Assessment and Accreditation Policy and Procedures 2020 - 2021

North Tyneside Council

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Policy Statement

North Tyneside Council Adult Learning Service (NTCALS) is committed to ensuring that learners receive regular, consistent and accurate assessment with appropriate feedback to support and promote learning and help them achieve their goals. All learners should receive the same quality standards of assessment practice, marking, feedback and support.

The same quality standards are also expected for learners enrolled through external partners and this will be specified in partnership agreements.

In addition awarding bodies require centres to ensure standardisation in assessment, verification and moderation procedures and practice.

Context

NTCALS aims to ensure:

1   Equality of access to fair and reliable assessment is guaranteed to all learners. Assessment will meet the needs of the individual learner in line with the Equality Policy of North Tyneside Council.

2   Assessment and internal verification/moderation in each faculty will comply with NTCALS guidance and be carried out to meet the requirements of awarding bodies, the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ), and Qualification Credit Framework (QCF). For Higher Education qualifications assessment accreditation arrangements are undertaken in line with the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA).

3   Staff will be occupationally competent and hold assessor and /or internal quality assurance qualifications relevant to the qualification or course they are assessing.

4   The assessment and internal verification/moderation procedures for each qualification will be made known to learners at the start of the course.

5   The NTCALS Appeals procedure will apply to assessment and internal verification/moderation decisions. Learners will be informed of the appeals procedure of each awarding body at the start of the course.

6   The operation of assessment and internal verification/moderation procedures will be monitored through the internal moderation process, led by the Lead Internal Quality Assurer (LIQA) and reported to the Adult Learning Managers Meetings.

7   Learners will be given an opportunity to have prior experience and/or learning accredited.

8 Evidence that externally commissioned/contract providers can meet these standards will be required in advance of contracts being agreed. Monitoring and reporting arrangements will be specified in the contract.

Signed:

Mark Barrett
Senior Manager – Employment and Skills

Contents:

1. Assessment, Accreditation and Verification

The policy will be implemented through the following procedures:

The procedures outline the standards NTCALS expects to:
- Support learners to achieve their aims.
- To meet the quality assurance arrangements for assessment, which meet the requirements of awarding bodies, the Joint Council for Qualifications, and the Qualification Credit Framework.

Equality of access to fair and reliable assessment

All employees are bound by North Tyneside Council policies and procedures including the Code of Conduct for Employees. Equality of access to fair and reliable assessment is guaranteed to all learners. Assessment will be planned giving consideration to the special or additional needs of learners. The Personal Extenuating Circumstances form enables learners to request additional support both for internal assessment and external accreditation.

Assessment and internal verification/moderation:

Assessment and internal verification/moderation procedures will be monitored through team meetings, annual course reviews, internal quality assurance meetings and standardisation.

What learners can expect from NTCALS:
- Equality of access to fair and reliable assessment for all learners.
- Summary details of assessment requirements will be included on Course Information Sheets.
- Information about the regulations and requirements of awarding bodies, including the consequences of malpractice, as they register for the qualification.
- Information on the assessment and internal moderation arrangements for their course.
- Information on and preparation for external examinations.
- Prompt action to deal with appeals against assessment decisions.
- Firm action on incidents of Malpractice.
- Encouragement to give feedback on the assessment process through the compliments, complaints and comments system, learner forums and learner satisfaction surveys.

What NTCALS expects from learners:
- To familiarise themselves with the assessment requirements of the course.
- To complete assessment tasks in line with the guidance and on time.
- To request additional support, an extension to an assignment deadline or other adjustments e.g. special examination arrangements at the earliest opportunity.
- To submit only their own work
- To report malpractice by learners or staff.

Other stakeholders including, as appropriate, employers, parents or carers will also be informed of the assessment and internal moderation procedures on request.

2. Quality Assurance

NTCALS aims to maintain a thorough system of Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) which will ensure the Assessment process is solid and reliable.

Data and Information Protection
NTCALS is required, by law, to comply with the Data Protection Act 1998. This law dictates how we handle any personal information; this information will only be used in connection with training and the business we conduct with learners. We may also collect information, which may relate to learners, but only with their prior permission. All information will be stored securely to ensure confidentiality is maintained.

Internal Quality Assurance
A copy of the IQA arrangements for each programme is held by the Programme Manager. These arrangements are reviewed and monitored annually by the lead IQA.

IQA records will include:
- Monitoring and review arrangements:
  o IQA sampling plan including all candidates' registration numbers.
  o Portfolio sampling reports for interim and summative verification.
  o Observation and feedback of assessors' practice.
  o Candidate interview record.
  o Candidate appeal procedure.

The Examinations Officer, Programme Manager and Internal Quality Assurer hold copies of relevant awarding body information.

For **non-accredited** provision the **RARPA** process distils good practice in assessing and recording learner achievement of outcomes and aims and monitoring progress.

Samples of non accredited provision will be moderated by lead on quality or the lead IQA who will produce a sampling plan for the academic year. RARPA will be moderated for each term. A report on RARPA moderation will be submitted to the Adult Learning Managers Meeting.

Sampling Strategy
The service uses a RAG rating system red, amber and green to ensure the quality of the assessment process. Assessors are rag rated according to their experience and quality of assessment and will undergo sampling according to this rating. It is recognised that assessors can move up or down this process and the IQA will review where the assessor will sit within this system.
A red rag rating is applied in the following situations:
- New assessors
- Poor quality processes and assessment activity
- Change to a new IQA
- Until a full cohort is through their qualification
- 100% sampling
Amber rating will be applied for the following reasons:
- An assessor who needs additional support with feedback or appropriate assessment methods
- Some inaccuracies in their assessment of learners work
- 60% sampling

Green rag rating for the following reasons:

- Experienced assessor
- Excellent attention to quality assurance, assessment and feedback
- Completed cohort with no issues and good track record
- 30% sampling

People involved in assessment and quality assurance:
The Lead Internal Quality Assurer (LIQA)
The Lead Internal Quality Assurer and Programme Managers will ensure staff are trained and updated on awarding body requirements and procedures, including support and development for them to achieve relevant Assessor and Verifier awards where appropriate.

The LIQA, in conjunction with the Programme Manager will ensure each programme and qualification is administered in accordance with NTCALS guidance and the requirements of awarding bodies. This ensures each programme and qualification has:
- Appropriately experienced and qualified tutors/assessors and verifiers/ moderators.
- An assessment and verification plan that meets the requirements of awarding bodies.

The LIQA will work closely with the IQAs to ensure that internal quality assurance is consistent, fair and rigorous across NTCALS and that any areas for improvement are addressed and that records are available to awarding body external quality assurers when required.

The LIQA will work with other IQA's to gather information on standardisation activity, any incidents of malpractice and how they were dealt with Issues of non-compliance by tutor/assessors relating to performance management arrangements will be dealt with by the line manager.

The Programme Manager and Internal Quality Assurer (IQA)
Each course or programme of study will have an agreed assessment plan. For non-accredited courses this will be in line with the RARPA procedures.

The Programme Manager will ensure that:
- All staff taking part in the assessment process are suitably qualified and experienced and inducted into the process in accordance with awarding body criteria.
- Records of all staff involved with delivery of external awards are logged with awarding bodies through the Examinations Officer and are current.
- CPD is planned to maintain currency of knowledge in the team.
- External examinations are undertaken inline with awarding body practice.
- An internal quality assurer is appointed for each programme.
- All tutors/assessors and assurers maintain good quality records.

Internal Quality Assurers:
- Check assessment and internal quality assurance activity for each programme; ensuring it meets the requirements of the NTCALA, awarding bodies, the JCQ and QCF.
- Ensure all tutor/assessors are aware of and using current qualification specifications and quality assurance standards.
- Ensure all tutors/assessors have up to date information/accreditation specifications from awarding bodies, JCQ and QCF.

- Ensure the consistency and reliability of assessment materials before they are issued to learners.
- Ensure additional needs and support for learners are met.
- Monitor progress of the assessment plan.
- Produce a sampling plan to ensure that:
  - Evidence is assured at all stages of the process, and over a period of time.
  - All assessors, all assessment sites, all methods of assessment and all units are covered.
  - New assessors will have 100% of their assessment sampled.
  - Not less than 10% of evidence, candidates and units are sampled.
  - The full award over a cohort of candidates is sampled.
  - Candidates are interviewed when possible to verify their understanding of the process and validate their evidence.
- Verify/assure assessment decisions to ensure consistency.
- Give prompt feedback to tutor/assessors on assessment decisions.
- Oversee and undertake Quality Assurance processes on assessors e.g. observing assessor practice annually. This is in addition to the observation of teaching and learning carried out annually.
- Deal with Appeals made by candidates on assessment decisions.
- Report malpractice.
- Attend IQA/standardisation meetings.
- Complete reports on internal quality assurance reports as requested by the Programme Managers and/or the LIQA for submission to awarding bodies.

Maintain accurate records of IQA activity in the IQA/Awarding body centre file for external quality assurance
These include**:**
  - Portfolio sampling report
  - Example of a sampling plan
  - Observation of assessors practice.
  - Candidate interview record

The tutor/assessor will:
- Liaise with the Programme Manager and Internal Quality Assurer to ensure learners are supported to achieve their awards/outcomes as quickly and efficiently as possible.
- Issue qualification registration forms for their course from the Examinations Officer, to learners for the award they are taking and return them **promptly** to the Examinations Officer.
- Ensure initial assessment captures prior learning and experience relevant to the programme.
- Undertake all assessment activity in accordance with the requirements of NTCALA and awarding bodies, the JCQ, and the QCF.
- The tutor job description and contract assumes adoption of these standards. The NTC Code of Conduct for Employees and Performance Management procedures outline the consequences of non-compliance and malpractice.
- Know the standards and criteria set by the awarding bodies for each award they are teaching and prepare learners appropriately.
- Devise and implement the course assessment plan.
- Ensure learners have a copy of the standards/assessment criteria against which they are being assessed.

- Identify fair, safe, valid, reliable assessment opportunities.
- Judge performance objectively against learning outcomes.
- Give feedback promptly to learners on assessment decisions, indicating what has been done well and provide guidance on how work can be improved. Opportunity should be given to learners to respond to feedback.
- Feedback should include the correction of errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Keep copies of all assessment activities and the criteria used to mark/grade them.
- Use standard documents.
- Keep a record/tracking system to monitor assessment activity and the progress of each learner and raise any concerns with the Internal Quality Assurer or Programme Manager.
- Make records of assessment activity available to Programme Managers, Internal Quality Assurer, and the LIQA.
- Report incidents of malpractice.
- Attend team, verification and standardisation meetings and training as required.

3. External Awards & Examinations process

Learners will be given awarding body guidance on assessment arrangements at the outset of the course and registered when they understand and are committed to meeting the requirements and have been assessed as suitable to undertake the qualification.

Registration is undertaken by the Examinations Officer in consultation with the Programme Manager and tutor using the Qualification Registration form. Learners complete and return this form to the Examinations Officer. Learners should be reminded to print their full name, date of birth and address, as this is what will appear on their certificate.

Learners claiming accreditation costs from the Learner Support Fund and not taking the accreditation will be required to repay the fee to the NTCALS. Learners should be informed of this as they enrol on the course.

The Examinations Officer enters learners with the awarding body for the relevant qualification, receives confirmation and keeps a copy of all paperwork. The Programme Manager informs the Examinations Officer of the verified results, which are logged with the awarding body to request certificates and sent to the Learner Records team.

GCSE candidates will be liable for any additional costs if they change from Higher to Foundation level after they have registered for the examination.

Requests for Special Arrangements relating to external awards should be made using the Personal Extenuating Circumstances form as early as possible in the course and at least three months in advance of an examination. The Examinations Officer will contact the awarding body and then advise learners on what arrangements can be made.

External Examinations and 'live' assignments
Programme Managers will liaise with tutors and the Examinations Officer about dates and times of external examinations and arrangements for collection and return of live papers/assignments, invigilation arrangements etc. Those responsible for conducting external examinations and 'live' assessment must be aware of and implement guidance for conducting examinations as listed in Guidance in Conducting External Examinations.

All 'live' papers and examination papers are kept in a locked cabinet held in the office of the Examination Officer. Documents delivered to a centre prior to the beginning of an exam will be locked away according to the requirements of JCQ. They will be delivered within the given time frame (JCQ requirement).

Completed scripts and assignments are also kept securely and sent to the awarding body by the deadline agreed.

Learners will be informed of the requirements for the conduct of external examinations and given the required Notices for Candidates, namely:
- Fair Processing - General and Vocational Qualifications (use of data information).
- Mobile Phone notice.
- Information to Candidates (Controlled Assessments).
- Information to Candidates (on-screen tests and written examinations).
- Notice to Candidates (Coursework).
- Warning to Candidates.

Informing learners they have passed and Certificate collection
The Examination Officer will inform Programme Managers and learners when certificates arrive in the office. Certificates will be posted to learners. Learners will be requested to collect their portfolios.

Learners can request an external examination is remarked. There is a charge for this which learners are required to meet.

Candidate Appeals

NTCALS should provide fair assessments. If a candidate thinks the assessment was unfair they can appeal. The appeals procedure includes:-
- A formal system of recording appeals.
- Prompt responses within clearly stated times.
- Stages that give all parties the opportunity to put their case.
- Clear outcomes at each stage.
- Constructive feedback to the candidate.
- The appeals procedure has 3 stages.

All vocational candidates will have a copy of the appeals process in their portfolio, signed by them and the tutor to ensure they understand the process.

Candidate request for remarking of an external examination

Candidates should discuss this with their tutor and Programme Manager, as they can let the candidate know how close to a grade boundary they were before making a request as marks can increase or decrease.

If candidates would like to proceed with the enquiry they must:
1. Complete a Candidate Consent Form (available from the Examinations Officer)

2. Return this form to the Examinations Officer together with a cheque payable to North Tyneside Council for the correct amount.

Fees for post-results services (Access to Scripts and Enquiries about Results) are set independently by each individual awarding body.

Malpractice and Maladministration Procedure

NTCALS quality assurance arrangements are designed to ensure all learners receive the highest standards of assessment and accreditation and maintain confidence in the integrity, standards and credibility of all awards, internal and external. This document aims to:
- Define malpractice/maladministration in the context of assessment and accreditation.
- Set out the roles and responsibilities of NTCALS staff and learners in relation to such matters.
- Describe the procedures to be followed where there is reason to suspect the regulations have been broken.

NTCALS views non-compliance with, or breaches of, statutory and internal quality assurance requirements very seriously and will take action to address any issues. It is expected that suspicions of malpractice will be reported by learners and all staff wherever they originate. NTCALS will inform the awarding body immediately and the quality lead will instigate a fact finding investigation in line with the awarding body guidelines and JCQ regulations.

NTCALS procedures align with current guidance in the JCQ General and Vocational Qualifications, *Suspected Malpractice in Examinations and Assessments, Policies and Procedures*.

Malpractice/maladministration is deemed to be any practice or action, which threaten the integrity of assessment or certification.

Malpractice/maladministration can be:
- Intentional and aim to give an unfair advantage in an examination or assessment.
- Due to ignorance of the regulations, carelessness or forgetfulness in applying the regulations.
- A result of an incident or circumstances which are beyond the control of those involved (e.g. a fire alarm sounds and the exam is disrupted).

The individuals involved in malpractice/maladministration are also varied. They may be:
- candidates;

- teachers, lecturers, tutors, trainers, assessors or others responsible for the conduct, the administration or the quality assurance of examinations and assessments;
- assessment personnel such as examiners, invigilators, assessors, moderators or internal and external verifiers;
- other third parties, e.g. parents/carers/guardians, siblings, friends of the candidate.

NTCALS Malpractice: Guidance to learners and JCQ Fair Processing Notice are given to candidates as they register for an award. Candidates are asked to sign to confirm they have understood the documents.

Guidance on what constitutes malpractice, reporting it, fact finding and sanctions, are located in: S:\ES&I\ALA\Policies & Protocols\2018-2019 Masters\Assessment and Accreditation Policy\confidentiality, malpractice, IQA letter\malpractice procedure.docx

Arrangements to Identify and Resolve Potential Conflicts of Interest

Definition of Conflict of Interest
A conflict of interest exists where either EAL or an individual to whom this policy applies has competing interests or loyalties in the same matter.

Here are some examples of Conflict of Interest *(This is not an exhaustive list):*
• When an individual has a position of authority in one organisation that conflicts with his or her interests in another organisation.
• A tutor/assessor employed by E&S Adult Learning Service delivering a qualification where a family member is one of the learners.
• E&S interest in any activity that could potentially lead to the organisation to act contrary to its interest in the assessment and delivery of qualifications
• When an individual has interests that conflict with his or her professional position.
• Where an individual is undertaking the end-point assessment of apprentices, and have previously trained, managed or assessed the same apprentice(s), during the 'on-programme' phase of their apprenticeship.

Conflicts of interest can:
• Inhibit free discussion.
• Result in decisions or actions that are not in the interests of the centre, learners, awarding organisation, EPAO or the employer.
• Put at risk EAL's reputation that it may have acted improperly

A conflict of interest can appear in the form of:
• Direct financial gain.
• Indirect financial gain e.g. a service or contract is awarded to a relative.
• Non-financial gain when the beneficiary of a service, award or donation is an employee, contractor or trustee

Managing Conflicts of Interest
The management of potential conflicts of interest is monitored as follows:
• NTC Employment & Skills Adult Learning Service EQAs will monitor conflict of interest at centres.

• NTC Programme Managers are responsible for monitoring and managing any potential and actual conflicts that are identified.
• All current and potential conflicts of interest are kept under review as part of the remit of the service Lead IQA meetings.
• Conflict of Interest declarations are sought from stakeholders involved in the development, delivery and award of qualifications and end point assessment services and logged with Lead Internal Quality Assurer for the service.

Accreditation of Prior Learning

NTCALA is committed to lifelong learning and therefore recognises the skills, learning and qualifications of all learners accessing the service.

Definition
APL is an assessment process that enables recognition of achievement from a range of activities using any valid assessment methodology. APL is a process that recognises that learning is continuous. It focuses on assessment and certification of prior learning.

Eligibility
All learners are eligible to request Accreditation of Prior Learning and be given access to the process through the Faculty Manager who will designate an assessor to give advice and support each learner.

Provided that the assessment requirements of a given unit or qualification have been met, the use of APL is acceptable for accrediting part of a unit, or a full unit(s). Although it is possible in theory to claim for an entire qualification through APL this is not the norm.

 Evidence submitted for APL must be:
- Authentic
- Current – (not more than two years old)
- Relevant
- Sufficient

Restrictions on APL
It cannot be applied to the following:
- Externally assessed units.
- Performance criteria for example in qualifications where evidence is gathered from observations.
- If the evidence is over two years old.
- If an awarding body APL policy or procedures deem it exempt.

Management of the APL process
Responsibility for overseeing the rigour and consistency of the APL process lies with the quality lead and the Programme Manager.

The Programme Manager will be responsible for the assessment of APL requests in their subject area. Programme Managers will designate a suitably qualified member of staff, to support the APL applicant within 10 working days of receiving an APL written

request. They will use the checklist of the assessment criteria for each qualification to determine if APL is applicable.

The Programme Manager (or a suitably qualified person nominated by them) will ratify the decision of the assessor, and the learner will be informed of the decision.

Appeals

All APL appeals should be submitted to the quality lead within 10 working days They will invite two independent members of staff not linked to the original APL assessment to consider the complaint. Learners will be informed of the date and time of this meeting.

This is the final stage of the internal procedure and a response will be communicated to the learner within 24 hours of the meeting and confirmed in writing.

Guidance on supporting a learner through the APL process is located in:
[Accreditation of Prior Learning guidance\Guidance on APL process.docx](Accreditation of Prior Learning guidance\Guidance on APL process.docx)

Recognition of Prior Learning Process

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is an assessment process which makes use of evidence of a learner's **previous non - certificated achievements** to demonstrate competence or achievement within a unit or qualification.
Through the RPL process, evidence of a candidate's previous achievement (learning) is assessed against the learning outcomes of a unit.

Eligibility

All learners are eligible to request Recognition of Prior Learning and be given access to the process through the Programme Manager who will designate an assessor to give advice and support each learner. Examples of RPL may come from life experience, volunteering, education and training, work activities.

Provided that the assessment requirements of a given unit or qualification have been met, the use of RPL is acceptable for substituting learning towards the unit and under no circumstances be used to replace the assessment requirements for units i.e. unit exams, practical theory tests or assignments.
This is because the summative assessment is the process through which evidence (produced via any prior assessment method or through the RPL process) is evaluated.

Evidence submitted for APL must be:
- Authentic
- Current – (is not time limited but up to the assessor to ensure it is valid and authentic)
- Relevant
- Sufficient

RPL Process

Centres wishing to undertake RPL must ensure that:
- it is carried out by designated staff with relevant levels of expertise to meet the requirements of the assessment strategy / guidance for the qualification concerned.

The methods of assessment used will be determined by the assessment strategy for the qualification being assessed and might, for example, include:
- examination of documents,
- expert witness testimony
- reflective accounts
- professional discussion.

The RPL assessment should be carried out as an entire process. This means that the assessor should:
- Plan with the learner
- Make a formal assessment decision
- Feedback assessment decisions to the learner, confirming decision and giving guidance on the available options (particularly in situations where the decision has been not to award credit.)
- Maintain appropriate records
- Ensure that learners are aware of their right to access the appeals process should they feel the assessment decision was unfair

The assessor **must** ensure that all learning outcomes and assessment criteria being claimed are covered and that records of assessment are maintained in the usual way. The process must be subject to the same quality assurance requirements as any other assessment method.

Additional guidance and paperwork

For:
- Exams
- Conducting an exam
- Registration of learners
- ALA and JCQ guidance for learners
- Personal Extenuating Circumstance forms
- Appeals process and guidance
- APL process
- IQA documents

Are located in: Assessment & Accreditation Policy 18-19.docx