

## Covid-19 FAQs

(Highlighted questions updated: 03 April 2020)

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## General

### Is my exam still going ahead?

Following government guidelines, NCFE and CACHE external assessments after 20 March 2020 have been cancelled or rescheduled until further notice. *(Please see below for a limited number of exceptions, including online on-demand assessments, and CACHE independent study assessments.)*

We're working with Ofqual, JCQ and other Awarding Organisations to put in a plan for each of our qualifications and once that plan has been agreed, we'll communicate with you directly.

No Assessment Variation or Special Consideration requests are required for learners booked onto any cancelled or rescheduled external assessments after 20 March 2020.

We'd therefore appreciate your cooperation and ask you to keep checking your communication channels for further updates and what we need from you.

### Have we suspended the delivery of certificates to centres?

Certificates are still being posted to centres if they have been claimed. It's the centre's responsibility to inform NCFE if they cannot receive certificates due to being closed. If this is the case, centres can request that certificates be held at NCFE. This option and process will be reviewed on a daily basis.

### Will UCAS extend the application process to Universities?

There is no reason for the usual admissions cycle to be disrupted. Please refer to Department for Education (DfE), UCAS and government guidance regarding Performance Points and UCAS specific queries.

### Do we still need to book learners onto external assessments that are currently cancelled or rescheduled?

**If you are able to**, please still ensure learners are registered onto the qualifications and booked onto the external assessment opportunity, even if this date is currently cancelled or rescheduled.

This allows NCFE to continue to accurately track Centre and learner booking data to help inform the work we are doing alongside Ofqual to identify the best possible solutions.

External Assessment papers will not be posted out for any cancelled assessments.

### If a centre isn't offering online/remote teaching to learners how will they record Guided Learning Hours (GLH) whilst closed?

It's up to individual centres to decide how they intend to record GLH whilst closed.

### Will late fees still be charged for centres who return papers late?

Centres must return completed external assessment evidence within 48 hours of the assessment taking place.

If the centre has had to close entirely due to Covid-19 and you are therefore unable to access and return any completed assessment evidence within this time, please contact [customersupport@ncfe.org.uk](mailto:customersupport@ncfe.org.uk).

No late return fee will be charged in these circumstances, however whilst the centre is closed NCFE must be informed and all evidence must be stored securely in line with the Regulations until this can be returned.

For external assessments which have been cancelled or rescheduled, please continue to securely store these papers in line with our Regulations for the Conduct of External Assessment until further instruction from NCFE.

**Should centres be submitting predicted grades for learners completing V Cert qualifications?**

Please do not submit any predicted grades, or other centre estimations, unless instructed to by NCFE. We are working closely with Ofqual, JCQ, and other Awarding Organisations, and will be in touch with further information when this is available.

## **Synoptic Project – (Level 1/2 V Cert Qualifications)**

**My learners haven't completed the full 21 hours for the Synoptic Project and my centre is closed. Can the remaining hours take place remotely? / What should I do if learners are unable to complete the full 21 hours? / How should I grade the incomplete Synoptic Assessment? / Will a second submission be available to learners? / If there's no second attempt at the Synoptic Project will special consideration be given to learners who were unable to re-submit?**

NCFE is working closely with Ofqual and JCQ to develop quickly, a fair and consistent approach to ensure that centres have clear guidance on how to apply an appropriate grade for learners who haven't been able to complete their assessment. Work is already under way and we'll provide more detail in the coming days.

**For the Synoptic Project, we have access to all the learners' work, but only one of the assessors is able to do the assessing so we won't meet the submission date, what should we do?**

Please contact your EQA to confirm when it will be possible for the work to be assessed and submit the grades at a later date when your staff are able to complete the assessments and IQA. Arrangements can be made with your EQA to carry out a remote EQA review to bank the grades.

**I have completed Synoptic Project work and it's been assessed but don't have an IQA to moderate, can I submit the grades?**

Wherever possible all learner work should be assessed and internally quality assured and centres should consider whether alternative IQAs are available to carry out the work. If you need more time to carry this out, speak with your EQA and agree a later date for submission of the grades and ensure your EQA remote visit is booked in.

If the IQA can't take place prior to 31 May 2020 and all other options have been explored, grades can be submitted based on the assessment only, so long as you inform your EQA and you've agreed a date for the EQA review to take place.

**Can the learner sign the Synoptic Project Cover sheets electronically?**

It's important to confirm that the work completed by the learner is their own. If the learner hasn't signed the cover sheet the teacher can sign on their behalf to confirm the work completed is their own.

## Functional Skills

We urge every one of our customers to follow the guidance from the government around self-isolation and social distancing. We are however aware that some of our customers such as prisons or employers use the Functional Skills qualifications so we want to provide you with the following information.

The paper based external assessments will no longer take place for the foreseeable future. We are **not** however turning off our online assessment system Surpass and will still allow online assessments to be completed on demand. These assessments should still follow our [Regulations for the Conduct of External Assessment](#).

**Please note: we are awaiting an update from Ofqual on whether the legacy qualifications will still expire on 31 August 2020. We will update you as soon as possible.**

**If we are continuing to run online Functional Skills external assessments, and our planned invigilator is not available, can we use a colleague or other suitable person to invigilate?**

Yes, any suitable person who is trained and aware of their responsibilities can act as an invigilator. They must be trained and act in line with the [Regulations for the Conduct of External Assessment](#) Section 3.10.

The Head of Centre is responsible for the recruitment and training of external assessment staff and ensuring that they are equipped to carry out their duties appropriately. Please refer to section 3.10 on the recruitment of invigilators.

[We have informative videos available online](#) showing the key areas of invigilation and good practice that can be used to advise anyone carrying out invigilation duties, along with the appropriate regulations. We recommend using these for anyone being assigned as an invigilator. If you have additional invigilation training needs, please contact us.

**What do we do if we have Functional Skills paper-based tests but are unable to access the site for tests, can we move the learners to another window?**

Currently our online Functional Skills offer is still available, therefore we recommend that centres consider this as an alternative to paper-based where possible.

These assessments must still be completed in line with our [Regulations for the Conduct of External Assessment](#).

If your learners require a paper-based option, and you intended to book them onto a forthcoming reformed Functional Skills paper-based window, we advise that you continue to make this booking, even though the assessment window is currently cancelled or rescheduled. External Assessment papers will not be sent out to centres for paper-based assessment bookings currently.

**Are there any plans for the 'Online Proctoring Software' to be made available for Functional Skills external assessments, the same as there are for the MCQ for EPA?**

NCFE is currently exploring if this is a viable option for NCFE Functional Skills external assessments. However, until we have further information, please continue to ensure all NCFE Functional Skills external assessments are invigilated in person, in accordance with our Regulations for the Conduct of External Assessment.

**Can we use remote methods of observation for the Speaking Listening & Communication assessments?**

You can use remote methods of observation.

**To maintain compliance during a remote observation your centre must produce a comprehensive plan to evidence how all the regulations for the conduct of controlled assessments will be met considering the following questions:**

- How will you check the learner's identity?
- How will you ensure that the environment is suitable for the SLC assessment for all participants?
- How do you intend to ensure the learners are in a 'supervised controlled environment' when the assessor / learner is remote?

**How can we distribute the assessment tasks to the learners when they are not permitted to email live assessment documents?**

Centres aren't permitted to email live assessment materials however if you would like to deliver these assessments remotely you can:

- post the materials to the learner by special delivery or courier
- Share the assessment materials remotely via a secure controlled platform such as [www.wetransfer.com](http://www.wetransfer.com)

**Reform****Can we use remote methods of observation for the Speaking Listening & Communication assessments?**

Yes, you can use remote methods of observation such as online video technology to complete these assessments. To maintain compliance during a remote observation centres still need to adhere to the regulations for the conduct of controlled assessments and should ensure that:

- learners are fully prepared for the assessment and fully briefed as to how the assessment will run using the video technology
- all assessments are recorded and securely stored
- learners are clearly identified at the beginning of the assessment
- learners should be in a suitable environment that both meets assessment criteria and upholds safeguarding measures.

We recommend that only learners who will be comfortable in this environment are observed remotely and that they have had the opportunity to do a practice assessment using this format. The Assessor should complete the usual Learner Observation and Achievement Record to show how the learner has performed.

The below documents may support you:

<https://www.qualhub.co.uk/media/10854/assessor-instructions-for-fs-controlled-assessments-english-slc-v12-final.pdf>

<https://www.qualhub.co.uk/media/10016/regulations-for-conduct-of-controlled-assessments-08112019.pdf>

**Are you able to relax the 2-week window due to the virus?**

The 2-week window is set from the date you make the booking. If your learners are unable to attend the assessment, then this should be cancelled and a further booking made for a later date. Bookings can be made on the day of the assessment to allow flexibility for centres.

## CACHE

### Will my centre be able to carry out observations for CACHE qualifications remotely?

Due to safeguarding within the sectors for CACHE branded qualifications this isn't something that we would normally accept. Early Years settings and schools don't allow phones and laptops with cameras into their provision and we would suggest most Health and Social Care provisions are the same.

You'll find further guidance on page 10 of our [Assessment and Internal Quality Assurance Guidance](#).

### Additional Guidance from Education and Training Foundation (ETF) regarding Level 5 Diploma in Education and Training (DET) qualification

For the Level 5 DET, providing that the learner has satisfactorily completed all other in course assignment work, it is acceptable to award a Pass to learners who have:

- Completed at least 70% of their teaching placement hours (providing that a majority is group teaching rather than eg one to one teaching)
- Completed at least 6 of their 8 observations where the most recent 4 have been satisfactory
- Additionally, if there are insufficient observations completed and the placement is continuing but the provider team is unable to complete any observations, these may be done in this instance by the placement mentor.

### Can learners still complete and submit CACHE External Assessments which are independent self-study?

Yes, CACHE independent self-study assessments can still be submitted in line with the advertised submission date.

Assignments must be collated by the centre alongside the completed submission list as well as learner confirmation, via email to centres, the authenticity of their work.

Centres must email [assessmentdelivery@cache.org.uk](mailto:assessmentdelivery@cache.org.uk) for NCFE to return a secure file transfer link to the centre. This will allow the centre to upload all learner evidence and completed submission list.

The below independent self-study assignments will be accepted digitally:

- NCFE CACHE Level 3 Extended Diploma for Children's Care, Learning and Development (Wales & Ireland) 600/7093/6 (CCLD)
- NCFE CACHE Level 3 Certificate in Childcare & Education 601/3999/7 (EYE EPS1/EYE EPS2)
- NCFE CACHE Level 3 Diploma in Childcare and Education (Early Years Educator) 601/4000/8 (EYE EA1/ EYE EA2/ EYE EPS1/EYE EPS2)
- NCFE CACHE Level 3 Diploma in Early Years Education and Care (Early Years Educator) 601/2147/6 (EYE EE1/EYE EE2/ EYE RS1/EYE RS2)
- NCFE CACHE Level 3 Extended Diploma in Health and Social Care 601/6110/3 (HSC CEA1/ HSC CEA2/ HSC EDEA 1/ HSC EDEA 2)
- NCFE CACHE Level 3 Certificate in Health and Social Care 601/6109/7 (HSC CEA 1/ HSC CEA 2)

Centres must continue to follow the Regulations for the Conduct of External Assessment.

Further information on specific instructions for the above assessments can be located in [QSID](#).

All submissions dates are advertised in the [External Assessment timetable](#). If a centre believes they will be unable to submit learner work by these dates and requires an extension, please submit an [Assessment Variation](#) request at the earliest opportunity.

If a Centre has learners who are unable to complete these assessments, or will otherwise not be submitting learner evidence, please notify NCFE by submitting a Special Consideration at the earliest opportunity, and no later than 5 working days after the published submission date.

**Can you provide cover sheets and other assessment documentation in an alternative format so we can complete and send digital copies?**

Word versions of the External Assessment Cover Sheet will be added to the Members' Area to support with digital submission.

## External Quality Assurance

For qualifications with a Synoptic Project (Level 1/2 V Certs), wherever practically possible we will need you to collect as much learner work to be assessed and Internally Quality Assured (now or at a later date). Even if this is partial, incomplete work, it is likely to be vital in any contingency arrangements we make.

### **My centre is now closed, what contingency arrangements are being put in place for those who have only partially completed qualifications with internal units only?**

Wherever possible, we encourage centres to make the best use of technology and support learners to achieve their qualification. If this isn't possible, we'd expect centres to pick up the delivery of qualifications again as and when they re-open and we are happy for delivery to be extended.

If learners have completed some units but not all, our EQAs would be happy to sample and sign off partial achievement until learners have time to complete the full qualification.

As mentioned above, we are working closely with Ofqual, JCQ and other Awarding Organisations, and will publish further information when available.

### **As centres move to remote teaching what flexibility will there be, if any, in relation to the specific requirements of associated assessment strategies?**

The assessment strategy and associated regulations for each qualification still need to be maintained. Specific questions should be discussed with your EQA.

### **Can alternative methods be used if a learner has proven competency through observation against most of the 'be able to' criteria (min 80%)?**

Where learners have made extensive progress towards the competencies, including coverage across the age ranges, (minimum 80%) to date, and where there has been direct observations undertaken with no issues raised, outstanding assessment criteria may be captured through a triangulation of alternative assessment methods such as professional discussion/reflection and witness testimonies. A clear statement of competency provided by the assigned and qualified Assessor to confirm professional judgement must be made to confirm completion. These additional methods will need to be subject to internal quality assurance providing a clear audit trail. If there is *any* doubt with regards student competency, an observation will need to be planned when this becomes possible.

The learner planned end dates may need to be adjusted to ensure that learners are not disadvantaged, with sufficient time and support provided by the centre, ensuring that they and their workplace are clear with regards this amendment or extension.

If learner completion is linked to funding which is causing an issue, then a conversation with the provision may need to be scheduled as appropriate in light of the advice above on potential contingency in this present situation.

If these qualifications are linked to direct entry to the workforce as a member of staff in ratio such as an Early Years Educator, L3 CCLD and HSC NI and Wales qualifications, please note centre responsibility and wider implications for babies and young children if learners are signed off without clear competency levels achieved. Please ensure your rationale and approach is clearly documented for individual /cohort of learners as appropriate.

### **Are you able to confirm if all our EQA will be working remotely now and will centre get remote visits?**

Yes, centres should speak to their EQA directly about visits.

### **As visits are not currently able to take place for the purpose of external quality assurance, are you able to confirm that remote EQA visits will continue to prevent our direct claims status lapsing or certification being help up?**

Yes, our EQAs will be completing remote visits wherever possible so there should be no impact on DCS or certification claims where learner evidence can be sampled.

**Can we get learner certificates sent to the home address of staff instead of our registered centre address?**

No unfortunately not due to data protection restrictions.

- In addition, NCFE does not hold personal contact details of learners, nor have their permission to contact them directly.
- If certificates are sent to a centre that was closed they will be redirected back to NCFE.
- Centres can access eCertificates which would hopefully enable funding claims, employer or HEI validation.
- For more information about eCertificates please see our [Portal Handbook](#)

**For late registrations / certifications, some centres may not be able to access enrolment evidence, are the timescales on this process being updated in light of this?**

We'll of course take a pragmatic approach to all late registration and certification requests to ensure that any learner who has not been registered/certificated due to the ongoing Covid-19 situation have the opportunity to do so for qualifications which have recently been withdrawn.

There will however be occasions where we will be unable to accept a late registration for qualifications that have been withdrawn for a significant amount of time and have since been replaced with a new regulated qualification.

## Education and Training and Assessor qualifications

### **Additional guidance from the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) regarding Level 3 and Level 4 Education and Training qualifications and Assessor qualifications**

The ETF have issued the following additional recommendations to cover this particular period with regard to reasonable adjustment for Level 4 Certificate in Education and Training (CET), Level 3 Award in Education and Training (AET) and Assessor qualifications. **This applies to registrations prior to 10 March 2020, to allow learners to complete courses, and does not apply to any new learners registered after this date.**

These are temporary measures, and we expect centres to adhere to the regular guidance and rules once the wider situation returns to normal. Any relaxations (i.e. taking place remotely) would only be allowed for those learners who have started these qualifications prior to 10 March 2020 – i.e. to allow learners to complete, not for new starts.

#### **Level 4 Certificate in Education and Training (CET)**

Learners may be deemed to have passed if all assignments passed satisfactorily and at least 20 hours of teaching practice have been completed with 2 satisfactory observations (1 of which may be remote).

#### **Level 3 Assessor qualifications including Level 3 Award in Assessing Competence in the Work Environment, Level 3 Award in Assessing Vocationally Related Achievement and Level 3 Certificate in Assessing Vocational Achievement.**

For learners who have achieved at least one satisfactory observation per practical unit with positive feedback prior to 10 March 2020, the remainder of their assessed observations can be conducted remotely.

#### **Level 3 Award in Education and Training (AET)**

Any micro-teach should be carried forward if not complete.

## Placements

### **My student can't access work placement (as they are closed) so won't hit the required number of hours**

We understand that due to the situation there will be learners who are due to complete their learning over the next few months and the number of placement hours completed to date will not be in line with the current qualification requirements. For learners that have completed at least 80% of their placement hours and all other necessary requirements for their course i.e. external assessment, assignments, teaching and learning have been completed, the centre can apply professional judgement at their discretion to allow certification with a reduced level of placement hours. The Tutor/Assessor needs to ensure a clear audit trail with the necessary placement documentation including an attendance log is held at the centre along with overall confirmation of completion. The Internal Quality Assurer (IQA) needs to ensure this is being reviewed as part of their IQA process prior to certification and maintain records for the next EQA review.

Where learners have made extensive progress towards the competencies, including coverage across the age ranges, (minimum 80%) to date, and where there has been direct observations undertaken with no issues raised, outstanding assessment criteria may be captured through a triangulation of alternative assessment methods such as professional discussion/reflection and witness testimonies. A clear statement of competency provided by the assigned and qualified Assessor to confirm professional judgement must be made to confirm completion. These additional methods will need to be subject to internal quality assurance providing a clear audit trail. If there is *any* doubt with regards student competency, an observation will need to be planned when this becomes possible.

If these qualifications are linked to direct entry to the workforce as a member of staff in ratio such as an Early Years Educator, L3 CCLD and HSC NI and Wales qualifications, please note centre responsibility and wider implications for babies and young children if learners are signed off without clear competency levels achieved. Please ensure your rationale and approach is clearly documented for individual /cohort of learners as appropriate.

### **We are a workplace that is still open, to support the children of key workers. What is NCFE's guidance for our learners on placement here?**

It will be the responsibility of the Centre they are currently studying with to ensure the health & safety, safeguarding and welfare of their learners.

For up to date information with regards COVID-19, please refer to NHS and government guidelines which are updated continually

## Assessments, results, and papers

### Can learners still complete MCQ assessments?

Online, on-demand Multiple Choice Question (MCQ) external assessments including CACHE MCQs are still taking place. If a learner needs to complete a paper based answer sheet this will no longer be an option from 23 March 2020.

### Will results be delayed for external assessments?

We are not expecting any results to be delayed where the external assessment has taken place, so please consult our external assessment timetable for these date. However we will continue to monitor the situation and inform centres at the earliest opportunity if we are required to amend any published results release dates for external assessments completed before 23 March.

### For results release of external assessments that took place before 23 March, can we still submit post-results service requests (such as Functional Skills Feedback, and Review of Marking?)

Yes. All post-results services, timescales, and options are still available as standard where results are released for external assessments that took place before the school closures began.

### What do I do about external assessment papers still at my centre?

If they have been completed, or partially completed, Centres must return within 48hours of the assessment taking place.

If the centre has had to close entirely due to Covid-19 and you are therefore unable to access and return any completed assessment evidence within this time, please contact [customersupport@ncfe.org.uk](mailto:customersupport@ncfe.org.uk).

No late return fee will be charged in these circumstances, however whilst the centre is closed NCFE must be informed and all evidence must be stored securely in line with the Regulations until this can be returned.

For external assessments which have been cancelled or rescheduled, please continue to securely store these papers in line with our Regulations for the Conduct of External Assessment until further instruction from NCFE.

At all times external assessment paper work should be stored and handled in line with our [Regulations for the Conduct of External Assessment](#).

## Direct Claim Status (DCS)

### **My DCS is going to lapse and my centre is closed so I can't accommodate a remote visit.**

If you are unable to accommodate a remote visit as your centre is closed, then your DCS will lapse until you re-open again. Once we are notified by the government that all schools and colleges are open, we'll apply a DCS override giving you DCS for a grace period of 6 weeks, to allow time for a visit to take place. If you meet all the criteria on this visit your DCS will be maintained.

### **My DCS is going to lapse and my centre can accommodate a remote visit, but it's booked after my DCS has lapsed.**

NCFE is happy to extend DCS for a reasonable amount of time to allow centres to plan for remote visits. DCS extensions can only be applied if a visit is booked so contact your EQA to discuss this in the first instance.

## **Finance – Customers**

### **Do I need to pay my invoices?**

Yes you do, any invoices relating to March will be issued 1 April and will need to be paid in accordance with our standard terms and conditions. Any older invoices need to be paid to terms.

### **Can I extend my payment terms without talking to you about it?**

If you are experiencing any payment to terms difficulties please contact our credit control team to discuss the options available to you via email at [finance@ncfe.org.uk](mailto:finance@ncfe.org.uk) or call 0191 2408810.

### **I pay by cheque but the payment is not showing on my latest statement, why is this?**

As from 18 March 2020 we will no longer be working from the Head Office and any cheques received will not be banked and will not be considered to be cleared funds until we are in a position to bank them.

This situation can be avoided by making payment by either card, please telephone the finance team on 0191 2408810 or by BACs payment to the bank account details shown on the invoices.

### **When will I receive my latest invoice?**

Invoices will still be generated and sent out via email on the 1<sup>st</sup> working day following the end of month.

### **Finance have emailed me, are you still working as normal?**

For as long as possible we will try to continue with business as usual, that mean you will still receive emails, invoices, statements and reminder notifications from the Finance team.

### **Can I still speak to a member of Finance?**

Yes you can, please call the team on 0191 2408810, however it may be easier for you to email [finance@ncfe.org.uk](mailto:finance@ncfe.org.uk) and we will respond directly.

### **I have emailed Finance but not had an immediate response, how long will it take you to respond to me?**

Our usual response time is 24 hours, however there may be circumstances beyond our control which mean we are unable to respond or answer your customer query within this timescale, rest assured we will do our best to respond as soon as we are able to do so.

## Finance – Suppliers

### **Are you still paying invoices and operating as normal?**

Yes we will be continuing to do weekly payment runs.

We will try to continue with business as usual for as long as possible. This means you will still receive emails, invoices, statements and reminder notifications from the Finance team.

### **I posted my invoice, will it still be processed?**

Please ensure you email your invoice to [accountspayable@ncfe.org.uk](mailto:accountspayable@ncfe.org.uk) as we are now all working remotely and are not in the office to collect the post. Any invoices that are not emailed may be delayed in processing.

### **I send my emails direct to my contact is that OK?**

Invoices need to be sent to [accountspayable@ncfe.org.uk](mailto:accountspayable@ncfe.org.uk). If you do not send your invoice direct to the Finance team, we do not have visibility of the invoice and are unable to process this until it is sent to us. This may delay processing and payment times.

### **How should I get in touch if I need to speak to a member the accounts payable team?**

Please email [accountspayable@ncfe.org.uk](mailto:accountspayable@ncfe.org.uk) or call the Finance team on 0191 2398066.

### **I have emailed Finance but not had an immediate response, how long will it take you to respond to me?**

Our usual response time is 24 hours, however there may be circumstances beyond our control which mean we are unable to respond or answer your query within this timescale. Rest assured we will do our best to respond as soon as we are able to do so.