Internal assessment writing and delivery: guidance for centres

Contents

This guidance must be used in conjunction with Ofqual's guidance for designing and developing accessible assessments.

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ofqual-handbook/section-d-general-requirements-for-regulated-qualifications

Section 1 – Assessment writing

Introduction

Assessment must evidence a learner's own knowledge, understanding and skills within their chosen subject. Evidence must be gathered through effective and reliable internal assessments and this guidance document is designed to support teachers and deliverers to ensure the integrity of all internal assessments.

This guidance can be used to support the delivery of our qualifications which include internal assessment.

There are 4 essential elements in the production of successful internal assessment tasks.

These are:

- a valid and engaging context or scenario
- meaningful assessment tasks with clear, assessable outcomes
- sufficient opportunities for stretch and challenge for higher attainers
- appropriate coverage of the content and learning outcomes

The following guidance will help you to create valid and reliable internal assessment tasks. It is always good practice to have your internal assessment briefs checked and signed off by your internal quality assurer (IQA).

Setting the scenario

The key requirement in setting the scenario is that it needs to be valid. It must present a task or context which is realistic for the industry or sector.

The scenario should also:

- set a challenge or problem for learners to address
- allow for the generation of a range of assessment tasks with a minimum of additional information
- be accessible for the age of the learners
- be free from obvious bias (for example, gender, race and/or ethnicity)
- allow for the scene to be set in around 150 words

Examples

Compare these 2 scenarios:

1. Recently there has been a warning about the high fat content of foods eaten by young people. We want to investigate the food eaten by our year group in schools so that we can provide advice on balanced diets and nutrition requirements and make recommendations for healthy eating.

2. Having an understanding about diet and motivation can help you and others lead a healthier life. This knowledge can also help tackle health issues within society. As a result of this, your teacher has asked you to put together a range of resources about diet, nutrition and motivation.

In these examples, the first is more successful than the second for a number of reasons:

- it states an authentic, current problem relevant and accessible to the age range compared with the second scenario where there is no problem to address
- the context – concern about the high fat content of food – gives learners a direct connection to the sector they are studying and shows them clearly the relevance of their skills and knowledge
- the second scenario has no such direct appeal, making it difficult for learners to recognise how their skills and knowledge might be useful to employers
- the first scenario outlines a broad problem allowing for a number of different approaches and a unifying theme from which to build a number of different assessment tasks
- the second scenario is limited and closely linked to the task of putting together resources – this restricts the ways in which additional tasks can be linked to it; it is likely that further activities will need extra information
- the second scenario has a weak purpose for doing the task and the teacher request is less motivational than an investigation

Writing the tasks

The key requirement for writing tasks is that they must be meaningful and have clear, assessable outcomes.

The tasks should also:

- not confuse teaching and learning tasks with assessment
- be valid and relevant
- be practicable for school/college-based learners
- be direct and open-ended and not 'stepped'
- avoid mandating the way the task is to be carried out (unless the learning outcomes require it)
- be stated separately from any scene-setting information
- allow for different levels of achievement

Examples

Compare these 2 examples:

1. Why do we use recipes? In your answer you should:

- describe the main steps
- explain what the ingredients do
- describe the cooking skills you need to make the dish

2. Get into a group of about 3 and decide on a name for your team. Carry out a health and safety risk assessment of the working environment in which you intend to prepare and cook food. Identify potential risks and hazards and design a PowerPoint presentation stating what precautions you will put in place to avoid these.

In these examples, the first task is more appropriate than the second for several reasons:

- it is clear what is going to be assessed:
  o there are 3 activities, each of which has an assessable outcome
  o the command words 'describe' and 'explain' tell learners what they have to do and give them clear signals about the sort of answers which are expected
- there are opportunities for learners to show different levels of achievement
- by comparison, it is much less clear what will be assessed from the second task because it confuses teaching and learning activities (get into a group; name a team) with assessment activities – it is also not clear whether PowerPoint skills are part of the assessment
- the second task could also be criticised for combining so many instructions into one paragraph without the aid of numbers or bullet points – text presented like this can be challenging for lower level learners

Opportunities for stretch and challenge

For graded qualifications, the assessment tasks must provide enough evidence of achievement for all of the grades to be awarded securely.

Assessment tasks must support:

- accurate discrimination in attainment across all grades
- the opportunity for high performing learners to demonstrate sufficient evidence of distinction quality to be awarded that grade
- qualitative differences in learners' performances

The responses that you expect from learners can help to determine whether the task will discriminate effectively.

Task: explain why sales of music on vinyl continue to rise		
Pass	**Merit**	**Distinction**
Some people like the warm sound of vinyl.	Some people think that vinyl gives a much warmer sound than digital formats. People also like the idea of owning a physical product.	Some people prefer the warmer sound of vinyl even though you need well-maintained equipment to play it successfully. Listening to vinyl reaffirms the value of music because it requires concentration and is not portable.

The example above shows how a straightforward task can be used to discriminate between learners at different levels.

Examples

Consider the following example tasks:

1. Explain what is meant by a balanced diet.

   You will need to show what is meant by a balanced diet. This is about portion size and healthy eating. You must include all aspects of nutrition, including water and fibre.

2. Design a poster to show how the main food groups contribute to a healthy lifestyle.
3. Compare 4 different sources of business funding and identify the strengths and weaknesses of each source.

All 3 of these tasks have limitations in terms of effective discrimination.

The first one restricts the opportunities for lower level learners to show what they know and understand by giving so many hints as to what is required. Even lower-level learners could be expected to know about portion size, water and fibre without prompting.

The second example restricts the opportunities for higher level learners to show the sophistication of their understanding. A poster is a restrictive format for assessing knowledge and understanding and the range of responses to the learning outcome will be limited by space and creative ability.

The third example relies on quantity not quality to distinguish between levels of achievement. The focus of the tasks is on being able to understand strengths and weaknesses; increasing the number of instances to compare will lead to repetition in answers rather than any increase in quality. There is no assessment gain from asking learners to perform the same task more than once.

Examples

Consider the following examples:

Question 1:

1(a) produce a PowerPoint presentation

1(b) design a poster

Question 2:

2(a) Having identified the components of health-related and skill-related fitness you now need to find a friend and undertake a test for each component of fitness (health-related and skill-related) and record your results correctly.

2(b)
- 'you now need to undertake a test' [do]
- 'visually appealing' [striking; attractive; neat]
- 'prior to undertaking exercise' [before exercising]

The first examples run the risk of introducing unconscious bias into the assessments. Unless the learning outcome requires a particular format, it is best to leave the decisions to the learners. For most of the specifications, competence in PowerPoint is no more relevant than neat handwriting.

The second examples are using language more complex than is needed to describe the tasks. Tasks should be written in straightforward language with what the learners need to do (the main clause) first (for example, do a fitness test with a friend). The words should also be straightforward: 'do' instead of 'undertake', 'before exercising' rather than 'prior to undertaking exercise'.

Synoptic assessment tasks

This section is only applicable to those qualifications which include internal synoptic assessment. Please refer to the relevant qualification specification on our website to determine whether the qualification requires an element of synoptic assessment.

Synoptic assessments must include tasks which provide learners with the opportunity to identify and use effectively, in an integrated way, an appropriate selection of skills, techniques, concepts, theories and knowledge from across the whole vocational area.

Such tasks:

- require the demonstration of a relevant practical skill
- focus on the end-to-end planning and production of an artefact, product or process
- signal clearly the relationship with skills and knowledge from other units

Examples

1. Participate in a business enterprise project.
2. Develop a personal health and fitness programme.

Both of these examples meet the key criteria of breadth and relevance and it is easy to see how learners would have to draw on skills and knowledge from a number of different units to complete the tasks.

Demonstrating fitness for purpose

All assessments must be fit for purpose, appropriate for the method of assessment chosen and consistent with the specification. They must address the learning outcomes in a balanced way and cover the required content.

Using an assessment grid

The simplest way to do this is to complete an assessment grid in the writer's checklist.

You must ensure that:

- there is an appropriate balance between learning outcomes and tasks
- that the learning outcomes are weighted by GLH in accordance with the specification
- if the learning outcomes are equally weighted, the amount of assessable evidence produced for each learning outcome is roughly similar

It's also good practice to draft outline responses for each grade to check that learners are likely to produce outcomes in line with the grade descriptors and that the tasks will discriminate effectively.

Example assessment grid

	Unit title							
	LO 1 XXX		LO2 XXX			LO3 XXX		
	GLH XX		GLH XX			GLH XX		
	Assessment point **Components of graphic design**	Assessment point **Experimentation**	Assessment point **Research**	Assessment point **Graphic design**	Assessment point **Health & safety**	Assessment point **Personal statement**	Assessment point **Review**	Assessment point **Strengths & weaknesses**
Task 1(a)		✓						
Task 1(b)	✓							
Task 2			✓	✓	✓			
Task 3(a)						✓		
Task 3(b)							✓	✓

Example assessment grid

	Unit 02: understanding food Assessment criteria							
	1.1	1.2	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	3.1	3.2
Task 1			✓	✓	✓			
Task 2						✓		
Task 2(a)							✓	✓
Task 3	✓	✓						

Section 2 – assessment delivery

Introduction

This guidance aims to offer support and information on how to administer an internal assessment.

The points in the guidance will provide you with information on:

- how the administration of an internal assessment should look
- the difference between teaching, learning and assessment
- the type of feedback that can be offered before, during and after an assessment
- the assessment cycle
- submitting evidence to the external quality assurer (EQA)

Remember: assessment must evidence a learner's own knowledge, understanding and skills within their chosen subject. Evidence must be gathered through effective and reliable internal assessments and this guidance document is designed to support teachers and deliverers of each of the above qualifications in doing so, to ensure the integrity of all internal assessments.

The assessment cycle

Plan: assessment planning includes writing a valid and reliable assessment brief and planning in the administering of this, alongside your scheme of work and/or lesson plans. Further guidance on how to write an internal assessment brief is included at the beginning of this document in Section 1.

Deliver: teaching and learning must all take place prior to any assessment of knowledge and skills. The teaching and learning should include all of the content that the internal assessment will cover.

Complete: learners are to complete the internal assessment within the allocated time and must do so outside of any teaching and learning. The internal assessment should be administered using the guidance within this document to ensure its integrity. During the assessment your role will be that of the assessor and not as a teacher.

Assessment: assessment of learner evidence should take place as soon as possible after the assessment has been completed. Tracking documents should be used to record grades per assessment criterion/points for each learner and where applicable for the whole unit. Assessment of learner evidence should be made against the relevant assessment criteria/points and grading descriptors for the qualification which are found in the qualification specification. Grades must be recorded accurately for the evidence submitted as part of the internal assessment alone. Work created by the learner during teaching and learning that was not completed as part of an internal assessment cannot be used as evidence.

Feedback- once you have assessed/marked all learner evidence that has been submitted, feedback must be offered to each learner on an individual basis. For further guidance on how and when to feedback please see pages 12–17. Feedback must include the grade being awarded for each assessment criterion/point and where applicable for the overall unit. Feedback needs to be accurately recorded and the learner must sign to confirm receipt of – and that they agree with – the feedback provided.

Differentiating between assessment and teaching and learning

Teaching and learning and your role as a teacher:

- teaching and learning occurs in experiences both inside or outside the classroom where learner skills, knowledge and understanding are developed
- support materials to aid learning can be provided
- instructions on completing tasks can be given to learners
- intervention by teachers to ensure learning is appropriate here
- informal assessment can be used to assess and track progress
- feedback and guidance on how to improve work can be given

The teacher is to deliver the course material in line with the qualification specification to develop the learners understanding, knowledge and skills through teaching and learning. Remember, work created by the learners as part of teaching and learning or for use as formative assessment by the teacher, cannot be used as evidence in an assessment.

Assessment and your role as an assessor

- assessment is carried out in a controlled environment under the supervision of an assessor (usually the teacher)
- no guidance on how to meet assessment criteria/points and grading descriptors from the assessor is allowed
- group work and how learners interact with each other is clearly defined
- steps to prevent plagiarism are taken
- templates and other scaffolding techniques may not be provided to learners
- no work completed during teaching and learning is allowed to be used in the assessment
- specific, detailed feedback (see page 12) on how to improve may not be provided to learners
- assessments must not be completed by learners at home

The role of an assessor is to administer the internal assessment, assess the learner evidence produced against the learning outcomes and assessment criteria/points and to provide feedback to the learner regarding their achievement.

It is always worth reminding your learners of your varying roles as a teacher and an assessor, so they know what to expect during both teaching and learning and assessment.

Assessment delivery

How the delivery of an assessment should look

At the start of the internal assessment taking place assessors should:

- provide the learner with information regarding the time available for the internal assessment task/brief, to include the submission deadline
- make the learner aware that you are now the assessor and not the teacher
- make the learner aware that you can no longer provide guidance and support including feedback, on what to do, in order to complete and achieve this assessment
- make the learner aware that the task/brief they will be completing is an assessed piece of work that will go towards their qualification and final grade

- ensure that each learner is aware of the learning outcome, assessment points/criterion that are being met – these should be available to the learner throughout the assessment
- brief the learners on plagiarism and explain that it must be their own work or clearly referenced if sourced research material is used
- explain to the learner when and who will mark/assess their work and when they will receive feedback*
- raise your appeals procedure with the learners and make sure they are aware of this in the event that they disagree with your mark

*Usually, the teacher and the assessor are the same person, it is really important to ensure your learners are aware of this and the difference in roles.

Giving feedback to learners

Feedback during teaching and learning

Feedback is an important part of learning and we encourage feedback during teaching and learning that will identify areas for learner progression, including stretch and challenge:

- positive feedback always relates to the assessment criteria/points and grade descriptors found in each unit within the qualification specification
- offering feedback on ways in which a learner could improve their work to achieve a pass, merit, distinction or distinction* by referring to the assessment criteria/points and grade descriptors, encourages learners to continuously do this themselves and prepares them for the external assessment
- feedback on how to improve knowledge, skills, understanding, behaviour, spelling, punctuation, grammar and how to approach a task are all positive feedback

Feedback and guidance that gives them a specific list of actions they need to take in order to complete a task is not positive and learners should be encouraged to identify how they can improve themselves. Use open questions in your feedback.

Feedback during an assessment

Once the learner begins working on the internal assessment, the assessor must not provide any specific feedback on the evidence produced by the learner before it is submitted for assessment, or confirm achievement of specific assessment criteria/points until the work has been assessed.

Learners must demonstrate themselves that they can provide evidence for the assessment brief independently, using their knowledge, skills and understanding gained through the teaching and learning of the unit delivery.

We understand it is important to continue giving general feedback and support during assessment, which could include:

- confirmation of which learning outcome, assessment criteria/points the assessment brief is targeting
- refereeing the learners to the learning outcomes and assessment criteria/points to keep them on track
- clarification of what the assignment brief requirements are
- general feedback on timekeeping, attendance and punctuality, attitudes and behaviours

However it is not appropriate for teachers to:

- coach learners in how to produce the evidence or what evidence to produce (unless the brief specifically states what the evidence should be)
- give them a specific list of actions they need to take in order to meet the assessment criteria/points and learning outcomes, or to achieve a particular grade

You may wish to refer the learner to the assessment criteria/points or learning outcomes and to the grade descriptors to keep them on track.

Remember: the assessor must not provide feedback or guidance on how to improve the evidence to achieve higher grades at this point; this will happen when the learners are given feedback after their work has been assessed. Feedback will not coach the learner.

All work must be completed independently by the learner and must not be a product of teacher guided feedback.

Feedback after assessment

Giving feedback following assessment must include feedback on improvement and progression and not coaching to achieve a specific grade. Feedback should be clear and constructive on the assessment criteria/points and/or learning outcomes the learner has achieved or not achieved.

Provide justification and explanation of the assessment decisions that have been made, make reference to the assessment criteria/points and where appropriate the grading descriptors. It is also good practice to give general feedback on timekeeping, attendance and punctuality, attitudes and behaviours.

Remember: teachers must not give explicit instructions or step by step guidance on how to improve a grade.

You should:

- focus on what the learner has done well and why
- encourage the learner to work out how to apply successful techniques elsewhere
- make all comments general so that the learner can apply them to new situations
- encourage self-regulation and criticism (for example, 'you know the key features of making an evaluation, check whether these are included in your own work')
- reference learning points (for example 'your answer might be better if you included strategies we discussed earlier')
- limit your comments to 1 or 2 key areas
- always refer to the assessment criteria/point or learning outcome
- provide justification for your decision
- always record feedback given to individual learners

You must not:

- provide templates or model answers
- give feedback on specific elements of tasks
- give specific feedback on how to achieve a higher grade
- list negative points for correction

If a learner has not yet achieved a specific assessment criterion/point, learning outcome or a full unit, you must discuss with them any re-submission opportunities. Learners are allowed 2 attempts at each internal assessment.

For further guidance on evidence submission and the internal and external quality assurance processes please refer to the guidance on our website.

Example of positive feedback with commentary

NCFE Level 2 Technical Award in Music Technology

Unit 01 learning outcome 01: Understand the hardware components and software functions of a DAW

Well done (learner name). You have achieved a merit in this learning outcome.

In your presentation you correctly described the hardware required to set up a Digital Audio Workstation (DAW) and went on to describe sequencing software functions using Apple Logic to illustrate your points.

You covered all of the functions and hardware required by the assignment brief and applied your knowledge well to the scenario of setting up a home studio system. However, you did not consistently use the correct technical terms for some functions. Correct use of technical terms throughout your work may have allowed you to achieve a higher grade in this learning outcome. It may be useful to familiarise yourself with technical terms to help you communicate effectively as a producer.

Your presentation was well thought out and will be useful to you when you come to set up a DAW for your next project in this unit. In future presentations it would be useful to think about your use of slide animations, as sometimes these were a little distracting. You handed the presentation in before the deadline date and worked well in class throughout the assessment.

Good work in this first assignment (learner name), I look forward to seeing your next project.

Please add your comments and signature to the feedback sheet so I can see how you thought the assignment went.

This feedback is individual to the learner with a clear statement of achievement.

It includes a brief summary of activity and an overall statement of how this meets the learning outcome has been offered. The feedback positively links to the assignment brief and offers justification of the grade by referencing the grade descriptors and uses the language from these. The assessor positively explains areas for development without giving a specific list of actions, yet identifies areas of improvement and justifies them by using a real life situation.

There are positive overall comments that link to next assessment to keep focus.

There is also a gentle reminder to get feedback and a signature from the learner, with a reason for collecting this.

Example of negative feedback with commentary

NCFE Level 2 Technical Award in Music Technology

Unit 01 learning outcome 01: Understand the hardware components and software functions of a DAW

As I said to the group when you gave your presentation there was quite a lot of important words missing. If you had used the template I gave you this wouldn't have happened!!!

We've talked about this in class already ages ago, but here is a list of things you need to do to get a distinction:

- slide 1: change 'audio input' for 'audio interface'
- slide 2: change 'USB interface' for 'MIDI interface'
- slide 3: change 'ESX-24' for 'software sampler'
- slide 4: check your spellink here

I didn't like the way your slides changed either.

You can sign this if you want.

This feedback highlights that not all feedback has been provided on a one-to-one basis. It is not appropriate or linked usefully to grading and notes that templates have been used. It includes inappropriate use of punctuation that gives a negative response to the learner. Verbal feedback on this assessment has been previously offered but has not been recorded. The feedback has been given sometime after the assessment which can be demotivating. The learner is guided on how to achieve a higher grade by offering a very specific list of negative points for correction.

The tone of this feedback lacks any positive or encouraging ideas, with spelling errors.

Examples of positive feedback

NCFE Level 2 Certificate in Food and Cookery

Unit 01, assessment criterion 4.2: Demonstrate how to follow recipes

You are confident when following recipes, you are well organised and have assembled everything you need for both ingredients and equipment at the start, which enables you to work in a methodical and systematic way. You demonstrate that you understand the key stages of a recipe and the importance of their sequence. At most stages of the recipe you demonstrate a good level of skill. Remember to taste your dish and adjust the seasoning as necessary.

NCFE Level 2 Certificate in Creative Studies: Interactive Media

Unit 02 learning outcome 02: assessment point - experiment with interactive media products and their production in relation to a brief

You have made a clear start to your experimentation and understand the need to try different techniques when developing an interactive media product. You seem to be getting to grips with your chosen animation software and you are not afraid to try different tools and consider which works best for you. Creating a flow chart to identify the processes you are following also shows an awareness of industry practices. Remember you have looked at other methods to document processes in class and you might want to draw on some of them, if relevant, and if you feel it would help to show the processes in your animation as you complete your experimentation.

NCFE Level 2 Certificate in Food and Cookery

Unit 02 Understanding food

Congratulations (learner name), you have demonstrated your achievement of all of the assessment criteria for unit 02 and have completed this unit at pass standard. You have produced some excellent work at distinction and merit standard for some of the assessment criteria. Remember, in order to achieve a merit every assessment criterion (AC) must be at least a merit and to achieve a distinction every AC must be a distinction. You have related most of your work directly to the youth club scenario, which shows that you really understand the information, this is very good practice. You have one opportunity to rework parts of your assessment in order to improve your overall grade.

Learning outcome 1 (AC 1.1-1.3) – 1.1 and 1.2 distinction and 1.3 merit (max is merit) so no improvements needed, well done.

Learning outcome 2 (AC 2.1-2.4) – some sections of your PowerPoint are lacking in the necessary detail and discussion; some points you make are not very clear. 2.1 Pass, 2.2 and 2.3 merit. Compare these with 2.4 which is a distinction, you have really explained the points you make for this one. I am not sure that the PowerPoint was the best choice of presentation method for you, (learner name), as I know you are very keen to reach a distinction. PowerPoint slides can limit the space and therefore the amount of description you can give. You might prefer to convert this into another format and then add to it in order to 'comprehensively describe' each of the factors you have identified.

Learning outcome 3 (AC 3.1-3.3) – 3.1 distinction, this is excellent work, which is very detailed and well thought out. 3.2 merit, good evidence for merit but towards the end of the unit you had started to demonstrate practical work at distinction standard. I am able to arrange another two practical sessions in which you can aim to improve your grade to distinction now you are more aware of what is required and your skills have developed. You will need to photograph your finished results as before and I will complete 2 additional teacher observation sheets, good luck with this! AC 3.3, have another look at your evaluations as these are very brief and superficial; they do not meet the requirement for evaluation with 'critical judgement' that is required for distinction. You need to write in greater detail and to give reasons and explanation for the points you make; also have a think about the costings again. What information will the youth leaders need in order to decide whether these dishes are good value or not? I suggest you try improving one of the existing evaluations (perhaps your most recent one?) and then write 2 new ones for the additional dishes you make.

How to record feedback

It is impossible to record all verbal feedback given to learners during teaching and learning. It is however important to accurately record verbal and/or written feedback that has been given in relation to the results of an assessed piece of work and this must be documented. This feedback will be reviewed by your IQA and EQA.

Feedback must be given on a one-to-one basis, unless requested otherwise by the learner. It is always best practice to have your learner sign that they have received and agree with any feedback that has been offered in relation to the assessment decision. You could always offer space for the learner to record their own comments.

We have a range of templates that can be used to track and record learners' achievement and feedback; these are available on our website.

Please note: learners must be informed that grades may change and are not fully confirmed until they have been both internally and externally quality assured.

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