



Assessment mitigation centre guidance for Wales and Northern Ireland only in relation to Covid-19 disruption, 2020-21

**Guidance for the Health & Social Care and Child Development and Well-being,
Wales and Northern Ireland qualifications only**

Version 1.1 (September 2020)



The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has resulted in disruption to education and training during spring and summer 2020. Public health restrictions are likely to be in place during 2020/21, and further disruption may occur on a localised basis.

To mitigate the disruption to teaching, learning and assessment of a range of Health and Social Care, and Childcare qualifications detailed in Appendix 1, flexible approaches have been applied specifically where:

- there are requirements to include direct observation as the main source of evidence
- where work experience/practice hours are a mandatory requirement of the qualification

By putting in place these arrangements the Awarding Organisations/Bodies have considered issues relating to the manageability, validity and reliability of the relevant qualifications and their assessment, whilst simultaneously responding to the prospect of ongoing disruption during 2020/21.

The following arrangements have been collaboratively developed and agreed with Awarding Organisations, Qualifications Wales and CCEA, and with the relevant workforce regulators in both Wales and Northern Ireland. They apply to Health and Social Care, and Childcare qualifications delivered in Wales and Northern Ireland.

These arrangements apply to qualifications operated by the following Awarding Organisations/Bodies:

- City & Guilds
- NCFE CACHE
- Pearson
- OCN NI
- BIIAB
- Agored Cymru

These mitigations update and replace those communicated in Summer 2020. They will be available until 30 June 2021 and apply to:

- Any learners who were registered and on-programme before 31 August 2020 and have yet to complete.
- Any new learners registered from 01 September 2020

Observation of practice – competency-based qualifications

Where it is safe¹ to do so, observation by an occupationally competent and qualified assessor is preferred as the **main source of evidence for all learners**.

Where this is not possible due to protracted disruption caused by Covid-19 restrictions, the Awarding Organisations/Bodies will accept testimonies provided by a suitably experienced employer/manager/leader recruited by the centre to undertake the role of an Expert Witness (EW).

Centres must ensure that EWs fulfil the specific requirements detailed in the Skills for Care and Development² Assessment Principles³ and/or their recently published 'flexible arrangements' document⁴. This includes the requirement to provide EWs with induction, training and ongoing support that is timely, meaningful and appropriate.

Additionally, centres must adapt their Internal Quality Assurance strategies to ensure that Assessor judgements based on Expert Witness Testimony (EWT) are prioritised for standardisation and sampling activities.

The appropriate use, recording, standardisation and sampling of EWT and the process of EW recruitment, induction, training and support will be subject to External Quality Assurance by the Awarding Organisations/Bodies.

Certification will not be possible for any competency-based qualification unless substantial assessor observations and/or EWT are present in a learner's portfolio and that these are based on experience within a real work setting.

Please note that the Skills for Care and Development Assessment Principles and the associated 'Flexible Arrangements' are endorsed by Social Care Wales (please refer to Appendix 3) and by the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (please refer to Appendix 4).

Recording of Expert Witness Testimony

Centres should enable Expert Witnesses to provide and present their testimony in an efficient way ensuring that this does not compromise validity and reliability. This could include:

- the use of voice and audio recordings, or

¹ Does not contravene national and/or local restrictions and following a robust and appropriate Covid-19 risk assessment

² Skills for Care and Development (SfCD) is the UK sector skills council (SSC) for social care, children, early years and young people. Its structure for realising the SSC remit is via a partnership of four organisations: Care Council for Wales, Northern Ireland Social Care Council, Scottish Social Services Council and Skills for Care (adult social care only)

³ See <https://skillsforcareanddevelopment.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/SfCD-assessment-principles- updated-Feb2019-1.pdf>

⁴ See <https://skillsforcareanddevelopment.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Adaptions-to-Assessment-Principles-Covid-19.pdf>

- through remote discussions where the main assessor could scribe the EW contributions. Please note that both paper and online forms are permitted.

Throughout the process centres must ensure that the confidentiality, dignity and privacy of individuals, children, young people, or families using services remains paramount and must not be compromised. This is particularly important when video and/or audio streaming or recording is being used.

Use of technology to support assessment

In order to protect their confidentiality, dignity and privacy the use of video and/or audio streaming or recordings is **not permitted for direct observation** where an individual, child or young person, or their families may be present or wherein personal information about their care is being discussed. Additionally, it is not permitted to use technology to record supervision or appraisal meetings.

Video and/or audio streaming and recording **can** be used to gather evidence in the following situations only:

- assessment planning, feedback and review
- team meetings – only aspects of the Agenda that are general in nature e.g. not linked to the care of a specific care of an individual, child or young person, or their families
- Planning and/or review of the learner’s training and development
- Planning of supervision/appraisal
- Professional discussion
- Planning and recording EWT
- Learner reflection

Triangulation of evidence

The requirement to capture evidence of competence, and applied knowledge and understanding, continues to be best practice and is essential to robust assessment. Triangulation of evidence during this period **must** include:

- Assessor observation and/or EWT
- Learner reflection⁵
- Professional discussion⁶

Simulation

Simulation is a useful way to learn new skills and to develop and gain confidence in a safe and supported environment, for example, when learning how to use a hoist. In some circumstances, it can be used to judge competency, for example the assessment of first aid skills, including different forms of CPR.

⁵ Reflection on experiences in real working environments – reflections based on simulation, case studies or scenarios will not be accepted

⁶ ibid

Within competency qualifications, simulation is **ONLY** permitted where explicitly detailed within a specific unit. Simulation must **NOT** be used in any other circumstances.

Mandatory work experience/practice hours

Where a work experience/practice requirement is a mandatory requirement within a qualification, wherever possible Awarding Bodies/Organisations expect all learners to achieve this requirement in full. Where this is not possible due to the impact of Covid-19 restrictions only, learners will be able to progress to certification in the following circumstances:

- The learner has completed at least 70% of the required work experience/practice hours and all attempts to access further hours have been exhausted – **please see table below for relevant calculations**
- Steps have been taken to support the learner to achieve the required work experience/practice hours,⁷ including part-time employment, bank and relief options, volunteering, work during holiday periods
- Actions taken to secure the full requirement of work experience/practice hours have been recorded and are available for internal and external quality assurance

Level	Qualification Title	Mandatory Placement Hours	70% Flexibility – hours required
Child Development and Well-being			
Level 2	Diploma for Children's Care, Learning and Development (Wales and Northern Ireland)	280hrs	196hrs
Level 3	Diploma for Children's Care, Learning and Development (Wales and Northern Ireland)	700hrs	490hrs
Level 3	Extended Diploma for Children's Care, Learning and Development (Wales and Northern Ireland)	700hrs	490hrs
Level 2	Diploma for Children's Care, Learning and Development (Northern Ireland)	350-400hrs	245 – 280hrs
Level 3	Diploma for Children's Care, Learning and Development (Northern Ireland)	600-700hrs	420 – 490hrs
Level 3	BTEC Nationals in Children's Care, Learning and Development	Variations up to 800 hours ⁸	Variations up to 560 hours
Level 4	BTEC Higher National Certificate in Early Childhood Education and Care	375 hours	263 hours
Level 5	BTEC Higher National Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care	525 hours	368 hours
Health and Social Care			
Level 3	Extended Diploma in Health and Social Care (Adults) (Northern Ireland)	100hrs	70hrs
Level 3	OCNNI Diploma and Health and Social Care ⁹	600hrs	420hrs

⁷ In relation to childcare qualifications the search for placements has included the full spectrum of regulated and inspected early years provision including full day care, sessional care and childminding settings

⁸ Please refer to the relevant qualification specification to confirm the required mandatory hours for each specific qualification and seek specific guidance from the Awarding Organisation/Body

⁹ This new OCNNI qualification is **NOT** available in Wales

In extremely exceptional circumstances¹⁰, certification may still be possible for learners who have completed less than 70% of the required work experience/practice hours. Awarding Organisations/Bodies will continue to work collaboratively with all relevant stakeholders to monitor learners' ongoing access to work experience/practice. Any further adaptations relating to work experience/practice hours will only be considered by the Awarding Organisations/Bodies where robust triangulation of evidence is present within a learner's portfolio, as follows:

- Significant Expert Witness Testimony (EWT) from the employer which details the learner's competence has been consistently displayed **over time**, across all units within the qualification and is sufficient to meet the specified assessment criteria. Please note that a single EWT will not be accepted as enough evidence.
- Substantial and holistic learner reflection across all units within the qualification clearly evidencing the integration of knowledge into practice. Reflections must be linked solely to the learner's work experience/placement; reflection based on simulation, case studies or scenario-based reflection **will not be accepted**
- Significant professional discussions between the learner, assessor and Expert Witness. These will occur **over time** and provide opportunity for the:
 - Learner to expand on submitted reflections for the purposes of VARCS¹¹
 - The EWT to enrich and validate the learner's reflections
 - The Assessor to gather evidence relating to outstanding areas of competency, particularly in relation to the integration of knowledge into practice and/or aspects of practice occur infrequently

In light of level of uncertainty currently being experienced with regard access to work experience/practice and to help ensure the best opportunity for a successful outcome, centres should use this model of triangulation for **all** learners who are completing competency-based qualifications.

¹⁰ Extremely exceptional circumstances relates to instances of protracted and persistent placement disruption for a duration longer than 4mths i.e. an academic term

¹¹ VARCS- Validity, authenticity, reliability, currency and sufficiency

2020/21 'progressing' Level 2 CCLD learners

Learners who are progressing from the Level 2 CCLD¹² to Level 3 during this academic year (2020/21) are permitted to carry forward up to 25% of the total work experience/practice hours that were undertaken during the completion of their Level 2 qualification. This allowance will only be available if the learner can:

- Evidence recent (within the previous 2 years), authenticated and relevant work experience which reflects some of the competency requirements of the Level 3 qualification to which they are progressing.

All learners seeking to access this adaptation must undergo initial assessment against the requirements of the qualification, and an individual learning plan produced. Internal Quality Assurance strategies must be adapted to ensure adequate sampling of this process and its outcomes with the associated documentation for both aspects made available for External Quality Assurance.

External quality assurance activity

The external quality assurance activity will confirm that assessment and internal quality assurance has been conducted in line with the qualification specification and/or the adaption outlined above. Where the adaptation has been applied, the EQA will check the following:

- The validity and reliability of the process used
- That EWT has been used appropriately and only where permitted
- All possible routes to secure work experience/practice have been exhausted before the 70% adaptation has been applied or additional reduction pursued
- IQA has been planned and implemented appropriate to the adaptations applied
- Appropriate use of technology for video/audio streaming and/or recording.

External Assessment

The guidance on external assessment will be issued by individual Awarding Organisations/Bodies, where applicable.

Monitoring of any ongoing impact resulting from Covid-19 restrictions

The Awarding Organisations/Bodies will continue to monitor and review any ongoing Covid-19 restrictions and their potential to disrupt learner access to work experience/practice and qualification assessment.

Qualifications where no mitigation is required

For some qualifications, it will be the case that no flexibilities or mitigations are required as assessments can continue to be delivered and assessed in the usual

¹² Learners completing L2 CCLD (NI) and learners completing L2 CCLD (Wales and Northern Ireland)

way according to the acceptable approaches within the assessment strategy/plan.
See Appendix 2

Appendix 1

Qualifications where adaptations apply

Level	Qualification Title	City & Guilds	NCFE CACHE	Pearson	Agored Cymru	BIIAB	OCNNI
Child Development and Well-being							
Level 2	Diploma for Children's Care, Learning and Development (Wales & Northern Ireland)	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Level 3	Diploma for Children's Care, Learning and Development (Wales & Northern Ireland)	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Level 3	Extended Diploma for Children's Care, Learning and Development (Wales and Northern Ireland)		✓				
Level 5 (Advance Practice)	Diploma in Leadership for Children's Care, Learning and Development: Advance Practice (Wales & Northern Ireland)	✓		✓	✓		
Level 5	Diploma in Leadership for Children's Care, Learning and Development: Management (Wales & Northern Ireland)	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Level 2	Diploma in Children's Care Learning and Development (Northern Ireland)	✓	✓				
Level 3	Diploma in Children's Care Learning and Development (Northern Ireland)	✓	✓				
Level 3	National Award in Children's Care, Learning and Development			✓			
Level 3	National Certificate in Children's Care, Learning and Development			✓			
Level 3	National Diploma in Children's Care, Learning and Development			✓			
Level 3	BTEC Nationals in Children's Care, Learning and Development			✓			
Level 4	BTEC Higher National Certificate in Early Childhood Education and Care			✓			
Level 5	BTEC Higher National Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care			✓			
Level 5	Diploma in Leadership for Children's Care, Learning and Development (Management) (Northern Ireland)		✓				
Health and Social Care							
Level 2	Diploma in Health and Social Care (Adults) Wales and Northern Ireland	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Level 3	Diploma in Health and Social Care (Adults) Wales and Northern Ireland	✓		✓	✓	✓	

Level 3	Diploma in Health and Social Care (Children and Young People) Wales and Northern Ireland					
Level 2	Diploma in Health and Social Care (Northern Ireland)	✓	✓			✓
Level 3	Diploma in Health and Social Care (Northern Ireland)	✓	✓			✓
Level 3	Extended Diploma in Health and Social Care (Adults) (Northern Ireland)		✓			
Level 3	Diploma in Health and Social Care					✓
Level 4	Diploma in Adult Care (Northern Ireland)	✓				
Level 5	Diploma in Leadership for Health and Social Care Services (Children and Young People's Advanced Practice) Wales & NI	✓		✓	✓	
Level 5	Diploma in Leadership for Health and Social Care Services (Adults' Advanced Practice) Wales & NI	✓		✓	✓	
Level 5	Diploma in Leadership for Health and Social Care Services (Children and Young People's Residential Management) Wales	✓		✓	✓	
Level 5	Diploma in Leadership for Health and Social Care Services (Children and Young People's Management) Wales.	✓		✓	✓	
Level 5	Diploma in Leadership for Health and Social Care Services (Adults' Residential Management) Wales & Northern Ireland	✓		✓	✓	
Level 5	Diploma in Leadership for Health and Social Care Services (Adults' Management) Wales & Northern Ireland	✓		✓	✓	
Level 5	Diploma in Leadership for Health and Social Care Services (Northern Ireland)		✓			

Appendix 2

Qualifications with no mitigation available

Level	Qualification Title	City & Guilds	NCFE CACHE	Pearson	Agored Cymru	BIIAB	OCNNI
Level 1	Level 1 Award in Introduction to Health and Social Care (Adults and Children and Young People), Early Years and Childcare (Wales and Northern Ireland)	✓		✓	✓		
Level 1	Level 1 Certificate in Introduction to Health and Social Care (Adults and Children and Young People), Early Years and Childcare (Wales and Northern Ireland)	✓		✓	✓		
Level 1	Level 1 Diploma n Introduction to Health and Social Care (Adults and Children and Young People), Early Years and Childcare (Wales and Northern Ireland)	✓		✓	✓		
Level 1	Level 1 Award in Introduction to Health and Social Care (Adults and Children and Young People), Early Years and Childcare (Wales)		✓				
Level 1	Level 1 Certificate in Introduction to Health and Social Care (Adults and Children and Young People), Early Years and Childcare (Wales)		✓				
Level 1	Level 1 Diploma n Introduction to Health and Social Care (Adults and Children and Young People), Early Years and Childcare (Wales)		✓				
Level 2	Award in Safeguarding Awareness (Wales)	✓			✓		
Level 2	Award in Social Care Induction (Wales)	✓			✓		
Level 2	Certificate in Induction into Adult Social Care in Northern Ireland	✓		✓		✓	
Level 3	Certificate in Induction into Adult Social Care in Northern Ireland	✓		✓		✓	
Level 4	Certificate in Principles of Leadership and Management for Adult Social Care	✓					

Appendix 3

Social Care Wales statement



Skills for Care and Development Assessment principles: Flexible arrangements to support existing principles and approaches to unit/qualification assessment during the COVID-19 pandemic. Published August 2020

We have been asked to provide some additional information about the recently published Skills for Care and Development Assessment Principles.

The regulator for qualifications in Wales is Qualifications Wales. Any generic assessment principles developed as a 4-nation approach should therefore be considered within specific arrangements agreed by the Qualification Regulator for qualifications offered in Wales.

Information for adaptations to the new restricted suite of health and social care and childcare qualifications in Wales has been published on the Health and Care Learning Wales website <https://www.healthandcarelearning.wales/covid-19-coronavirus-advice/>, any further changes to these adaptations must be agreed by the Qualifications Regulator.

The adaptations set out within the Skills for Care and Development Assessment Principles can be applied to the 'legacy' qualifications, i.e. those qualifications for health and social care and childcare which were the predecessors to the new suite of restricted qualifications in Wales. We would stress however that observation would be the first option for assessment of practice, only where this is not possible due to restrictions imposed as a result of Covid-19 should Expert Witness Testimony be used.

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Improvement and Development Manager

Appendix 4



Arrangements to support existing principles and approaches to Health & Social Care and Early Years student placements, observation and assessments during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Introduction

This approach to placements, observations and assessments have been developed in partnership and approved by the Social Care Council's Qualification and Development Panel (QUADP).

This guidance is in addition to the Skills for Care and Development (SfC&D) Assessment Principles (COVID-19) issued August 2020. This guidance should be used in conjunction with the SfC&D Assessment Principles. <https://skillsforcareanddevelopment.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/SfCD-assessment-principles- updated-Feb2019-1.pdf>

These adaptations will be reviewed in June 2021 and apply to adult social care, early years and childcare qualifications in Northern Ireland.

Arrangements as Agreed

Direct observations

Competence based assessment requirements must include direct observation of performance of the learner as the main source of evidence, where it is deemed safe and appropriate and also following an appropriate placement/organisation COVID-19 risk assessment process. **Student placements and direct observation of performance remains the preferred method of assessment.** The Social Care Council will work with employers, training providers and awarding organisations to support placements for students/learners where it is safe to do so.

The Social Care Council's Qualification and Development Panel (QUADP) members offered the following advice for securing placements during COVID-19:

- I. Work with local employers to secure placements and be agile in how placements take place; i.e. 3 block work placements by the same learners – the panel felt this would reduce the risk of infection by allowing the learners to be in 'one' place for a number of weeks therefore reducing contact with others outside of the placement, instead of previous 2/3 day a week placement over a longer extended time.
- II. Consider negotiating with employers about employing learners part-time and using this part-time work as evidence – it is noted however that there may be insurance, funding and benefits issues but it was felt that this could and should be explored as an option. A number of employers on the panel noted they would be keen to consider this option.

Appendix 1 (page 4) of the NISCC guidance is a pre placement risk assessment for providers and employers to consider along with their own risk assessments.

The Social Care Council's guidance and the Pre Placement Risk Assessment has been developed to ensure as much as possible that:

1. Learners/students undertaking competence based H&SC and Early Years Qualifications during the COVID-19 pandemic are given opportunities in services to learn from experienced H&SC and EY colleagues in order to ensure the opportunity to evidence competence.
2. Learners/students acquire the necessary skills and develop competence in skills from 'real life' opportunities
3. That employers offering opportunities for placements to learners/students are confident that all necessary risk assessments have taken place
4. That employers offering employment opportunities to learners/students can be confident that they (learners/students) have developed the skills and competency as required by the diploma they are undertaking and that students/learners will not be disadvantaged by lack of access to appropriate placement opportunities

It is accepted that there are occasions where it is not safe to place students in services or gain direct observations of performance, the approaches outlined in the SfC&D COVID-19 Assessment Principles should be considered.

<https://skillsforcareanddevelopment.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/SfCD-assessment-principles- updated-Feb2019-1.pdf>