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# ETB Training Centre Assessment Regulations

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# About this Document

## Overview

The ETB Training Centre Assessment Regulations underpin the planning, coordination, conduct, marking and storage of assessments, the recording and approval of results, and the verification and authentication of all ETB Training Centre assessments leading to the request of an award from recognised bodies whose awards are within or aligned with the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

This document is one of a number of ETB Training Centre documents that has been prepared to meet the requirements of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999. The documents and systems listed below are also related to ETB Training Centre assessments:

- Appeal of Assessment Result Procedure
- ETB Training Centre Procedures for Managing Assessment System Malpractice
- ETB Training Centre Learner Guide to Assessment
- ETB Training Centre Quality Assurance Assessment Policy and Operating Procedures
- ETB Training Centre Policy on Assessment Development, Marking and Grading
- ETB Training Centre Transition Quality Assurance System

## Scope

The document applies to **all** training and assessment activities conducted within the ETB Training Centre and by external providers operating within the ETB Training Centre transition quality assurance system. The document provides all assessment personnel with a set of overarching guidelines which will enable a common approach to assessment practice across all ETB Training Centre activity. As such, the regulations are designed to encompass best practice in assessment in the broadest sense.

Specific operational detail relating to the implementation of the assessment regulations is not contained in this document. Such detail can be found in a range of existing ETB Training Centre documents and procedures. Operational details provided in existing ETB Training Centre documents and procedures may need to be updated in line with this document. New procedures may also need to be developed to ensure organisational consistency.

Where the contents of this document differ from the regulations of an Awarding Body, regulations of the Awarding Body take precedence. Non-conformance with the requirements outlined in this document or any of the above-listed documents constitutes a non-conformance with ETB Training Centre quality assurance policy and procedure.

## Feedback and Review

This document will be reviewed 12 months after its publication. During this time, the contents will not be subject to change. Comments and feedback relating to the document can be sent to the ETB Training Centre. These will be taken into consideration when carrying out the review.

# Introduction

## What is the purpose of the ETB Training Centre Assessment Regulations?

The purpose of the ETB Training Centre Assessment Regulations is to ensure that assessment of learners is fair and consistent and is administered in line with ETB Training Centre and relevant awarding body requirements.

## What are the ETB Training Centre Assessment Regulations?

The ETB Training Centre Assessment Regulations cover:

- Planning and coordination of assessment
- Preparing for, conducting and concluding assessment events
- Marking assessments
- Handling learner assessment non-attendance or lateness, and deferral or deadline extension requests
- Handling learner assessment rechecks, reviews, and re-sits, repeats and appeals.
- Maintaining the security of assessment
- Conducting internal verification and external authentication
- Conducting the results approval process
- Requesting certification
- Maintaining assessment records and evidence
- Providing assessment adaptations and learner supports to meet the needs of learners with disabilities

Where there is any lack of clarity or a conflict of interpretation between all other duly approved ETB Training Centre quality assurance procedures impacting on assessment or certification and this document, the content of this document takes precedence.

## Where do the ETB Training Centre Assessment Regulations Apply?

This document applies to **all** assessment activities conducted within the ETB Training Centre and by external providers operating within the ETB Training Centre transition quality assurance systems. These regulations cover all assessment processes undertaken by a learner which are an agreed part of the validated programme leading to an award.

For second providers, the regulations will be reinforced through either ETB Training Centre contractual arrangements or via a Memorandum of Understanding, which indicates that the second provider subscribes to the ETB Training Centre Assessment Regulations

These regulations do not deal with any specific arrangements that the ETB Training Centre may put in place for assessment under Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). The ETB Training Centre may decide to produce additional arrangements for RPL, and specific RPL regulations may result in a separate publication, or amendments and/or additions to this document.

# Assessment Regulations

## Section 1. The Assessment Process

Throughout the assessment process:

- 1.1 The relevant ETB Training Centre Manager has overall responsibility for the assessment process.
- 1.2 All assessment duties are assigned to designated persons who are briefed prior to the assessment process.
- 1.3 Assessment duties are carried out in a way that preserves the integrity of the assessment process, assessment instruments, assessment evidence and records.
- 1.4 Any record, as defined in the Freedom of Information Acts, 1997 and 2003, is made available according to FOI procedure<sup>1</sup>.
- 1.5 All assessment personnel are responsible for the accurate completion and sign-off of all relevant assessment documentation.
- 1.6 Conflicts of interest are declared and managed<sup>2</sup>.
- 1.7 The rights of learners are at all times respected and learners are treated with confidentiality, fairness, courtesy and dignity. In carrying out their duties assessment personnel do not engage in any activity that constitutes bullying, harassment, or discrimination.

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<sup>1</sup> The Freedom of Information Reference Manual (Section 15) provides a guide to the functions, structure and records of the ETB Training Centre. A copy of the 2010 edition is available from the Freedom of Information Unit.

<sup>2</sup> Conflict of interest in the assessment process refers to any situation which compromises, or appears to compromise the objectivity of personnel involved in the assessment process (e.g. conducting an assessment in which a family member or friend is being assessed / the same person undertaking the conduct and verification of the same assessment).

## Section 2. Planning the Assessment Process

2.1 **Design:** The assessment for each programme should be planned in advance of commencing learning and assessment activities and should be in line with national criteria<sup>3</sup>. A holistic approach, which considers the assessment load and the needs of learners, should be taken and assessment plans documented. The tendency to over assess should be avoided<sup>4</sup>.

Assessment plans will:

- a. Reflect relevant Awarding Body and ETB Training Centre policy guidelines and procedures on assessment, including the grading and marking of assessments.
- b. Address the learning outcomes in the award standard.
- c. Include information on appropriate assessment methods for the programme.
- d. Outline the weighting and duration of assessments.
- e. Contain marking criteria, outlining expected standards of attainment for particular grades.
- f. Indicate the learner's expected performance.
- g. Include information on recognition of prior learning, where appropriate.
- h. State when and how learners will be informed of assessment outcomes.
- i. Indicate when performance feedback will be provided to learners.
- j. Include information on repeats and appeals processes.

2.2 **Delivery:** Assessment schedules should be devised locally for each programme and should specify the date, time and location of a named assessment and at what stage in training programmes the assessment takes place.

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<sup>3</sup> Modular Assessment Programme, Assessment Instrument Specification, Training Plan, Training Specification, etc.

<sup>4</sup> QQI FETAC Quality Assuring Assessment Guidelines for Providers (May2007).

## Section 3. Coordinating the Assessment Process

Coordination of the assessment process ensures that:

- 3.1 Resources and personnel are in place to support the coordination of the ETB Training Centre assessment as specified.
- 3.2 Communication mechanisms for the dissemination of information on assessment to assessment personnel and learners are in place and implemented.
- 3.3 Assessment personnel are briefed on, have access to and comply with the relevant elements of :
  - a. ETB Training Centre assessment policy and procedures contained in the ETB Training Centre Overarching QA Handbook and the relevant elements of the ETB Training Centre Transition Quality Assurance System (TQAS)
  - b. ETB Assessment Regulations
  - c. Relevant legislation regarding Equality, Health and Safety, etc.
  - d. ETB Training Centre Procedures for Managing Assessment System Malpractice
  - e. Any additional Awarding Body requirements if relevant
- 3.4 Responsibilities related to the assessment are clearly assigned (see Appendix 1 for a description of responsibilities in the assessment process).
- 3.5 Assessment personnel are technically competent to carry out the roles assigned to them.
- 3.6 The training needs of assessment personnel related to assessment are identified and addressed.
- 3.7 Assessment personnel have sufficient resources to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities.
- 3.8 Approved assessment procedures are implemented for each programme.
- 3.9 Assessment arrangements and schedules are established.
- 3.10 A system for the approval and coordination of reasonable accommodation requests is in place. (As set out in Appendix 2).
- 3.11 A process for dealing with issues of compassionate consideration is in place. Acceptable reasons for requesting compassionate consideration include:
  - a. Sickness, as evidenced by a doctor's medical certificate
  - b. Family bereavement
  - c. Other reasons that are accepted by the relevant ETB Training Centre Manager
- 3.12 Arrangements are in place for internal verification (on conduct of assessment process, results and peer review) and the relevant personnel briefed in advance of assessment.
- 3.13 Arrangements are in place for external authentication and the relevant personnel briefed in advance of assessment.
- 3.14 Arrangements are in place for results approval and the relevant personnel briefed in advance of assessment.

## Section 4. Preparing for the Assessment Event

When preparing for an assessment event the regulations outlined below apply:

- 4.1 Learners are provided with all relevant assessment information in advance of assessment<sup>5</sup>. Responsibility for dissemination of the information is assigned locally. Information provided is in a format appropriate to the learners and includes:
  - a. The ETB Training Centre Learner Guide to Assessment<sup>6</sup>
  - b. Availability of learner supports related to assessment
  - c. Assessment rechecks, review and repeat process details
  - d. Learner Instructions
  - e. Learner assessment appeals process details
  - f. Sanctions that may be incurred if learners do not conform with assessment regulations (e.g. stopping the issuing of certificates)
- 4.2 The most appropriate and current version(s) of an assessment is selected for use.
- 4.3 Approved supports requested by learners with a disability are put in place (see Appendix 2) and the learner is informed of the arrangements within the timeframe specified by operational procedure (as specified by TSS operational processes).
- 4.4 Assessment support personnel for reasonable accommodation purposes (if required) are approved in advance of assessment and are briefed on their role and conduct (see Appendix 2).
- 4.5 Learners are informed of when assessment(s) will take place, and when they will receive provisional assessment results.
- 4.6 Relevant assessment personnel are familiar with the full requirements of the assessment process including:
  - a. ETB Training Centre assessment policies and procedures contained in the ETB Overarching QA Handbook
  - b. The ETB Assessment Regulations
  - c. ETB Training Centre Transition Quality Assurance System
  - d. The relevant Assessment
  - e. The procedures for managing assessment system malpractice.
- 4.7 All assessments, assessment locations and assessment instruments adhere to current Health and Safety legislation.
- 4.8 The conditions and layout of the assessment location are as specified for the assessment event.
- 4.9 All required equipment is in working order.
- 4.10 The time and date settings on PCs are set to the correct time and date.
- 4.11 A copy of the ETB Assessment Regulations is available during assessment.
- 4.12 A clearly legible sign should be affixed to the door(s) of the assessment location indicating an assessment is underway and only authorised persons have access to the assessment location as appropriate to the assessment technique.

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<sup>5</sup> Assessment information is provided via the ETB Training Centre Internet, learner induction, learner portal, ETB Training Centre publications such as the ETB Training Centre Learner Guide to Assessment, ongoing information on assessment provided in class by instructors/trainers and various other methods as deemed appropriate locally.

<sup>6</sup> Easy-to-Read and Irish language versions are also available.

## Section 5. Conducting the Assessment Event

When conducting an assessment event, the regulations outlined below apply:

- 5.1 Only authorised individuals have access to the assessment location during the assessment.
- 5.2 Learner identity is verified and recorded. If the learner is not known to the relevant assessment personnel, proof of identity is provided.
- 5.3 If proof of identity is not presented and the identity of the learner cannot be confirmed, or impersonation is suspected, the individual in question will not be allowed to sit the assessment and the relevant ETB Training Centre Manager must be notified.
- 5.4 Electronic communications devices, not required as part of the assessment,<sup>7</sup> must be switched off and left in the designated area along with any other unauthorised materials and learner possessions such as coats, bags and books, etc.<sup>8</sup>
- 5.5 In cases where English is not the first language of the learner, learners are permitted to use a bilingual translation dictionary<sup>9</sup>, if the use of same is allowed by the relevant Awarding Body.
- 5.6 Where mathematical or statistical tables are required, these will be provided at the assessment location. Learners will not be permitted to use their own.
- 5.7 Where calculators are required in an assessment, only non-programmable calculators may be used. A learner may use their own non-programmable calculator.
- 5.8 The attendance and non-attendance of learners is recorded.
- 5.9 If a learner advises assessment personnel of sickness directly before the assessment commences, the regulations for deferrals apply (see Section 7).
- 5.10 Learner instructions on assessment are given to learners verbally and/or in writing by the relevant assessment personnel.
- 5.11 Learners are informed by the relevant assessment personnel of the start and finish times of the assessment.
- 5.12 The time allotted for assessment is strictly observed.
- 5.13 The assessment is run in accordance with the conditions of testing as detailed in the assessment programme.
- 5.14 On-line assessments are carried out in accordance with discrete assessment instructions and learners comply with the on-line system requirements.
- 5.15 Silence is maintained throughout written theory tests, PC-based assessments etc.
- 5.16 Learners do not help each other or interfere with each other's work.

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<sup>7</sup> For example, mobile phones, smart phones lap tops etc – all of which must be switched off.

<sup>8</sup> Except in cases where a reasonable accommodation allows for the use of a particular electronic communications device / book or other support by a particular student.

<sup>9</sup> Exceptions include Communication, English/Irish language assessments or assessments in the learner's native language or a language closely related to the native language of the learner.

- 5.17 Where any non-conformance with assessment regulations by a learner is observed, (e.g. suspected cheating/use of proscribed materials), the ETB Training Centre Procedures for Managing Assessment System Malpractice must be adhered to<sup>10</sup>.
- 5.18 Learners should not remove, or attempt to remove, any assessment material unless specified.
- 5.19 Learners are supervised at all times.
- 5.20 If admitted, learners arriving late to an assessment event are not allocated extra time, except under the conditions outlined in Footnote 13.
- 5.21 Learners are not allowed to leave an assessment location during the first 15 minutes of an assessment<sup>11</sup>.
- 5.22 If a learner cannot continue with an assessment due to sickness or unforeseen emergency, this is recorded. (see Sections 8.3 and 9.5).
- 5.23 Learners do not leave the assessment location unless authorised.
- 5.24 In the event of a disturbance during the assessment, e.g. fire alarm, the assessment location is evacuated in accordance with local procedures:
- a. Learners leave all assessment materials in the assessment location.
  - b. Time lost during the emergency evacuation is documented and learners should be accommodated to settle back into the assessment event and complete the assessment.
  - c. If the assessment supervisor is of the view that the integrity of the assessment process has been/may have been compromised due to the disturbance, the assessment event should be suspended and recorded.
  - d. Online assessments are abandoned and rearranged for another date.
- 5.25 If a learner engages in any unsafe practice, his or her assessment is suspended immediately and the unsafe practice is addressed. Once the unsafe practice has been rectified the learner may carry on with the assessment. In instances where an unsafe practice cannot be rectified, the assessment is stopped, the learner is asked to leave the assessment location and the assessment is recorded as an attempt.
- 5.26 Incorrect, impractical or unsafe assessment items that materialise during an assessment are dealt with.
- 5.27 In the event of a suspected or alleged instance of malpractice with assessment regulations, the ETB Procedures for Managing Assessment System Malpractice are adhered to.
- 5.28 Learner complaints in relation to the assessment process are documented and investigated in accordance with organisational complaints procedures.

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<sup>10</sup> The suspected incident must be recorded immediately and the relevant ETB Training Centre Manager must be informed. An investigation must take place immediately on the conclusion of the assessment. On completion of the assessment, the learner in question must be advised of the alleged malpractice and warned that their assessment may be declared null and void and that disciplinary procedures may ensue.

<sup>11</sup> This does not apply in cases where reasonable accommodations allow for rest breaks during an assessment or in cases where the assessment is less than 15 minutes.

## Section 6. Concluding the Assessment Event

When concluding an assessment event, the regulations below apply:

- 6.1 Learners are reminded to check that the information required on the front of their assessment script has been correctly completed and that they print their first and surnames in the relevant fields of all assessment documentation. In the case of PC-based assessments, learners must ensure that their files are saved to the designated format/location, if applicable.
- 6.2 Learners are instructed to collate and securely attach all documents used during assessment before submitting them to the relevant assessment personnel.
- 6.3 All copies of the Learner's Instructions/Test Questions are accounted for and returned to the designated place.
- 6.4 All relevant assessment documentation<sup>12</sup> is completed and signed off.
- 6.5 Any suspected non-conformances with Assessment Regulations are recorded.

Non-conformances with Assessment Regulations are noted and reported to the relevant personnel and dealt with as per ETB Procedures for Managing Assessment System Malpractice

## Section 7. Non-Attendance or Lateness, Deferral Requests or Deadline Extension Requests

With regard to the assessment non-attendance, deferral of an assessment or a deadline extension, the following regulations apply<sup>13</sup>:

- 7.1 Deferral requests are made in writing by the learner and must state the reason for the deferral request.
- 7.2 Requests for deadline extensions are made in writing by the learner and must state the reason for the deadline extension request.
- 7.3 Learners who do not turn up for assessment must submit a written explanation to the relevant instructor/trainer within two working days of the missed assessment.

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<sup>12</sup> Assessment report forms, attendance sheets and seating plan.

<sup>13</sup> Acceptable reasons for request of a deferral of assessment non-attendance or lateness, deferral of assessment, or extension to a deadline include:

- a. Sickness, as evidenced by a medical certificate
- b. Family bereavement
- c. Other reasons that are accepted by the relevant assessment personnel and the relevant ETB Training Centre Manager

## Section 8. Marking of Assessment

All results are provisional until approved by the Results Approval Panel (see Section 13).

When marking assessments, the regulations below apply:

- 8.1 Assessments are marked in accordance with the ETB Training Centre Policy on Assessment Development, Marking and Grading.
- 8.2 Non-attendance at an assessment by a learner without a valid reason<sup>14</sup> is recorded as an attempt<sup>15</sup>.
- 8.3 Evidence of attendance at an assessment by a learner is recorded as an attempt, except in the case of learners who could not continue with an assessment due to sickness or unforeseen emergency (see also 5.22 and 9.5).
- 8.4 Learner assessment evidence is verified as the learner's own work via an authorship statement<sup>16</sup> or other appropriate means must be submitted in the case of portfolios, projects, coursework etc.
- 8.5 If plagiarism is suspected, it must be recorded and dealt with in line with the malpractice document.
- 8.6 Learner performance is marked in accordance with directions outlined in the assessment marking instructions.
- 8.7 Learner assessment results are recorded and collated using approved documentation and systems.

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<sup>14</sup> See Footnote 13.

<sup>15</sup> With the exception of Apprenticeship assessments, where three unattended calls equal one attempt.

<sup>16</sup> Signed declaration that the work presented for assessment is the author's own work and does not include the unacknowledged work of any other person, organisation or body.

## **Section 9. Learner Assessment Rechecks, Reviews, Re-sits, Repeats and Appeals.**

When administering assessment, rechecks, reviews, resits, repeats and appeals, the following regulations are adhered to:

- 9.1 Assessment personnel are familiar with the rules governing rechecks, reviews, re-sits, repeats and the Learner Assessment Appeals Process.
- 9.2 Learners are facilitated in receiving feedback on their assessment, including viewing their marked assessment(s) as appropriate.
- 9.3 Learners are advised on the processes and procedures relating to repeats and appeals of assessment(s) prior to assessment.
- 9.4 Learners who fail to meet the minimum requirements of an assessment are afforded the opportunity to repeat an equivalent assessment in accordance with ETB Training Centre policy on repeats.
- 9.5 Learners who cannot continue an assessment due to sickness or unforeseen emergency are afforded the opportunity to re-sit the assessment (see also 5.23 and 8.3).
- 9.6 Where a specified number of assessment attempts pertain<sup>17</sup> the relevant conditions will be adhered to.
- 9.7 Re-sit and repeat assessments are conducted in the same conditions outlined in Section 5: Conducting the Assessment Event.
- 9.8 An equivalent assessment is selected for re-sit and repeat assessments, where applicable.
- 9.9 All requests for rechecks, reviews, repeats and appeals are processed in accordance with ETB Training Centre quality assurance procedures and relevant timeframes.

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<sup>17</sup> Learners who do not reach pass standards shall comply with the existing ETB Training Centre rules on repeats printed in assessment programmes.

## **Section 10. Security of Assessment Documentation**

To guarantee assessment security and integrity, the following regulations are adhered to:

- 10.1 All assessment information and related documentation is treated as confidential.
- 10.2 Security procedures are applied at all times during:
  - a. assessment development
  - b. transit of assessment papers to and from assessment locations
  - c. distribution of assessment documents to assessment personnel and learners
  - d. marking of assessment
- 10.3 Assessment papers are printed only as needed.
- 10.4 All assessment papers are collected after the assessment event.
- 10.5 Following an assessment event, assessment papers – including unused assessment papers, learner answer sheets and model answers – are not copied or reproduced electronically, and are returned to a designated place. Unused assessment papers will then be destroyed in a secure manner. Regulations for the storage and retention of assessment documentation are adhered to as outlined (see Section 17).
- 10.7 The relevant ETB Training Centre Manager and relevant assessment personnel are informed if the security of an assessment is breached by theft, loss, damage, unauthorised disclosure, fire or any other circumstances.
- 10.8 In the event of an alleged breach of assessment security, ETB Training Centre Procedures for Managing Assessment System Malpractice are adhered to.

## **Section 11. Internal Verification of Assessment**

When implementing internal verification processes, the following regulations are adhered to:

- 11.1 The internal verification of assessment is organised and conducted as per the ETB Training Centre Transition Quality Assurance System (TQAS) and/or the requirements of the relevant Awarding Bodies.
- 11.2 Internal verification personnel are fully briefed on the role of internal verification of the conduct of the assessment process, internal verification of results, peer review and the relevant sampling strategy to be used.
- 11.3 Assessment personnel do not internally verify assessments on which they have instructed, supervised, conducted or marked.
- 11.4 The appropriate documentation and evidence is made available to the internal verification personnel.
- 11.5 Assessment process is reviewed to ensure that correct procedures have been consistently applied throughout.

- 11.6 Internal Verification Reports are completed, dated and signed by the relevant internal verification personnel.
- 11.7 Any non-conformances or matters of concern identified are documented in the Internal Verification Report in accordance with TQAS processes.
- 11.8 All documentation arising from internal verification is made available to external authentication personnel, Results Approval Panel and others as appropriate.
- 11.9 Issues raised in the Internal Verification Reports are addressed by the Results Approval Panel.
- 11.10 Confidentiality is maintained throughout the internal verification process

## **Section 12. External Authentication of Assessment**

External authentication of assessment is arranged by the designated department in ETB Training Centre. When implementing external authentication processes, the following regulations are adhered to:

- 12.1 The external authentication of assessment is conducted as per ETB Training Centre policy and procedures and the requirements of the relevant Awarding Bodies.
- 12.2 The external authentication of assessment is carried out on a sample basis in line with a national sampling strategy.
- 12.3 External authentication personnel are fully briefed on the role of external authentication.
- 12.4 External authentication personnel are suitably qualified to moderate assessment results in accordance with standards outlined in the Award Specification<sup>18</sup>.
- 12.5 The appropriate documentation and evidence is made available to the external authentication personnel.
- 12.6 External Authentication Reports are completed, dated and signed by the relevant external authentication personnel.
- 12.7 Any non-conformances or matters of concern identified are documented in the External Authentication Report.
- 12.8 External Authentication Reports are made available to the relevant personnel.
- 12.9 Issues raised in the External Authentication Reports are addressed by the Results Approval Panel.
- 12.10 Confidentiality is maintained throughout the external authentication process.

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<sup>18</sup> QQi FETAC Quality Assuring Assessment Guidelines for Providers (May2007)

## **Section 13. Results Approval**

When conducting the results approval process, the following regulations are adhered to:

- 13.1 The results approval process is organised and conducted as per the TQAS.
- 13.2 All provisional assessment results are processed through the Results Approval Panel (RAP).
- 13.3 Results are approved by the chair of the RAP as having complied with ETB Training Centre quality assurance procedures and awarding body Quality Assurance requirements.
- 13.4 Actions agreed during the results approval process are documented and dealt with appropriately, prior to requesting certificates.
- 13.5 All results approval documentation is fully signed off and retained on file.
- 13.6 Following authorisation from the Results Approval Panel, certification is requested from the appropriate Awarding Body upon this authorisation.

## **Section 14. Assessment Standards Group**

With regard to the Assessment Standards Group, the following regulations apply:

- 14.1 The Assessment Standards Group is convened only in the most exceptional of cases and once all other routes have been exhausted, where serious issues have arisen in the approval of results. The Assessment Standards Group can only be convened at the request of the relevant officer.
- 14.2 On receipt of a relevant report and/or documentation, the director of National Programmes and Standards convenes an Assessment Standards Group to review the information and make decisions regarding the resolution of the situation.
- 14.3 The Group comprises the minimum number of members required by operational procedure.
- 14.4 All members of the Group have suitable expertise and experience.
- 14.5 The outcome is communicated to the relevant officer who will implement the final decision on the matter.

## **Section 15. Learner Feedback**

When giving or receiving assessment feedback, the following regulations are adhered to:

- 15.1 During a programme, learners are provided with timely, accurate and constructive feedback on their assessment(s). Learners who require feedback when a programme has been completed must be facilitated.
- 15.2 Feedback received from learners is made available to the relevant personnel for the purpose of continuous improvement of programmes and services.

## Section 16. Processing of Certificates

When processing requests for certification, the following regulations are adhered to:

- 16.1 Records submitted for certification must be accurate and quality assured.
- 16.2 Alleged non-conformance to assessment regulations will result in the postponement of the relevant certification requests until the matter has been investigated and satisfactorily resolved (See ETB Procedures for Managing Assessment System Malpractice).

## Section 17. Evidence and Record Retention

With regard to assessment evidence, the following regulations apply:

- 17.1 File storage, back-up and recovery systems are in place for on-line and PC-based assessments.
- 17.2 Assessment materials and, where possible, evidence of assessed work are retained until such time as all results have been approved, or in the case of results under appeal, until the appeals process has been exhausted.
- 17.3 A record of the disposal/destruction of assessment evidence is maintained<sup>19</sup>
- 17.4 Disposal mechanisms for assessment evidence are appropriate, safe and confidential.

With regard to assessment records, the following regulations apply:

- 17.5 Accurate records of learner attendance, achievement and certification, malpractice and appeals of assessment results are maintained.
- 17.6 Any assessment record (as defined in the Freedom of Information Acts, 1997 and 2003) is made available according to FOI procedure.
- 17.7 Assessment records are maintained for 6 years after certificates have been issued, or, in the case of programmes which are ESF funded, records should be kept for a further period of three years after the close of the operational programme<sup>20</sup>.
- 17.8 Assessment results are maintained indefinitely.
- 17.9 A system for the storage and deletion and/or archiving as appropriate of hard copy or electronic assessment records is established and a record of the disposal/destruction of assessment records, including electronic records, is maintained<sup>21</sup>.
- 17.10 Disposal mechanisms for records are safe and confidential.

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<sup>19</sup> Providers should adhere to Awarding Body specifications for the disposal of evidence, where these exist.

<sup>20</sup> E.g. Operational Programme                      Retain Until (Estimate)  
2000-2006    End 2016  
2007-2013    End 2022

<sup>21</sup> Providers should adhere to Awarding Body specifications for the disposal of records, where these exist.

# Appendices

# **Appendix 1. Responsibilities in the Assessment Process**

## **Responsibilities relevant to the Management of the Assessment Process**

Assessment management ensures the allocation of resources, time, expertise and staff development to support all stages of the assessment process. The relevant ETB Training Centre Manager has overall responsibility for the integrity and operations of the assessment process.

## **Assessment Coordination Responsibilities**

Assessment coordination ensures that assessments in ETB Training Centre provided, organised or procured training are coordinated and administered in accordance with the assessment procedures for the training programme-

Within the ETB Training Centre, assessment coordination is typically undertaken by the Training Standards Officer (TSO) and/or the Assistant Training Standards Officer (ATSO). External to the ETB Training Centre, assessment coordination may be undertaken by other assigned personnel.

## **Assessment Supervision Responsibilities**

Assessment supervision ensures that the conduct and integrity of assessment complies with the Awards Councils' and ETB Training Centre quality assurance requirements. This includes:

- Supervising tests and assessments
- Ensuring regulations, legislative, and health and safety requirements are observed
- Undertaking relevant administration
- Completing required reports
- Verifying learner identity in assessment

## **Assessor Responsibilities**

The learner's performance and related knowledge is assessed in a range of areas to ensure that the knowledge, skill and competence demonstrated meet the requirements of the national standards for the award. Assessor responsibilities include:

- Assessing learners' work against assessment criteria appropriate to the award standard
- Allocating marks in accordance with marking and grading criteria
- Ensuring that the grading applied is fair and consistent
- Giving results and providing feedback

Within the ETB Training Centre, the Instructor is often responsible for both assessment supervision and assessing. External to the ETB Training Centre, assessing may be undertaken by the trainer and/or person responsible for assessment supervision.

### **Internal Verification Responsibilities**

Internal verification is the review and evaluation of the assessment process and provisional results by persons other than those involved in course delivery and assessment for the programme in question. Internal verification includes checking assessment procedures have been applied and the checking/monitoring of the conduct of assessment and of assessment results to ensure learner evidence exists and that results and grades are properly computed and recorded. Internal verification also includes the peer review of assessment results.

Those responsible for internal verification must:

- Review assessment documentation and records
- Check that all assessment procedures were adhered to
- Monitor results
- Acknowledge good practice and identify any non-conformances/corrective actions
- Complete, date and sign the Internal Verification Report
- Communicate findings to relevant assessment personnel and to management
- Carry out any other administrative duties related to internal verification
- Make all documentation arising from Internal Verification available to external authentication personnel, the Results Approval Panel, and others as appropriate

Internal verification of the assessment process and results is undertaken by the Training Standards Officer or other personnel responsible for assessment coordination.

### **External Authentication Responsibilities**

External authentication is the independent review of assessment processes and results. The purpose of external authentication is to ensure the credibility of the ETB Training Centre assessment processes and ensure that assessment results have been marked in a valid and reliable way in compliance with the requirement of the National Standard for the award. External authentication personnel provide independent confirmation of fair and consistent of learners and ensure consistency of assessment results against the national standards.

External authentication includes checking and authentication of internal verification reports, sampling a range of learner evidence and moderating assessment results in accordance with standards outlined in the Award Specification<sup>22</sup>. It also involves the provision of constructive feedback to ETB Training Centre Management, completion of External Authentication Reports, outlining areas for improvement and good practice, and

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<sup>22</sup> QQI FETAC Quality Assuring Assessment Guidelines for Providers (May 2007)

providing recommendations on assessment results for consideration by the Results Approval Panel.

### **Results Approval Panel Responsibilities**

The Results Approval Panel (RAP) is a decision making forum which formally reviews and approves provisional assessment results and authorises requests for certification. The RAP reviews all information submitted, including the External Authentication Report, the Internal Verification Report along with all appropriate assessment-related records and reports. Having adjudicated on the evidence presented the RAP will then make a decision on the authorisation of certificate requests.

### **Assessment Standards Group Responsibilities**

The Assessment Standards Group is intended only for the most exceptional of cases once all other routes have been exhausted in the results approval process. In most cases, requests for the Assessment Standards Group will be made because the Results Approval Panel cannot conclude its deliberations, as serious issues have arisen which cannot be resolved at local management level. The request to convene an Assessment Standards Group must be made to the relevant officer. The Assessment Standards Group evaluates assessment related evidence, records and other related documentation and makes a recommendation to the relevant officer.

**The request for an Assessment Standards Group will only be accepted if all local assessment procedures have been applied, up to and including a decision by the local Results Approval Panel and prior to the ordering of certificates.**

## **Appendix 2. Adaptation of Assessments to Meet the Needs of Learners with Disabilities<sup>23</sup>**

Learners with disabilities must make their course instructor aware of their impairment and the need for reasonable accommodation at the beginning of their course. The learner will complete the Learner Request for Assessment Support Form for processing, with supporting evidence (where required). This form must be completed as early as possible, but no later than four weeks prior to the commencement of assessment. This is to allow for the reasonable accommodation to be facilitated.

### **Individualisation**

As a general rule, an adaptation to the form of delivery, which makes learning possible, will also assist in making assessment possible. The learner is usually the best authority on what form of delivery is the most effective and the same method(s) may then be possible during any assessment. However, it is important that the standard of the assessment is not diminished. Only the method(s) by which the learner demonstrates his/her attainment of the standard can be adjusted.

### **Rest Breaks**

Supervised rest breaks either inside or outside the assessment area should be allowed as is appropriate. A rest break can be flexible according to individual needs, e.g. 15 minutes every hour as opposed to one 30-minute period during a three-hour assessment. The time so used should not be deducted from the time allowed (where specified) to complete the assessment.

### **Split Sessions**

Splitting the assessment into two or more sessions may be an appropriate alternative for some students.

### **Extra Time**

In the case of assessments that are based on time, additional time of up to 25% is the usual rule of thumb.

### **Readers<sup>24</sup>**

A reader is a person provided to assist a disabled student by reading assessment questions aloud without suggesting the answer. A reader is a person who, on request, will read to the learner:

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<sup>23</sup> The contents of this Appendix represents best practice in line with the Disability Act 2005 following Awarding Bodies: QQI FETAC, QQI HETAC, City and Guilds, Irish Computer Society.

<sup>24</sup> A reader or writer/scribe should not normally be the learner's own instructor/trainer but there may be circumstances where this is necessary. Only in exceptional circumstances, and subject to approval by the relevant ETB Training Centre Manager, may a relative/somebody known to the learner act as a writer/scribe.

- a. The entire or any part of the assessment;
- b. Any part of the learner's answers (exactly, as they are 'spoken').

Readers are typically used by people with visual impairments, people who tire easily, people who have extreme muscle weakness and people with learning difficulties.

Only one reader per learner is permissible and the assessment should take place in a separate room or area. Such provision may give rise to the need for extra Assessment Supervision personnel.

### **Writers/scribes<sup>25</sup>**

A writer is a person who will, on request, write the answers exactly as given or dictated by a learner. A writer may also act as a reader and is often used in similar circumstances to a reader. As in the case of a reader, only one writer per learner is permissible and the assessment should take place in a separate room or area. Such provision may give rise to the need for extra assessment supervision personnel.

### **Sign language Interpreters<sup>26</sup>**

Sign language Interpreters must be qualified to interpret sign or other similar types of language. Only one Sign Language Interpreter per learner should be used. The assessment for learners (usually those who are deaf or hard of hearing) should take place in a separate room or area. Such provision may give rise to the need for extra assessment supervision personnel.

For extra transparency it may be necessary to video-tape the assessment for translation later. Similarly, some learners may prefer to sign their answers directly to video. A signed response should be transcribed to print by someone proficient in sign language. Any words or phrases re-interpreted for the learner should be underlined and noted in the question paper.

### **Overwriting**

Overwriting involves rewriting a question on an examination paper in such a way as to make it as explicit as possible. It is a technique primarily used with learners who are deaf or hard of hearing or who have a learning difficulty. Overwriting should be **in pen** on the answer paper. This is done by assessment supervision personnel in situ. Where extensive modifications are necessary, a separate sheet of paper with the questions written in full should be attached by staple to the original answer paper. Technical terminology should not be overwritten. In case of doubt about technical terminology a subject matter expert can be consulted. **Care must be taken to retain the original emphasis of the question.**

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<sup>25</sup> See Footnote 24

<sup>26</sup> Only in exceptional circumstances, and subject to approval by the relevant ETB Training Centre Manager, may a relative/somebody known to the learner act as a sign language interpreter.

## **Computers**

The use of computers by disabled learners may be necessary as their primary means of communication, for example, for learners with physical impairments for whom writing is difficult, for learners with visual impairments/blindness and for learners with learning disabilities such as dyslexia.

The definition of a 'computer' generally refers to hardware and/or software which facilitate effective communication for people for whom this may not otherwise be possible. It may be standard equipment, e.g. the use of word processing software by someone with motor difficulties which impede handwriting or may be specially adapted, e.g. speech synthesisers and text enlargement software/hardware for people with visual impairments.

Where voice activated software is used, the assessment should take place in a separate room or area. Such provision may give rise to the need for extra assessment supervision personnel. It is the responsibility of the assessment/training location to supply the appropriate hardware/software.

### **Audio-tapes**

Audio-taped assessments and responses are useful in some cases, e.g. visual impairment, motor difficulties. The centre should supply the assessment tape and a blank tape to learners at the same time as other learners. However, in order to minimise disruption to other learners, the person should either use headphones or complete their assessment in a separate room or area. Such provision may give rise to the need for extra assessment supervision personnel.

### **Braille, braille-mate, braille 'n speak, braille 'n print, etc.**

Braille is generally, though not extensively, used by learners who are blind or visually impaired. It is generally advised that the Braille machine is attached and adapted to a printer which will produce a printed text. The responses of the learner should not be printed until after the end of the assessment time, as the noise levels may be too high for other learners. The assessment/training location should supply the printer, braille paper and/or the computer print-out paper.

### **The use of CCTV (closed circuit television)**

This is a technological aid that magnifies print. It is usually used for learners with visual impairments. The learner can read the assessment paper as well as his/her answers from a TV screen. The learner uses the base under the screen to write and this is simultaneously magnified on the screen.

### **Enlarged print to A3 size**

Some learners, usually those with visual impairments, may simply require their assessment papers in enlarged print, i.e. A3 size paper.

### **Examination papers in colour**

Some learners, especially those who have dyslexia, may require their assessment paper in a colour other than black and white - for example, black on yellow, or black on grey. A gloss/highly sheen coated paper may also be unsuitable. The learners themselves should be consulted.

## **Other technologies**

The whole area of new technologies and access to information is rapidly changing. The opportunities for learners to demonstrate their abilities are increasing with the advent of assistive devices like the 'true-type talking microphone' – a device which with practice can type onto a computer screen a person's spoken word. Such technologies are also becoming more accessible in terms of general availability and price.

## Appendix 3. Definitions

**Appeal (Learner)** is the process whereby a learner can appeal an assessment result that they consider to be unfair.

**Assessment** is the process whereby learner performance in a range of areas is established to ensure that the knowledge/skill/competence is demonstrated to meet the requirements of the National Awards Standards for the award.

**Assessment Coordination** ensures that assessments in ETB Training Centre provided, organised or procured training are planned, coordinated and administered in accordance with the assessment procedures for the training programme.

**Assessment Event** is an occasion of formal testing, usually for summative purposes.

**Assessment Evidence** is created during the assessment event or as part of an assigned assessment task and includes assessment scripts, coursework, projects, portfolios, work competence schedule workbooks, logbooks, soft copy evidence etc. learner assessment evidence must be the work of the learner.

**Assessment Instruments** are used to assess a learner's attainment of required standards of knowledge, skills and/or competence. Assessment instruments include implements such as written, oral and practical tests, including project and portfolio briefs

**Assessment Materials** are any material relating to the carrying out of an assessment, e.g. assessment instruments, test papers, drawings, supports and equipment, specifications and records.

**Assessment Methods** are mechanisms devised for assessment purposes, e.g. including multiple choice, practical demonstrations, written answers, portfolios, projects, assignments.

**Assessment Plans** clearly identify the stages in the training programme when assessment will occur and the type of assessment that will take place at each stage.

**Assessment Programmes** detail the various methods by which progress is recorded and attainment is measured, i.e. practical tests, multiple choice tests, short answer tests and coursework or profiles. An assessment programme also identifies the stage in the training programme when assessment takes place.

**Assessment Records** are mechanisms for recording that an assessment event has taken place and which document the assessment outcomes for each learner. They include assessment marking sheets, summary assessment sheets, assessment attendance records, records of online and electronic assessment, marks and records of assessment decisions, documentation relating to non-conformances, results of appeals against assessment outcomes, certification records, internal verification and External Authentication Reports, coursework submission records, outcomes of deferral applications, extensions to deadline applications, and records of non-conformances and breaches of conduct.

**Assessment Schedules** specify the dates on which named assessments will be held in a specified training location.

**Assessment Specifications** are detailed statements of the items to be addressed through a specified assessment approach when designing any block of training.

**Assessment Standards Group** is a group with suitable expertise and experience, convened by the director of National Programmes and Standards, ETB Training Centre in the most exceptional of cases and when all other routes have been exhausted in the approval of results where serious issues have arisen.

**Assessment Supervision** involves overseeing the implementation of an assessment and may also involve overseeing the conduct of assessments. Assessment Supervision requires the invigilation of the assessment process in the context of formal assessments and must ensure that the conduct and integrity of assessments comply with the Award Councils' and ' Quality Assurance requirements.

**Authorised Persons** are those who are permitted to access an assessment location, as appropriate, before during and after an assessment. Authorised persons include: learners who are registered to undertake the assessment in question, personnel responsible for the conduct and supervision of assessments, other support personnel as necessary, e.g., IT support staff, readers, etc.

**Authorship Statement** is a written declaration by the learner that a portfolio, project, coursework submission etc is the learner's own work.

**Awards** are conferred, granted or given by an Awards Council and which records that a learner has acquired a standard of knowledge, skill or competence.

**Awarding Body/Awards Council** is a national body that has the power to give a learner a qualification (award).

**Cheating** is defined by the ETB Training Centre as:

- Obtaining an assessment paper ahead of its release
- Copying any assessment material without permission
- Having, using, or attempting to use any unauthorised material in an assessment, namely mobile phones, books, notes, electronic aids or other materials
- Giving or receiving help from another learner or any other person, where such help is forbidden
- Plagiarism
- Impersonation

**Competence** is the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development.

**Conducting an Assessment** involves assessing learners' performance and related knowledge in a range of areas, to ensure that the knowledge/skills/competence demonstrated meet the requirements of the National Standards for the award. In the ETB Training Centre system, an assessment is usually conducted by the instructors/trainers of the programme.

**External Authentication** is the independent review of the assessment process for a particular training programme, carried out by examining a sample of assessments in terms of:

- The assessment process, to ensure adherence to National Assessment Procedures

- The technical content of the assessment and the consistency of assessment marking against the assessment specification and standards set out in the marking criteria

**External Authentication Personnel** conduct external authentication of the assessment process for a particular programme (see above)

**Fair and Consistent Assessment** involves the following:

- Planning and implementation of assessment arrangements that are appropriate to the standards set out in the in programme's learning outcomes
- Provision of adequate opportunities and resources for learners to prepare for assessment
- Openness and transparency
- An unbiased, impartial and inclusive system that provides equity of opportunity
- Consistency in terms of assessment procedures, including marking and grading

**Impersonation** is the act pretending to be another person.

**Internal Verification** is the process by which the ETB Training Centre reviews the assessment process and provisional assessment results on a sample basis and conducts peer review, to ensure adherence to National Award Standards.

**Internal Verification Personnel** conduct internal verification of the assessment process and internal verification of assessment results as per the ETB Training Centre Transition Quality Assurance System and/or the requirements of the relevant Awarding Body/Bodies. Internal verification personnel may also be responsible for assessment coordination. It is possible for internal verification personnel to conduct assessments, but they cannot verify their own assessment decisions or the process used in reaching them.

**Knowledge** is the cognitive representation of ideas, events or happenings.

**Learners** are persons who are acquiring, or who have acquired knowledge, skills or competence as per the learning outcomes of a particular programme.

**National Award Standards** are the benchmarks for all assessment activity conducted for the purposes of national recognition of the achievement of those standards through an award. The format of National Award Standards will also specify assessment requirements for an award.

**Peer Review** is the process whereby the assessor of a particular course and a subject matter expert review results to ensure assessments were marked in line with the relevant award standard and the assessment specification. Peer review is carried out on a sample basis.

**Plagiarism** is defined as copying the words of others, or using someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own. If a learner uses the words or ideas of someone else, he or she must clearly state where they came from.

**Programmes** are learning processes designed and offered by a provider, based on predetermined National Awards Standards and leading to an award.

**Reasonable Accommodations** are concerned with enabling individuals with disabilities to enjoy equal benefits and conditions to their non-disabled peers in accessing and participating in training and assessment. This may require a training provider to take reasonable account of learners with disabilities' needs and requirements in the training

environment. What reasonable accommodation entails varies from learner to learner, depending on their individual needs and requirements. See Appendix 2 for examples of Reasonable Accommodation.

**Re-check of Assessment** involves checking and ensuring that all parts of an assessment have been properly recorded and that there are no errors in the recording, collating or combining of marks which determined the result. This is the first stage of an appeals process.

**Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)** is a systematic recognition process to enable individuals to enter programmes and attain full awards based on prior learning experiences, regardless of how that learning was acquired.

**Relevant Manager** has overall responsibility for assessments run in a training location. The assessment manager provides support and guidance to all assessment personnel in the ETB Training Centre /external trainer/second provider environment.

**Reliability** in an assessment is the confidence one can have in the fairness of the result. Outcomes of assessments should be as consistent as possible. Those conducting assessments should produce similar results when using the same assessment for similar groups of learners. Measures should be used to reduce the variability in grading that may be due to those conducting assessments, the assessment instruments or the assessment methods.

**Repeat** is defined as an opportunity afforded to a learner who fails to meet the required standard in an assessment to repeat an equivalent assessment. Only referred or pass grades can be awarded in repeat assessments.

**Resit** is defined as an opportunity afforded to a learner who abandoned an assessment due to sickness, emergency, etc., to re-sit an equivalent assessment. In such cases normal marking and grading policy applies.

**Results Approval Panel** is a panel convened by the ETB Training Centre to formally review and approve assessment results and authorise requests for certification.

**Review of Assessment** is the reconsideration in detail of all or part of the existing assessment material by internal assessment personnel and reconsideration of a full set of results. This is the second stage of an appeals process, subsequent to a recheck and prior to a possible final appeal.

**Second Provider** is a person or body external to the ETB Training Centre that is contracted by the ETB Training Centre to conduct all or part of a training programme.

**Skill** is the goal-directed performance of a task, underpinned by know-how of the procedural knowledge required.

**Validity** essentially means fitness for purpose. To be valid an assessment measures what it was intended to measure. There are different types of validity:

- **Face Validity:** Does the assessment meet stakeholder and learner expectations? Is it the kind of assessment strategy you might expect to find in a particular programme?
- **Content Validity:** Is the assessment strategy, structure and methodology based on award standards, curriculum aims and learning outcomes?
- **Construct Validity:** Does the assessment method measure the intended specified learning outcomes or introduce and measure some other abilities which were not required in the specified learning outcome? For example, inappropriately high level of language in the question paper or demanding keyboard skills required to complete the test but not required by the specified learning outcomes in the award standard.