

Additional Assessment Principles guidance

Audience: Centres delivering competence and work-based qualifications to the adult social care workforce in England.

Introduction

This document and the approaches to practice have been developed and agreed by Skills for Care and the Joint Awarding Body Quality Group (JABQG).

Our aim is to support best practice in maintaining standardised approaches and to uphold the rigour and integrity of qualifications in the sector.

Flexible arrangements to support existing principles and approaches to assessment during the COVID-19 pandemic **have now been removed**. There is an expectation that centres delivering qualifications return to full assessment approaches as guided by the assessment principles.

There are currently two sets of assessment principles:

- [Joint Skills for Care and Skills for Health Assessment Principles for the Level 2 Diploma in Care \(RQF\) in England](#)
- [Skills for Care & Development Assessment Principles](#): these principles are **for all other** occupational competence and work based qualifications in the sector.

The guidance within this document sets out clarification of aspects from the existing assessment principles and aims to recognise developments e.g., with the use of technology in the assessment process. **This document must be used alongside and in conjunction with the appropriate existing assessment principles.**

Clarification of existing assessment principles: direct observation requirements

Skills based assessment must include **direct observation** as the main source of evidence and must be carried out over an appropriate period of time. Evidence should be naturally occurring and so minimise the impact on individuals who use care and support, their families, and carers.

Direct observation: should continue to act as the preferred main source of evidence for skills based assessment criteria within work based qualifications in the sector.

Direct observation as an assessment activity should be carried out by an occupationally competent and qualified assessor in person with the learner in the workplace.

Direct observations of the learners practice should be carried out and demonstrated over an appropriate period of time. An appropriate period of time needs to reflect the learners journey on their qualification e.g. from start to end of the qualification and not the time period of the actual direct observations carried out e.g., a 2 hour time period where observation has been carried out.

The amount of direct observations required will be appropriate to the qualification time, level and content of the qualification and take account of the learners circumstances, which could include individual learning needs, breadth of practice, emerging competency, recognition of relevant prior learning and achievement and any additional factors associated to the workplace. Centres can explore this further through the standardisation process and discussion with the awarding organisation.

There are a range of additional factors which need to be considered when planning for and carrying out direct observations e.g., upholding person-centred values, gaining permission from and minimising distress to individuals who use care and support services, ensuring the environment is safe for the assessor and if there are any security/access restrictions. An additional factor is where direct observations could be difficult to gain during the **period** of the learners' qualification.

Therefore, if there is an additional factor in being able to meet direct observation requirements, approaches **must be** discussed and agreed prior with the awarding organisation.

This should not be confused with reasonable adjustments or special considerations.

Clarification of existing assessment principles: use of expert witness

The use of an expert witness does not replace the need for direct observation. If there is an additional factor in which this needs to be explored to support achievement of the learner, then again this **must be** discussed and agreed prior with the awarding organisation.

An expert witness in the workplace can be used to provide direct observation evidence when the assessor is not occupationally competent in a specialist area e.g., specialist healthcare tasks.

The use of an expert witness could also be used to enrich, supplement, and add triangulation to the main direct observations which have been carried out in person by the assessor.

When an expert witness is used, it remains that overall assessment decisions

relating to a learner's competency must be made by the assessor and be subject to the internal quality assurance process.

Requirements for an Expert witness are stated in the existing assessment principles and centres need to establish appropriate processes to recruit, induct, support, and standardise suitable Expert witnesses from within the workplace.

Use of technology in the assessment process

We know that use of technology in the assessment process brings many benefits for all involved and when done well it can enhance the assessment experience, outcomes and develop skills of the learner.

We know that technology, platforms, and e-portfolios support the assessment process well. This can include and is not limited to planning, review and feedback aspects along with carrying out and recording professional discussions.

We also know that the workforce is making wider use of technology and some roles in the sector are functioning more remotely than they did before.

Using technology in the assessment process should and can be used appropriately and care needs to be taken to ensure:

- recording, storage, and accessibility issues comply with legal requirements in relation to confidentiality and data protection
- centre practices with using different methods of technology are supported by robust centre policies, standardised practices and meet requirements set by the awarding organisation and Ofqual as the regulatory body.

Using technology to carry out direct assessment e.g., remote observation (the assessor observing the learner on-line carrying out a work activity)

Whilst we take valuable learning forward and embrace developments, we must not lose sight of the nature of qualifications in the sector. They are competence and work based and there needs to be appropriate consideration and balance when technology is being used to carry out assessment of a qualification e.g., observing skills and practice of a learner. Carrying out a remote observation **does not** replace the need for direct observation in person.

When could it be considered appropriate to carry out a remote observation with the use of the technology?

- When the work activity is task orientated and does not include or require the presence of an individual accessing care or their families. Also, as an approach to enrich, enhance and triangulate the main direct observations and other assessment methods which have been planned and carried out.

Standardisation process

The standardisation process within centres and discussions with awarding organisations needs to support the careful selection of where and how remote observation could be safely utilised within the assessment process.

Tips to support the standardisation process

- Consider the level of the qualification and the specific units (or areas of practice) in which remote observation could be utilised safely.
- At Level 2 and 3 for example, remote observation may not be suitable for some areas of practice due to the nature of the skills based criteria as many of these function with regards to the learner providing direct care and support to individuals, there may however be areas of practice where these risks are minimal.
- More opportunities do present themselves in the higher-Level Diplomas such as Level 4 and 5 and specific units, such as the learner taking part in an on-line meeting, team meeting, or where their role may be more remote based and they are providing remote support to colleagues.

Using technology in the assessment process - good practice example

A remote observation has been planned with a L5 learner who is facilitating an online team meeting with colleagues who work in the community.

The evidenced planning process has considered all aspects of good practice, and these aspects are checked prior to the observation commencing, including the scope of the meeting, its attendees and how confidentiality will be ensured and protected.

The assessor observes the learners practice throughout the remote observation and takes notes. The assessor does not make a video or audio recording of the meeting as it happens.

They use the notes they make during the observation process and record retrospectively as a written/digital record narrative, it is this which is then uploaded to the e-portfolio.

The assessor confirms the parameters of which the remote observation has taken place within the assessment audit trail.

Good practice for direct observation and remote observation assessment activity

All observations should be **planned** well to ensure:

- evidence is naturally occurring, and it will enable the learner to demonstrate a range of competencies from within the qualification they are undertaking
- they are non-obtrusive and minimise any impact on individuals who use care and support, their families and carers
- permission and informed consent are gained from individuals who use care and support, including families and carers and others who may form part of the learners assessment, this should include confirming permission and consent at the time of each assessment activity and not just as prior planning activity
- confidentiality is protected and maintained for everyone involved in the assessment process, this should include consideration of the learner, work setting, individuals, families, carers and other relevant people who may form part of the learners assessment
- the privacy and dignity of the individual who uses care and support is always maintained, this relates to personal information of the individual and the practice being observed. It is not appropriate or required to observe or **listen** to care and support of a sensitive nature e.g., personal/intimate and end of life care
- individuals who use care and support and others are not captured inadvertently in recordings of evidence.

Evidencing and **recording** of observation activity:

- method of observation should be stated clearly in the audit trail e.g., **direct observation** or **remote observation**.
- all assessment recordings must comply with policy and legal requirements in relation to confidentiality and data protection, this should also be guided by robust centre policies, standardised practices and meet requirements set by the awarding organisation.
- should be documented within the appropriate records to evidence the associated planning, review and feedback provided for the assessment.

- the observation recording/outcome of assessment should be in enough detail to ensure that it is valid, traceable, auditable and authenticated.
- assessors must be able to fully evidence and justify the assessment decisions that they have made through the assessment records presented.
- if remote observation has been used then a rationale to support this choice of approach should be provided by the assessor showing clear endorsement by the IQA, in line with the principles laid out in this guidance.

Internal quality assurance

Internal quality assurance activity remains key to ensuring that the assessment process and cycle is consistently of good quality and that it meets the assessment principles and assessment strategy of the awarding organisation.

Internal quality assurance methodologies and approaches should be reviewed by centres to account for and enabling monitoring of assessment practices in using technology safely.

Requirements for quality assurance are clearly stated in the existing assessment principles and centres and awarding organisations need to ensure that they are applied consistently.

Definitions

Triangulate: Considerations and practices of collecting evidence from different sources to inform and evidence accurate and consistent assessment decisions.

Qualifications in England: These consist of those currently [approved](#) by Skills for Care and include the Level 2 Diploma in Care (delivered to learners in an adult social care setting) and the Level 3, 4 and 5 Diploma in Adult Care. The relevant Skills for Care & Development Assessment Principles and this additional Assessment Principles guidance will also support delivery and assessment of the new Level 2 Adult Social Care Certificate qualification, expected to launch for the adult social care sector from June 2024.

JABQG are a partnership of awarding organisations offering a range of qualifications in the health, adult social care and children's workforce, their remit is:

To collaborate on and standardise quality and assessment to ensure the integrity of qualifications across the health and social care and childcare sectors through:

- providing a forum for awarding organisation members to address issues of mutual concern and interest

- informing awarding organisation policy and strategy in relation to the health, social care and childcare's sectors within the agreed remit and in terms of developments, current issues and quality implications
- being proactive in developing strategic responses to external agencies on behalf of the awarding organisations thereby supporting the development of a united voice on key issues within the sector.