



Quality Assurance of Assessment Arrangements in Internal and External Assessments: Information for centres

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Changes in this edition:

Revision date	Detail
August 2024	Introduction Re-ordered for clarity
August 2024	Responsibilities of centres Heading updated, separate sections for schools and colleges merged
August 2024	Assessment Arrangements Process New section 'Inform all staff of their roles and responsibilities in relation to quality assurance of assessment arrangements' added
August 2024	Quality Assurance Separate sections created for Quality Assurance Process and Quality Assurance Visits from SQA for externally assessed National Courses
August 2024	Appendix 1 Suggested checklist for the verification of assessment arrangements moved to Appendix 1
August 2024	Checklist – learner consent Entry on checklist relating to discussions with a parent, carer or guardian updated

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Introduction

We have a responsibility to ensure that the assessment process is robust and fair for all learners. This is why we must ensure that assessment arrangements are appropriate and only provided to those learners who have an identified difficulty. This could be a physical difficulty (including medical or sensory difficulty), a behavioural or mental health difficulty, or a learning difficulty.

This guidance will help you ensure that you have a robust verification process in place for providing assessment arrangements for disabled learners or those with additional support needs.

You should read this document along with [Assessment Arrangements Explained: Information for Centres](#), which details the key principles when making a decision about assessment arrangements. Our [Assessment Arrangements Toolkit](#) also provides examples and templates that you can use or adapt to suit your centre's needs.

You must have an effective internal quality assurance process for identifying and establishing learners' needs for assessment arrangements in all the SQA qualifications that you deliver, including National Courses. You must read and understand the assessment arrangements guidance on our [website](#), and ensure that your own centre's policies and processes align with this guidance.

Colleges and training providers must also read the following documents:

- ◆ [Systems Verification Process: Guidance for Centres](#)
- ◆ [Systems Verification Criteria: Guidance for Centres](#)

For colleges and training providers, Quality Assurance Criterion 3.5 requires that you have policies and procedures in place for managing assessment arrangements for both internal and external assessments. You must also have evidence of how you implement your assessment arrangement policies and procedures.

Responsibilities of centres

Your centre's quality assurance process should include stages to:

1. Inform all staff of their roles and responsibilities in relation to quality assurance of assessment arrangements.
2. Identify, as early as possible, any difficulty a disabled learner might have in demonstrating their attainment through the published assessment procedures.
3. Determine the most appropriate assessment arrangement for the learner.
4. Establish the learner's need for the assessment arrangement in an internal or external assessment.
5. Authorise assessment arrangements.

All of these stages must be documented, implemented and monitored to meet SQA's requirements. There's an explanation of each stage in the next section.

The [Assessment Arrangements Toolkit](#) will help you document processes and procedures.

At all stages, it is essential that there is professional dialogue between teaching staff, learning support (we use this term to refer to any support staff in all centres, including equality and inclusion staff, throughout this document), those responsible for quality assurance, and those submitting assessment arrangement requests to us.

In some cases, evidence from other professionals, such as therapists, specialist teachers, disability practitioners or educational psychologists, may be used part of your wider evidence base. This type of evidence is not an exhaustive list. It can be varied, and could help you to decide whether or not an assessment arrangement is appropriate for an individual learner, and on the nature and extent of that arrangement.

In all cases, SQA co-ordinators and senior management staff should work closely with learning support staff to ensure they are aware of the assessment arrangements that learners need.

Partnership agreements

Where there is a school-college or school-school partnership agreement in the teaching of a National Course, the presenting school or college must have access to the evidence used to assess a learner's eligibility for a particular assessment arrangement. This information should be shared securely and must be available during the quality assurance visit.

Assessment arrangements process

1 **Inform all staff of their roles and responsibilities in relation to the quality assurance of assessment arrangements**

All staff should be aware of their roles and responsibilities in the quality assurance of assessment arrangements, and the deadlines they need to meet. Teaching staff are responsible for providing learning support staff with:

- ◆ information about the qualifications or courses they are teaching
- ◆ the skills, knowledge and competences being assessed
- ◆ any concerns that a proposed assessment arrangement might compromise the integrity of the assessment

They are also responsible for keeping learning support staff informed throughout the academic year about whether the assessment arrangements provided to a learner in their course is appropriate.

Centres often include a timeline and all the documentation used in their assessment arrangements process with their policy. This ensures that all the relevant information can be accessed in one document.

2 **Identify, as early as possible, any difficulty a learner might have in demonstrating their attainment through the published assessment procedures**

Wherever possible, a learner's likely difficulties in accessing an assessment should be identified before they start a qualification. In some cases, the learner's difficulties may only become apparent, or could be identified by the learner themselves, by learning support staff, or by teaching staff, during their course of study.

Further information from the learner's parents or carers may also be relevant, and may be used as part of your centre's wider evidence base.

3 **Determine the most appropriate assessment arrangement for the learner**

Assessment arrangements must allow the learner to demonstrate their attainment without compromising the integrity of the assessment. This could be straightforward (for example, providing a braille question paper in the external exam) or it could require more detailed discussion with us (for example, where the assessment in a National Qualification or Higher National Unit could potentially be compromised by the proposed assessment arrangement).

4 Establish the learner's need for an arrangement in an internal or external assessment

You must ensure that there is evidence that clearly demonstrates the learner's need for the assessment arrangement, that you have considered whether it compromises the standards of the assessment, and that this evidence has been formally verified. This is important for two reasons:

- ◆ You need to be assured that your decision to provide, or not to provide, a particular assessment arrangement can be justified, and that it is in accordance with both our guidance and relevant equality legislation.
- ◆ We need to be satisfied that all centres have in place their own robust internal assessment arrangements verification process. This ensures that **all** relevant information and evidence has been gathered and fully considered for every learner who has an assessment arrangement. There is more detail on evidence requirements in the section 'Quality assurance process'.

5 Authorise assessment arrangements

The head of centre, or a member of senior management, is responsible for authorising the provision of an assessment arrangement in an internal assessment. Senior management staff play an important role in internal verification meetings. Their role is to take a holistic approach when considering a learner's circumstances and teachers' professional judgement, to reaching a centre-based decision in line with relevant policies and SQA requirements. They are also responsible for submitting any assessment arrangement requests on our Assessment Arrangements Request (AAR) system for National 5 to Advanced Higher coursework and exams by the published deadline date.

When you provide any assessment arrangement, you are confirming that:

- ◆ you have followed our quality assurance requirements
- ◆ you have met your responsibilities in terms of quality assuring the learner's need for the arrangement
- ◆ the assessment arrangement is appropriate
- ◆ you have discussed the assessment arrangement with the learner

When discussing the assessment arrangement with the learner, please make them aware that, as part of the process, you will share information about them and their assessment arrangements with us. You can find an example of a learner pro forma on [our website](#).

Quality assurance process

This section explains the evidence you should hold to support any assessment arrangement decision. We have also included a checklist that may be helpful to you in Appendix 1.

Evidence you will need

Any documents may be held electronically or as printed copies, but should include evidence of:

1. your centre's quality assurance processes
2. the evidence used to assess a learner's need for a particular assessment arrangement

1 Evidence of your internal verification meetings

You must have evidence of the meetings or discussions in which you considered all relevant learner information and evidence before confirming that an assessment arrangement is appropriate. This might be the minutes or agreed notes from the verification meetings. These must be signed and dated, by hand or electronically (for example a decision recorded on an Excel spreadsheet, MIS system or electronic document). Electronic records can also be confirmation emails from senior management to learning support staff.

Quality assurance is an ongoing process, so there may have been opportunities for other members of staff to discuss the evidence gathered. There should always be a meeting with a senior manager present before the final decision to provide any assessment arrangement is taken.

2 Evidence that your learners have agreed to the provision of assessment arrangements

You must have written confirmation from the learner that they have been involved in discussions about, and have agreed to, the assessment arrangements being provided. You must also ensure any learner who is sitting National 5 to Advanced Higher external assessments is aware that information about them and their assessment arrangements will be shared with us.

If you consider that a learner aged between 12 and 16 does not have a general understanding of assessment arrangements, the learner's parent, carer or guardian must be involved in the discussion about the assessment arrangements being provided. You may wish to use our learner proforma, which you can find [on our website](#).

3 Evidence of how your learner's disability or additional support needs affects them in the learning and teaching environment

In all cases, there must be evidence of the nature and extent of the learner's difficulty, and how this has impacted on learning and teaching. Supporting information from other professionals (for example, therapists, specialist sensory impairment teachers, support staff or educational psychologists) may also be available.

For schools, the evidence might include medical reports, results of screening assessments, minutes of meetings, notes of case conferences, ongoing consultations on current intervention strategies or individualised educational programmes (IEPs).

For colleges, evidence might include a working file (for example a personal learning support plan) containing information about the learner's disability or additional support needs (including medical reports, results from screening assessments, minutes of meetings, notes of case conferences, and ongoing consultations on current intervention strategies).

For care-experienced learners, in any educational setting, the evidence may include letters or reports from social work or other professionals highlighting barriers to learning which could be a result of trauma.

4 Evidence of your learner's current need for support in the classroom, how this is met, and how it relates to the assessment arrangements being requested or provided

In nearly all cases, learners requiring specific assessment arrangements will need similar arrangements to be made during their course. There must be evidence that links this ongoing support to the assessment arrangements needed for assessments. The evidence might include plans and records of support from learning support (including any support provided in a school's support base), or details of support regularly required from teaching staff.

The evidence about a learner's needs should be reviewed at least annually to ensure that any arrangements provided in one academic year are still appropriate in the next session.

Note: With changes to the level of demand in assessments at different levels of a qualification (for example from National 5 to Higher or SCQF Levels 5 to 6), it is important to confirm whether the assessment arrangements provided in a previous academic year are still appropriate, and whether any changes should be made to this provision.

5 Evidence that varying needs across subject areas have been taken into account

Assessment arrangements must be considered in the context of the individual learner's assessment needs in each subject area, and in different assessments within subject areas.

Evidence can be gathered for subjects or courses with similar assessment conditions and demands. This can help to streamline the evidence gathering process and reduce duplication of workload across departments.

For example, evidence gathered about an assessment arrangement in a course with an extended writing assessment may be relevant for another course with a similar type of assessment. Decisions around assessment arrangements in this context require co-ordination across departments for courses with similar assessment demands. Evidence of such co-ordination or liaison should be readily available.

6 Evidence for specific types of assessment arrangement

For some learners, the evidence of their need for a particular assessment arrangement will be well established — for example, braille question paper for a visually impaired learner or a deaf learner using BSL. However, for some types of assessment arrangement (such as a learner's need for extra time, a scribe or a reader), there must be additional information or evidence of the need for an arrangement in the assessment.

For extra time, classwork evidence should show not just that extra time is required, but that the amount of extra time provided is appropriate. Where a learner is entered for a course that does not have timed assessments, evidence of their need for extra time can

occur where there are natural time allocations, such as within a class period. For example, all learners are given 15 minutes to complete a task in class, but a learner may be unable to complete this in the time allocated due to their processing difficulty. Teaching staff may decide to allocate an additional 10 minutes to allow this learner to complete the task.

7 Evidence of a process for the management of assessment arrangements which is supported by senior management staff

You must have evidence of a whole-centre approach to providing assessment arrangements. This could be, for example, an assessment arrangements policy or have information on this within a wider inclusive practice policy.

Appendix 1 is a checklist that you may wish to use when reviewing your assessment arrangements process to ensure you have appropriate evidence.

Quality assurance visits from SQA for externally assessed National Courses

As part of our quality assurance measures as Scotland's awarding body, centres delivering externally assessed National 5 to Advanced Higher National Courses may be selected for a quality assurance visit. This is based on a number of factors which might include:

- ◆ the length of time since the last quality assurance visit
- ◆ size and type of the centre
- ◆ how many late requests you have submitted
- ◆ compliance with deadline dates

If you are chosen, we will contact your SQA co-ordinator to agree a mutually convenient date for the visit. We will maintain contact with your SQA co-ordinator, who is responsible for informing staff about the date of the visit, evidence requirements, and arranging for the required staff to be available during the visit.

All documented processes and supporting evidence will be reviewed. You could use Appendix 1 to check that you have the required evidence.

We will provide verbal feedback at the end of the visit to the SQA co-ordinator and any other staff that are present. The feedback will cover:

- ◆ the findings against each type of evidence requirement
- ◆ any recommended or required actions
- ◆ comments on the quality of your evidence and any good practice identified

This will be followed up with a detailed written report. There should be nothing in our final written report that you were not made aware of on the day of the visit.

- ◆ Recommendations are made so that you can strengthen your existing processes. The recommendations are suggested actions, but they are not mandatory and you do not need to act on them.

- ◆ Required actions are given when it is determined that there is insufficient evidence, little evidence or no evidence to demonstrate that a quality assurance criterion has been met. These actions must be taken forward and should be clear and specific, with an agreed date for completion.

In the unlikely event that your processes and evidence do not meet our requirements by the agreed date and as noted in your visit report, we will contact you to discuss the issue further. We may ask you to submit the documented evidence for all learners who need assessment arrangements. We will consider the supporting evidence and make a decision on a case-by-case basis.

Note: Appeals against decisions about assessment arrangements can be found in our guidance, [The Appeals Process: Information for Centres](#) (publication code: AA7708).

We will send your SQA co-ordinator a link to a feedback questionnaire along with a copy of the visit report. Please take the time to complete this feedback and return it back to us. It provides valuable information to help us make future improvements and to further improve our quality assurance processes.

Appendix 1: Template — evidence checklist for quality assurance of assessment arrangements

This checklist, based around these seven types of evidence, is designed to help you find out if you have the appropriate evidence for your quality assurance process.

1 Evidence of the internal verification of assessment arrangements	(✓)
Do you hold assessment arrangements verification meetings with relevant members of centre staff to ensure that all relevant information and evidence has been considered in determining a learner's assessment arrangements in internal and external assessments?	
Do you have a record of minutes/notes of the assessment arrangements verification meetings that has been signed and dated (electronically or by hand)?	
Is it clear which assessments your assessment arrangements verification meetings relate to? For example allowing time for discussion around the more complex cases and simple agreement on the straightforward ones?	
Are the meetings held at appropriate times of the year?	
Are appropriate centre staff present?	
Are decisions about the provision of assessment arrangements formally authorised by a member of senior management staff?	
Is this senior member of staff independent from the learning support structure in the centre?	
Do you have a procedure for making late decisions?	

2 Confirmation that the learner has agreed to the provision of assessment arrangements	
Has the learner been involved in discussions about the assessment arrangements being provided?	
Has the learner provided written agreement to the provision of assessment arrangements?	
If a learner aged between 12 and 16 is considered not to have a general understanding of assessment arrangements, has their parent, carer or guardian been involved in the discussion about the assessment arrangements being provided?	
Is it clear to your learner which courses they will receive assessment arrangements for?	
Do you have a record of any assessment arrangements a learner has refused?	

3 Evidence of how your learner's disability or additional support needs affects them in the learning and teaching environment	(✓)
Do you have the relevant information or evidence of the nature and extent of the learner's disability or additional support need?	
Do you have evidence of how the difficulty has impacted on teaching and learning?	
Have teaching staff been involved in relevant discussions and in recording information about the impact of the learner's difficulty?	
Is your evidence of how the learner's difficulty impacts on teaching and learning current?	

4 Evidence of need for current support, how this is met, and how it relates to the assessment arrangements requested	(✓)
Does your evidence show that decisions made about the proposed assessment arrangements are based on the current support provided in teaching and learning?	
Do you have evidence that teachers/lecturers/assessors are involved in relevant discussions and in recording relevant information?	
Do you have current evidence to show that the assessment arrangement is effective and removes the disadvantage, without compromising the assessment standards?	

5 Evidence that varying needs across subject areas have been taken into account	(✓)
Do you have evidence of the learner's need for assessment arrangements across subject areas with similar assessment conditions and demands?	
Do you have evidence that the relevant teaching staff have been involved in gathering evidence?	
Do you have evidence that teaching staff support the assessment arrangements proposed?	

6 Evidence for particular assessment arrangements	(✓)
Do you have appropriate evidence of how a particular assessment arrangement has been determined? For example, for extra time, does this include (i) evidence indicating that extra time is appropriate and (ii) evidence that the amount of extra time requested is appropriate?	

7 Evidence of a whole-centre process for the management of SQA assessment arrangements which is supported by senior management	(✓)
Do you have evidence that there is a whole-centre policy in relation to the provision of assessment arrangements?	
Do you have evidence of this policy being disseminated to all relevant staff?	

Appendix 2: Sources of support

If you have a query about a particular assessment arrangement, please contact the Assessment Arrangements Team on 0345 213 6890 or aarequests@sqa.org.uk.

For further up-to-date information on assessment arrangements, please visit [our website](#).

If you have a general enquiry about SQA or our qualifications, please call our Customer Contact Centre on 0345 279 1000 or by using [our enquiry form](#).