

Distance Assessment Policy

For internal and external use

September 2013

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Quality, Standards and Research

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The key role of Pearson Education Ltd (Pearson) is to secure standards for those qualifications we certificate. As part of our commitment to quality assuring standards and therefore protecting learners, Pearson provides guidance and support to help centres and their learners achieve their learning and development goals. Pearson also ensures that any regulatory requirements our regulators impose on us are met, and that we support centres to meet those requirements.

Pearson regulatory policies are integral to our approach and articulate in a consistent way how we meet our regulatory requirements. They are reviewed annually to ensure that they remain fit for purpose.

This policy provides our requirements for distance assessment.

Scope of policy

This policy applies to the assessment of learners' work that leads to partial or full completion of Pearson Education Limited qualifications accredited within the Qualifications and Credit Framework and the National Qualifications Framework; BTEC qualifications; National Vocational Qualifications; Functional Skills; Pearson's Self-Regulated Framework qualifications and other qualifications; and that are variously assessed through distance means in the UK and overseas.

Pearson Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) are not included within the scope of this policy and should not be assessed at a distance from the learner.

Assessment made possible by, facilitated and supported through the use of postal means, information and communication technologies such as telephone and internet based communications, e-assessment and the use of web-based assessment materials, are included in this policy.

E-assessment is defined as the use of electronic systems for the development, operation and delivery of assessment for Pearson qualifications or units, or, the collection of performance evidence, which contributes to the awarding of regulated Pearson qualifications or units and those within the Pearson's Self-Regulated Qualifications framework.

The policy outlines the minimum requirements that Pearson expects must be met by approved centres when assessing Pearson qualifications through distance means. Centres must ensure that when using distance assessment, the method of assessment meets in full any particular, specified requirements for the delivery and assessment of the qualifications and units being delivered.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Pearson Policies on Distance Learning, on NVQs Delivered Overseas, UK Centres Operating Overseas, Self-Regulated Qualification Policy; and the Edexcel NVQs and SVQs Delivery Requirements and Quality Assurance Guidance all of which are available on the Edexcel website.

Policy statement

Centre Approval Process

Centres seeking to gain approval for Pearson qualifications, assessed through distance means must comply fully with the approval requirements for these qualifications. The approvals processes vary according to qualification type and details of these may be found on the Edexcel website: <http://www.edexcel.com>.

In order to gain approval centres must provide suitable physical and human resources and ensure that learners have access to these. Centres intending to use distance assessment and seeking to gain approval must ensure that the requirements of this *Distance Assessment Policy* are fully met.

Centres must recognise that some qualifications, subjects and sectors are not suitable for distance assessment. Centres seeking approval to deliver qualifications with the intention of assessing these through distance means must ensure that the purpose and integrity of the qualifications are not compromised in any way through the use of distance assessment.

Design of assessment

In designing distance assessment for a qualification centres must ensure that they have adequate resources to enable the assessment to be delivered effectively.

In designing distance assessment, centres must in addition ensure that the assessment:

- is fit for purpose
- is accessible to learners
- allows each learner to generate evidence that is valid and can be authenticated
- can be delivered efficiently
- permits Reasonable Adjustments to be made, while minimising the need for them
- allows each specified level of attainment detailed in the specification to be reached by a learner who has attained the required level of knowledge, skills and understanding
- allows assessors to be able to differentiate accurately and consistently between a range of attainments by learners.

Authenticity

Through rigorous assessment and internal quality assurance processes, centres must take all reasonable steps to ensure that, in relation to distance assessment:

- evidence submitted by each learner for assessment is authentic (or includes authentic evidence generated by that learner as a contribution to group work)
- where an assessment is required to be completed under specified conditions, learners complete the assessment under those conditions (other than where any Reasonable Adjustments or Special Consideration require alternative conditions)
- a declaration of authenticity is completed by learners and assessors as it is a requirement for the qualifications or units assessed through distance means
- as part of external quality assurance, Standards Verifiers will review the process through which centres confirm the authenticity of learners' evidence.

Implementation

Centres must ensure that the content of the distant assessment for qualifications they deliver:

- is fit for purpose
- is appropriate for the method of assessment chosen
- is consistent with the specification for that qualification.

Centres operating distance assessment must have policies and procedures in place to manage the controls on test conditions in relation to on-demand testing, invigilation, secure test environments and health and safety.

Centres must ensure that the distance assessment for qualifications they deliver:

- allows each learner to generate evidence which is valid and can be authenticated
- is independent of the technology on which it may be based
- does not treat disabled learners less favourably than non-disabled learners. This includes disabilities as defined by the UK Equality Act 2010 and subsequent regulations and guidelines
- permits Reasonable Adjustments to be made, while minimising the need for them
- allows each specified level of attainment detailed in the specification to be reached by a learner who has attained the required level of knowledge, skills and understanding
- allows assessors to be able to differentiate accurately and consistently between a range of attainments by learners
- is conducted accurately, effectively and efficiently.

Movement of Evidence and Data

Centres using distance assessment must take full account of any restrictions placed on the collation and storage of data on learners and the collection and storage of learners' evidence of achievement both within and across the borders of countries in which they operate.

When centres are using postal means for the movement of learners' evidence and for the movement of assessment records and internal quality assurance records, they must ensure that, in the event of loss of these materials in transit, learners are not disadvantaged and the security of the assessment process is not compromised. Centres should retain original copies of learners' evidence, assessment records and internal quality assurance records, providing authenticated copies of these for assessment through postal means.

Centres operating e-assessment must ensure that the use of technology does not create barriers for learners by providing user-friendly interfaces for centres and learners and by enabling familiarisation and/or training sessions appropriate to the mode of delivery. Provision must be made available for learners with particular assessment requirements. Centres must provide suitable support for system users, such as familiarisation sessions and guidance for assessors and moderators.

Systems and Data Integrity and Disaster Recovery

Centres operating e-assessment must maintain and review the security of e-assessment systems for protection against corruptive influences. Procedures must be in place to assure the security of hardware and software and the integrity of test data.

Systems must allow for flexibility in the light of technological development. System testing must be thorough, and be reviewed at regular intervals once the system is operational. Centres must ensure that suitable support facilities are in place and that there is a comprehensive contingency plan should any part of the system fail.

Centres must ensure that systems have been thoroughly tested such that they have sufficient capacity to store, retrieve, generate and share all necessary data, including the ability to exchange data securely with other internal and external systems, as required, without endangering the integrity of the data.

Centres operating e-assessment must have suitable measures in place to ensure the effective management of business continuity to address business interruption and the need for disaster recovery for their e-assessment services and systems, in the event of a system's failure. Systems management should be underpinned by measures to identify potential risks to those services and systems so that they can be managed to minimise disruption.

Use of e-portfolios for assessment

In addition to the requirements for e-assessment, e-portfolio systems used for the purpose of distance assessment should store and maintain securely performance evidence for access by all required parties, meet the evidence needs for a range of qualification types and enable learners to move their portfolios from one centre to another.

The e-portfolio should be securely, readily and easily accessible for:

- learners
- assessors
- internal verifiers
- standards verifiers
- users at locations remote from the centre
- any other interested and validated organisation or person.

E-portfolios and their contents must be maintained in a secure environment, access to which is limited through:

- a defined hierarchy of user access
- unique security passwords/IDs provided for each level of user
- read-only rights provided to those with limited access
- facility to differentiate between qualified and non-qualified assessors
- 'isolation' of completed units following final assessment
- facility to grant remote access to allocated Pearson standards verifiers.

The package must be easy and intuitive to use for all users – learners, assessors, internal verifiers and standards verifiers - and to be capable of:

- storing the full range of file types - text, sound, scanned images, digital pictures, video, templates and standard software applications
- being customised for candidates with special access requirements
- providing links to other documents/areas, such as centre policies and procedures, Pearson qualification documentation and the relevant Sector Skills Council and professional bodies' websites.

Portfolio evidence must be retained and accessible for standards verification and audit, assessment and internal verification records must be retained for a minimum of three years. The e-portfolio product should:

- meet Pearson's requirements for retention of evidence
- safeguard against removal or modification of archived documents.

Regulatory references

Ofqual and SQA require all awarding organisations to establish and maintain their compliance with regulatory conditions and criteria. As part of this process, policies that relate to Pearson's status as an awarding organisation will reference the particular conditions and criteria that they address.

This policy addresses the following regulatory criteria and conditions:

Ofqual General Conditions of Recognition
C1 Arrangements with third parties C2 Arrangements with centres D2 Accessibility of qualifications E4 Ensuring an assessment is fit for purpose and can be delivered G1 Setting the assessment G6 Arrangements for Reasonable Adjustments G8 Completion of the assessment under the required conditions G9 Delivering the assessment

Policy review date

September 2014

Useful contacts

For more information on Pearson qualifications and services please visit the website: www.edexcel.com