

Assessment and Accreditation Policy and Procedures



North Tyneside Council



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North Tyneside Council

North Tyneside Council Adult Learning Service

Assessment and Accreditation Policy

Policy Statement

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

The same quality standards are also expected for learners and apprentices 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 quality assurance in each programme area comply with NTCALS guidance and meets the requirements of awarding bodies and the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ).
- 3 Staff are occupationally competent and hold assessor and /or internal quality assurance qualifications relevant to the qualification or course they are assessing or verifying.
- 4 The assessment and internal quality assurance procedures for each qualification are made known to learners at the start of the course.
- 5 The NTCALS Appeals procedure is applied as relevant to assessment and internal verification decisions.
- 6 Learners are informed at the start of the course of the NTCALS Appeals procedure, the Awarding Body for their qualification and their respective Appeals procedure.
- 7 The operation of assessment and internal quality assurance procedures is monitored through internal moderation and standardisation processes, Adult Learning Managers Meetings and the quality forum.

- 8 Learners and apprentices will be given an opportunity to have prior experience and/or learning accredited in line with our recognition of prior learning guidelines (please also see Apprenticeship initial assessment process).
- 9 Evidence that externally commissioned/contract providers can meet these standards will be required in advance of contracts being agreed and monitoring and reporting arrangements will be specified within such contracts.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Barrett', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mark Barrett
Senior Manager – Employment and Skills

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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 and the Joint Council for Qualifications.

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, ongoing course reviews, internal quality assurance and standardisation.

What learners can expect from NTCALS:

- Equality of access to fair and reliable assessment for all learners and apprentices.
- 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 quality assurance 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 voice activity and learner satisfaction surveys.
- Encourage employer feedback through a range of mechanisms
- Contingency plans in place ensuring learning can continue if circumstances present themselves.

What NTCALS expects from learners and apprentices:

- 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/apprentices 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 2018. 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. For further information on our policy in relation to the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) please see North Tyneside Council's Information Security policy.

Internal Quality Assurance (IQA)

A copy of the IQA arrangements for each programme is held by the Programme Manager. These arrangements are reviewed and monitored monthly at the quality forum in line with the quality framework.

IQA Monitoring and review arrangements will include records of:

- IQA sampling plan including all candidates' registration numbers.
- Portfolio sampling reports for interim and summative quality assurance activity.
- If appropriate any relevant candidate appeal records.
- Relevant standardisation and monitoring reports.

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. For further information on this process please request access to our RARPA procedure. Samples of non-accredited provision will be moderated during the academic year by an allocated quality assurer (IQA) via a sampling plan agreed with each Programme Manager as relevant to their programme area's RARPA profile. Moderation reports will be produced and shared with the assessor and Programme Manager and stored in the appropriate quality folder in the shared drive. Moderation reports and activity will be audited and standardised twice per academic year and a summary report submitted to the Quality Forum. Actions will be determined and agreed on an individual, programme area and ALS-wide basis as appropriate from the IQA and standardisation process with any necessary professional development included in ALS planning and individual IPRs as necessary.

Apprenticeship Quality Assurance

For apprenticeship standards a quality panel convened by the Apprenticeship Programme Manager who will undertake standardisation activities with the delivery

team to ensure delivery of high quality apprenticeship standards. The Programme Manager for Apprenticeships will dip sample elements of apprenticeship e portfolio's and include progress and action planning during staff monthly course reviews. Apprentices will be supported to prepare for EPA through mock assessments provided by another member of the apprenticeship team.

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.

Red rag rating is applied in the following situations:

- Newly appointed assessors
- New qualifications
- Poor quality processes and assessment activity
- 100% sampling

Amber rag rating will be applied for the following reasons:

- An assessor who needs additional support with feedback or appropriate assessment methods
- Some inaccuracies or inconsistencies in their assessment of learners' work
- New assessors after one full cohort of learners through certification
- 50% sampling

Green rag rating for the following reasons:

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

Roles and Responsibilities

Senior Program Manager

The Senior Programme Manager will liaise with relevant Programme Manager/s to 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 and opportunities are given to maintain vocational competence.

The Senior Programme Manager will ensure each programme and qualification is administered in accordance with NTCALS guidance and the requirements of awarding bodies and JCQ. This ensures each programme and qualification has:

- Appropriately experienced and qualified tutors/assessors and internal quality assurers.
- An assessment and quality assurance plan that meets the requirements of awarding bodies.
- Timely systems for administration of learner information, registration, and claims

- The single central register of mandatory training and CVs are reviewed annually.

Programme Manager

Each programme manager will work closely with their IQAs to ensure that internal quality assurance is consistent, fair and rigorous across NTCALS, innovative or exemplary practice shared and any areas for improvement addressed. Programme managers arrange standardisation activity, team meetings and relevant continuous professional development, in line with the quality framework and report to the quality forum. Records of this will be made available to awarding body external quality assurers as required.

Programme Managers 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 and current CVs are held centrally and available on request.
- 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 in line with the professional development policy.
- All external assessments are undertaken in line with awarding body practice, NTCALS procedures and JCQ guidance.
- An internal quality assurer is appointed for each programme.
- All tutors/assessors and quality assurers maintain effective learner progress and assessment records which can be sampled on demand.

Internal Quality Assurers will:

- Check assessment and internal quality assurance activity for each programme; ensuring it meets the requirements of the NTCALS, awarding bodies and JCQ.
- 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 and JCQ.
- Ensure the consistency and reliability of assessment materials before they are issued to learners.
- Identify if learner support needs are being 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.
 - The full qualification over a cohort of candidates is sampled.
 - Not less than 10% of evidence, candidates and units are 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.
- Deal with Appeals made by candidates on assessment decisions.
- Report malpractice.
- Attend IQA/standardisation meetings.
- Provide summary information on internal quality assurance reports as requested by the Programme Managers and/or Senior Programme Manager for submission to awarding bodies.

Tutor/Assessor will:

- Liaise with the Programme Manager and Internal Quality Assurer to ensure learners are supported to achieve their qualification/outcomes as quickly and efficiently as possible.
- Ensure qualification registration/apprenticeship forms are completed in a timely fashion and returned **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 NTCALS, awarding body and JCQ guidance.
- Comply with adoption of all relevant standards in relation to NTC Code of Conduct for Employees and Performance Management procedures being mindful of the consequences of non-compliance and malpractice in line with NTCALS procedures.
- Declare any potential conflict of interest related to their own or colleagues practice in line with the Declaration of Interests Policy including Whistleblowing where appropriate (see NTC Whistleblowing procedures)
- 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.
- Assessors should provide opportunity to learners to respond to 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 standardised 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 Senior Programme Manager.
- Report incidents of malpractice.
- Attend team, organisational and standardisation meetings and training as required.
- Collect evidence and upload to EPAO in preparation for Gateway according to the organisations processes and timelines.

- Apply for EPA for apprentices using the correct process for that EPAO

3. External Awards & Examinations process

Learners/apprentices will be given awarding body/EPAO information and guidance on assessment arrangements at the outset of and throughout the course as appropriate and necessary. Learners/ apprentices will be registered in line with awarding body/ EPAO requirements as and when they understand and are committed to meeting the requirements and have been assessed as appropriately prepared to undertake the assessment.

Registration is undertaken by the Examinations Officer in consultation with the Programme Manager and tutor using the Qualification Registration or apprenticeship form. Learners/apprentices must complete and return this form to the Examinations Officer. Learners/apprentices should be reminded to print their full name, date of birth and address, as it should 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 NTCALS. Learners should be informed of this as they enrol on the course.

The Examinations Officer enters learners/apprentices with the awarding body or EPAO for the relevant qualification/standard, receives confirmation and keeps a copy of all paperwork. Verified results will be managed by the Examinations Officer and Programme Manager in line with each awarding body's/ EPAO's agreed processes with certificate issue confirmed at the earliest opportunity following successful achievement of all required assessments and confirmation of certification logged with the Learner Records team. Apprenticeship standard results will be sent directly to the employer and a screen shot will be shared with Learner Records to evidence apprenticeship outcomes. Learners/apprentices will be advised of the outcomes of externally marked assessments at the earliest opportunity in line with awarding body/ EPAO regulations. If a candidate feels that their assessment result is not an accurate representation of their performance within the assessment, they may make an appeal in line with below process and/ or the awarding body/ EPAO policy which will be highlighted to any learner/ apprentice wishing to appeal or challenge an external assessment outcome. .

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/apprenticeship standard EPAs 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 the learner/ apprentice on agreed arrangements or adjustments.

External Examinations and 'live' assignments

All External Examinations and 'live' assignments will be conducted in line with the Exams Policy. Programme Managers will liaise with tutors and the Examinations Officer as appropriate to arrange dates and times of external examinations including

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 stored 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 Learner Records and learners when certificates are available. Certificates will be generally be posted to learners. Learners will be requested to collect their portfolios.

EPA achievement will be sent directly to the apprentices employer.

Candidate Appeals & Remarks

NTC Adult Learning Service should provide fair and reliable assessment processes in association with our respective awarding bodies. Assessments methods are set by awarding bodies and may be determined and marked internally, by Adult Learning Service tutors and assessors, or externally, via submission to the awarding body.

Learners have the right to appeal or request a remark as detailed in our Appeals and Remarks Procedure, if they think assessment was unfair.

Candidate request for remarking of an external examination

Candidates should discuss this with their tutor and/or Programme Manager and be aware that remark requests typically incur a fee set independently by each individual awarding body. Any learner wishing to request these services, will be required to cover the associated fees in full.

If candidates would like to proceed with the enquiry they must:

1. Complete a Candidate Consent Form (see Appeals & Remark Procedure)

2. Return this form to the Examinations Officer and arrange immediate payment to North Tyneside Council for the correct amount. Payment must be received before an appeal or remark request will be processed.

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

Candidate request for remarking Internally marked assessments

The appeals and remark procedure is robust and 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.

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 quality assurers.
- other third parties, e.g. parents/carers/guardians, siblings, friends of the candidate.

For further information on what constitutes malpractice, reporting it, fact finding and sanctions please request access to our Malpractice and Maladministration Procedures.

Arrangements to Identify and Resolve Potential Conflicts of Interest

NTCALS have a clear, discreet policy on Declaration of Interest to identify, minimise and/or mitigate any potential conflict of interests. A conflict of interest is a situation in which an individual, or organisation, has competing interests or loyalties. Any such interest which could compromise, or appear to compromise, their decisions must be declared.

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 NTCALS's reputation or public confidence that it may have acted improperly.

Managing Conflicts of Interest

The management of potential conflicts of interest is monitored as follows:

- NTCALS EQAs will monitor conflict of interest at centres.
- NTC Programme Managers are responsible for monitoring, managing and recording any potential and actual conflicts that are identified on the conflict of interest tracker.
- All current and potential conflicts of interest are kept under review as part of the remit of the Quality Forum.
- Conflict of Interest declarations are sought from stakeholders involved in the development, delivery and award of qualifications and end point assessment services and logged on the conflict of interest tracker.

For further information please request a copy of NTCALS Declaration of Interests Policy.

Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)

NTCALS 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 Programme 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:

- Valid (is not time limited but up to the assessor to ensure it is valid and authentic)
- Current
- Authentic
- Sufficient
- Relevant

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, currency must be considered in relation to contemporary practice and updated regulations.
- 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 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 Programme Manager 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 available on request from the Exams Officer.

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/apprentice's previous achievement (learning) is assessed against the learning outcomes of a unit or an apprenticeship standard.

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 RPL must be:

- Valid (is not time limited but up to the assessor to ensure it is valid and authentic)
- Current
- Authentic
- Sufficient
- Relevant

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

- Exams Policy
- Institutions conducting exams

- Registration of learners
- NTCALS and JCQ guidance for learners
- Personal Extenuating Circumstance Procedure
- Appeals process and guidance
- APL & RPL process
- IQA documents
- Malpractice and Maladministration guidance
- Declaration of Interest Policy
- Special Consideration guidance
- NTC Information and Security Policy
- RARPA Procedure
- Quality Framework
- Professional Development Policy
- Complaints Procedure

How to contact us

If you have a concern or query about assessment or accreditation, please contact our Exams Office via post, phone or email:

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