



Chief Examiner Report

**NCFE CACHE Level 3 Certificate in Health and
Social Care
QN: 601/6109/7**

Assessment code: HSC CEA

Paper number: P003210, P003211

Submission window: 9th January 2026

Introduction

This report contains information in relation to the external assessment from the chief examiner, with an emphasis on the standard of learner work within this assessment window.

The aim is to highlight where learners generally performed well as well as any areas where further development may be required.

Key points:

- grade achievements
- administering the external assessment
- standard of learner work
- assessment structure
- use of word allocation
- criteria requirements and command verbs
- referencing of external assessment tasks
- assessment criteria (AC)
- regulations for the conduct of external assessment.

It is important to note that learners should not sit the external assessment until they have taken part in the relevant teaching of the full qualification content.

Grade achievements

HSC CEA – Theme 1

Communication in health and social care

Grade	NYA	D	C	B	A	A*	Learners	980
% of learners	13.37	33.16	41.53	10.92	0.71	0.10	Pass rate	86.43

HSC CEA – Theme 2

Safeguarding in health and social care

Grade	NYA	D	C	B	A	A*	Learners	1887
% of learners	13.46	33.33	40.59	10.02	1.80	0.32	Pass rate	86.06

Administering the external assessment

The external assessment is invigilated and must be conducted in line with our [Regulations for the Conduct of External Assessment](#) document. Learners may require additional pre-release material in order to complete the tasks within the paper. These must be provided to learners in line with our regulations.

Learners must be given the resources to carry out the tasks and these are highlighted within the [Qualification Specific Instructions for Delivery](#) (QSID) document.

Standard of learner work

- The standard of learner work varied, some learners submitted detailed work, attempting all the criteria and utilising the full word count.
- Some learners used a substantial word count to secure the lower grades, submitting nothing beyond the B grades.

Assessment structure

- This series saw many signposted scripts submitted from learners, very few submitted holistic scripts.
- The use of signposted scripts appears to support learners in achieving their intended grades, as it encourages a comprehensive response to all required criteria.
- Some learners used many words providing lengthy introductions to their submissions.
- Many learners selected C2 and B1 as areas to reduce their response to recoup words to enable them to complete higher grades.

Use of word allocation

- Learners attempting all the criteria should utilise the full word count. Learners should remember the increasing demand of the command verbs, and use their word count accordingly.
- Learners frequently submit brief B1 responses in an attempt to save words for higher-grade criteria. This approach ultimately limits their achievement, as failing to meet B1 prevents progression to the higher grades.

Criteria requirements and command verbs

- Centres are advised to ensure learners understand the requirements of the command verbs.
- Many students did not achieve the highest grades, however many students demonstrated sound knowledge and understanding around the C and B grades. There were many good examples of practice supported discussion to enhance both breadth and depth of discussion.
- Students should be aware that the C criteria requires learners to relate their answers to the selected key issues. However, B criterion requires learners to relate their answers to the theme.

Referencing of external assessment tasks

- Quotations and their sources need to be traceable. Centres should advise learners to use reputable sources of information, preferably UK based or sources relevant in Health and social care.
- Sources such as clever quotes, brainy quotes, motivational quotes and blogs or historical literary writers are not reliable academic sources for information, learners should not seek out these or essay writing sites.
- Quotations must support the key issues that the learner has selected, they need to be embedded in their writing to support their explanation and discussion. Still some students submit work with citations which are not traceable.
- Quotations should support learner work, not replace their own original work.
- Learners are strongly advised to embolden their quotations in speech marks in the text, this provides an obvious check they have included 2 quotations per grade boundary.

Assessment criteria (AC)

HSC CEA – Theme 1 Communication in health and social care

D criteria

- To achieve D1, learners must fully explain both key issues; providing only two brief bullet-pointed terms is not sufficient.
- To achieve D2 Learners need to explain why their chosen key issues are relevant to the theme.

C criteria

- To achieve C1 it is not sufficient to just describe a theory of communication; it must be related to the learners chosen key issues selected in D1.
- To achieve C2, learners must relate their selected values or principles back to the theme. At times, learners confused the concepts of values and principles with legislation, which affected the accuracy of their responses.

B criteria

- B1 requires learners to analyse the relevance of a theory/philosophical, approach/legislation or report, learners should choose one of the above, not provide a description of each as this does not meet the command verb requirements.
- To meet the B2 criteria, learners must discuss possible ways that equality, diversity and inclusion can be ensured in practice, simply explaining what they are will not meet the requirements
- Many learners provided well written analysis of their own learning and how this would impact their future practice. To achieve B3 learners should provide a personal account not a generic reflection about other health care professionals.

A criteria

- To achieve A1 learners must relate their evidence back to the key issues they identified in D1, and learners should make valid judgements.

- To achieve A2, learners must have achieved B1; Often learners appear to have made limited responses in B1 to save words, this impacted their ability to achieve A2.
- A2 must link back to the legislation discussed in B1.
- A3 requires learners to discuss the professional skills required for effective practice, it also must be related to the theme.

A* criteria

- To achieve A1, learners are required to evaluate their selected philosophical approach, legislation or report by presenting clear strengths and limitations. This section should build on their previous analysis and must not introduce new content.
- Some learners offered general reflections about health care roles rather than presenting a personal evaluation of their own learning linked to the theme, as required for A*2.

HSC CEA – Theme 2 Safeguarding in health and social care

D criteria

- For D1, learners must identify two key issues, but many learners are selecting three instead.
- Many learners who identify three key issues in D1 then proceed to discuss the relevance of all three in D2, which leads to unnecessary use of their word count.
- Using valuable words in the D grades has an impact on the words available to use on the higher demand command verbs.

C criteria

- To meet the C1 criteria, learners should select a single theory, piece of legislation or report. Writing about all three is not necessary and does not meet the criterion. C1 must relate back to their chosen key issues.
- Linking C2 (values and principles) and B2 (ways to ensure equality, diversity and inclusion) is not a successful way to save words for the higher criteria as often neither C2 nor B2 are met.

B Criteria

- For the B1 criteria some learners provided a detailed narrative of a specific serious case review; however, they should be aware that the requirement is to analyse. A narrative description alone does not meet this criterion.
- B1 was often inadequately addressed, many students submitting work relating to several Acts, rather than developing one piece of legislation.
- Many learners provided well written analysis of their own learning and how this would impact their future practice in safeguarding.
- To achieve B3 learners need to provide a personal account not a generic reflection about other health care professionals, or a list of their learning.

A Criteria

- To achieve A1 learners must ensure their discussion is grounded in practice and clearly connected to the key issues they have identified.
- For theme two, some learners provided further explanation of the chosen serious case review rather than discussing the impact of their selected report on practice.

A* Criteria

- Not achieving A2 often precluded learners from achieving A*1. To achieve this criterion learners must evaluate and state strengths and limitations, a list for each is not sufficient.
- Not achieving A*1 impacts A*2. To achieve these learners must provide developed recommendations for their own future practice.

Regulations for the conduct of external assessment

Malpractice

There were four instances of malpractice in this assessment window. The chief examiner would like to take this opportunity to advise learners that instances of malpractice (for example, copying of work from another learner or AI misuse) will affect the outcome on the assessment.

Maladministration

There was one instance of maladministration in this assessment window. The chief examiner would like to highlight the importance of adhering to the regulations for the conduct of external assessment document in this respect.

Chief examiner: Clare Scott

Date: 9th March 2026