQs, with the exception of guidance relating to availability of onscreen assessment of knowledge.

Priority will be given to assessment activities for learners completing their courses or requiring certification before the end of July 2020.

Centres may wish to review their assessment policies and special requirement procedures to accommodate the learner’s workplace situation or home environment.

In the first instance, centres are encouraged to support learners to complete on time. Where this is not achievable, centres are advised to extend learner time on programme.

Competence or skills-based assessment adaptations

Valid and reliable evidence of competence is required for all units that contain competence learning outcomes.

Whenever possible, in the first instance, assessors should attempt to meet unit assessment requirements. Where a unit requires observation as the primary and/or predominant assessment method, this should be attempted. Where it is not possible to carry out direct observations, assessors are permitted to adapt assessment methods and consider other valid and reliable methods where appropriate and convenient to do so.

Practical observations could be undertaken remotely using audio visual remote technology, allowing assessors to view the learner at work. Learners could also use video technology and software to record themselves demonstrating competence or skills, providing verbal narrative to explain what they are doing. This is particularly effective for computer-based tasks.

Witness or expert witness testimonies could be obtained remotely using digital recording devices, or using fully-authenticated emails from supervisors, managers or other relevant stakeholders within, or associated with the organisation. Assessors should plan to capture witness testimonies around actual workplace activities, rather than unit assessment criteria and ensure statements contain sufficient detail to confirm the standard of work and competences demonstrated.
Professional/Guided discussions around workplace evidence, or an occasion when competence has been demonstrated where it is not possible for the learner to be observed, could be captured using digital recording devices. Professional discussion should also be considered to supplement existing evidence such as previous assessor observations.

Verbal personal statements/reflective accounts relating to competence that has been demonstrated could be recorded and submitted electronically to the assessor. Recordings must provide an actual example of an activity that has taken place. This evidence could be supported by relevant evidence from the workplace, where available.

Simulation rules have been relaxed during these unprecedented times. You do not need to seek permission from your Pearson Standards Verifier to utilise simulation at this time, however you should maintain a record of all simulated activities and make this available to your Pearson SV at the next standards verification activity.

Simulation can be used where natural work evidence is unlikely to occur, if simulation is used, the assessment instruments created by the centre should be reliable and fit for purpose, the assessment tasks and activities should enable learners to produce valid, sufficient and reliable evidence that relates directly to the specified criteria.

Centres are encouraged to emphasise the practical application of the assessment criteria, providing a realistic scenario for learners to adopt, and make maximum use of practical activities.

Simulation must not be the predominant source of competence evidence within the portfolio.

In circumstances where it is not possible for learners to fully complete units, centres should complete a gap analysis for the partially completed units and consider utilising expert witness testimony to ensure timely completion of those ongoing units.

Knowledge-based assessment adaptations

Assessors are encouraged to continue setting knowledge-based assessment activities, even where it is not possible to continue the assessment of competence. Assessment planning should consider methods that take into consideration
individual circumstances of each learner, including availability of technology and circumstances within their respective work or home environments.

Where there are identified and proven special assessment needs that present barriers using this assessment method, verbal Q&A may be considered as an alternative assessment method. **NB - Not applicable for SVQs**

Centres **must** refer these to the allocated Standards Verifier for approval prior to assessments taking place. The SV will review circumstances on a case-by-case basis to ensure this approach is only used when absolutely necessary to do so and there is risk of learners being disadvantaged. **NB - Not applicable for SVQs**

**Onscreen and paper-based tests**

Knowledge-only units which sit within the diplomas of SASE/SASW apprenticeship frameworks that are chosen to be assessed through optional onscreen assessments, could be switched to structured written assessments based on the assessment requirements of the respective unit(s).

In the event that it is still possible for learners to complete onscreen assessments, staff **must** ensure that invigilation procedures and social distancing guidelines are followed in full.

Centres/Training providers are advised to delay assessments until they are able to conduct assessments in a manner which adheres to government guidelines on social distancing.

Onscreen-only qualifications such as: ITU/0000/1 – Principles of Team Leading Level 2 (Onscreen test), must only be assessed through this method, therefore there is no opportunity to adapt this external assessment to alternative internal assessment methods.
Standards Verification

To support centres during the current Covid-19 pandemic, we have completed a risk-based review of programmes in specific sectors and will be extending Direct Claims Status (DCS), where appropriate. The qualification(s) listed in Appendix A have been included in this review. A communication was sent to Quality Nominees on 27 May 2020, where this applies to your centre.

We will be regularly monitoring registrations and certification claims made during this period and will apply further quality assurance measures and checks if there are unexpected shifts in registrations and claims that are unusual for this time of year.

Where a programme does not have DCS, Standards verification will continue remotely by your allocated Standards Verifier to release certification for completed learners as appropriate. We will look to prioritise assessment activities for learners completing their courses or requiring certification. Please ensure all portfolios are retained for retrospective sampling by your Standards Verifier.

Scottish Vocational Qualifications

Please note that SQA have published the following guidance here which should also be followed for any Scottish Vocational Qualifications.

Equalities and Objectivity

It is important that when making adapted assessment available for learners, centres consider the ability of some groups of learners in accessing adapted assessments. We should look to, as far as possible to ensure that any adaptations do not advantage or disadvantage any learner and minimise any disadvantage to learners with a protected characteristic. For learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), or other vulnerable learners, whilst we have published guidance to support adapted assessment across sectors, we acknowledge that centres will be best placed to accommodate this when making adapted assessments available for their learners.

Ofqual has concluded that Pearson remain subject to a number of equalities obligations, both under the Equality Act and under the General Conditions (Condition D2) and these will continue to apply in addition to the extraordinary framework. Reasonable adjustments must be made available wherever possible, and
we will be obligated to monitor any disadvantages for any groups of learners and remove these where they are not justified.

However, since the priority this summer is to secure the issue of results to as many learners as possible, Ofqual’s position is that “awarding organisations should not be prevented from making an adapted assessment available on the basis that such an adaptation is not possible for all groups of learners. But they should do as much as they can to take account of the needs of all groups of learners when determining what adaptations to make”. This may still mean that some learners may be prevented from getting the results they have been working towards this summer.

In its published outcomes, Ofqual has recognised the importance of ensuring non-bias during this time and has provided additional guidance to Awarding Organisations and Heads of Centres to support this. If you need support or guidance please do contact our sector specialists, whose details are here.

**Malpractice and Maladministration**

Assessments can be adapted so that students are able to progress in their learning and life despite the current disruptions to our normal way of teaching, learning and assessing. It is important that centres ensure standards are maintained when assessments are adapted. As with all of our internally assessed assessments, we expect our centres to deliver and assess them appropriately. Centres should also be aware of the heightened potential of learner malpractice where assessments are adapted – through personation for online assessment or collusion between learners for example.

We may need to investigate where there are concerns centres may not have delivered adapted assessments appropriately or not followed the centre assessed grade process guidance. Centres are reminded to report all instances of suspected malpractice to Pearson via candidatemalpractice@pearson.com (for learner malpractice) or via pqsmalpractice@pearson.com (teacher malpractice and maladministration).
Appendix A: Qualification this guidance applies to covered by the guidance

Competence-based qualifications:

- **Customer Service**
  - 601/3479/3 – Customer Service Level 4 NVQ Diploma
  - 601/3478/1 – Customer Service Level 3 Diploma (QCF)
  - 601/3424/0 – Customer Service Level 2 Diploma (QCF)
  - 601/3392/2 – Customer Service Level 1 Certificate (QCF)

- **Contact Centre**
  - 600/1226/2 – Contact Centre Ops Level 3 NVQ Diploma
  - 600/1635/8 – Contact Centre Ops Level 2 NVQ Certificate
  - 600/1225/0 – Contact Centre Ops Level 1 NVQ Certificate

- **Business Administration**
  - 601/3406/9 – Business Administration Level 3 Diploma (QCF)
  - 601/3405/7 – Business Administration Level 2 Diploma (QCF)
  - 601/3393/4 – Business Administration Level 1 Certificate (QCF)

- **Leadership and Management**
  - 601/3396/X – Management Level 3 Diploma (QCF)
  - 601/3430/6 – Team Leading Level 2 Diploma (QCF)

- **Business Enterprise**
  - 600/2964/X – Enterprising Skills in a Business Environment Level 3 Diploma (QCF)

- **Recruitment**
  - 601/6188/7 – Recruitment Level 3 Diploma (QCF)

BTEC Specialist and Professional qualifications:

---

1 Qualifications in scope of this guidance must be publicly funded and will be from Entry through to Level 6. For qualifications that do not appear in this guide, we will determine on a case by case basis whether we are able to apply the same approaches to ensure that assessments remain fit for purpose and results remain valid.
Business Skills Levels 1-3

- **Customer Service**
  - 603/5450/1 – Customer Service Specialists Level 3 Diploma
  - 603/5449/5 – Customer Service Specialists Level 3 Certificate
  - 603/4676/0 – Customer Service Practitioners Level 2 Diploma
  - 603/4675/9 – Customer Service Practitioners Level 2 Certificate
  - ITU/0000/1 – Principles of Customer Service Level 2 (Onscreen test)

- **Business Administration**
  - 603/3918/4 – Business Administrators Level 3 Diploma
  - 603/3917/2 – Business Administrators Level 3 Certificate

- **Leadership and Management**
  - 603/4161/0 – Managers Level 3 Diploma
  - 603/4160/9 – Managers Level 3 Certificate
  - ITU/0000/1 – Principles of Team Leading Level 2 (Onscreen test)

Scottish Vocational Qualifications (Non-Ofqual):

- **Customer Service**
  - GK8/M 24/ – Customer Service at SQCF Level 8 (SVQ)
  - GL0/1 23/ – Customer Service at SQCF Level 6 (SVQ)
  - GL0/0 22/ – Customer Service at SQCF Level 5 (SVQ)
  - GK8/L 21/ – Customer Service at SQCF Level 4 (SVQ)

- **Business and Administration**
  - GL1/2 23/ – Business and Administration at SQCF Level 6 (SVQ)
  - GL0/1 22/ – Business and Administration at SQCF Level 5 (SVQ)