

Best practice guide to curriculum and assessment planning

A simplified planning model for the NCFE
CACHE Level 3 Technical Occupational
Entry in Social Care (Diploma)

Contents

Introduction	3
Purpose of this guide	3
How to use this guide.....	3
Overview of the qualification	5
Qualification at a glance.....	5
Original regulated unit structure	6
Assessment requirements.....	6
Placement and practical evidence.....	7
Relationship to the simplified model.....	7
Curriculum and assessment framework	8
Four-phase curriculum roadmap	8
Ten thematic delivery units	8
Twelve lean integrated assessment briefs.....	10
Designing lean assessment briefs.....	11
Principles for coherent and manageable delivery.....	14
Evidence economy rules.....	14
Spiral practice threads across the curriculum.....	15
Quality assurance and implementation	16
Quality assurance safeguards.....	16
Minimum behind-the-scenes tracking requirements	16
Assessment brief review RAG checklist	18
Appendices.....	19
Appendix 1: Simple unit-to-assessment coverage summary	19

Introduction

Purpose of this guide

This guide explains the simplified model in plain language so it can be shared with colleagues, curriculum leads, assessors and stakeholders who do not need the full AC-level technical tracker.

This is a curriculum and assessment planning guide. It does not replace the qualification specification, sample assessment materials (SAMs), centre assessment records, internal or external quality assurance processes, or the requirement to evidence all original units, Learning Outcomes (LOs) and Assessment Criteria (ACs).

The simplified model is built around four clear principles:

1. Teach the qualification through four coherent phases rather than as 23 isolated units.
2. Organise curriculum delivery through 10 connected thematic units.
3. Assess learning through 12 streamlined, integrated assessment briefs rather than 23 separate unit assessments.
4. Maintain detailed unit, Learning Outcome (LO) and Assessment Criterion (AC) tracking behind the scenes to support compliance, internal quality assurance (IQA) and external quality assurance (EQA).

How to use this guide

Step 1: Begin with the curriculum roadmap

Use the four-phase roadmap to explain the overall learner journey before introducing detailed unit or assessment information. This helps colleagues understand how knowledge, skills and professional practice develop across the qualification.

Step 2: Use the 10 themes to plan curriculum delivery

Use the thematic delivery units to support schemes of work, sequencing decisions, staffing discussions and the planning of placements and real work environment (RWE) opportunities.

Step 3: Use the 12 briefs to plan assessment

Agree the principal assessment product for each brief. Check that every brief has a clear vocational context or scenario, purposeful tasks and a manageable number of learner outputs.

Step 4: Keep detailed tracking behind the scenes

Assessors and IQA leads should maintain a detailed tracker showing coverage of all units, LOs and ACs. Learners and colleagues who do not have an assessment or quality assurance role do not need to work directly with every technical mapping field.

Step 5: Review assessment burden before implementation

Before approving each assessment brief, consider whether any tasks can be combined, removed or replaced by observation, professional discussion, placement evidence or evidence generated through the Realistic Work Experience (RWE). Each task should have a clear purpose and should not duplicate evidence already captured elsewhere.

Overview of the qualification

The NCFE CACHE Level 3 Technical Occupational Entry in Social Care (Diploma) is a regulated Level 3 qualification designed to develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to work effectively within a range of social care settings. The qualification supports progression into employment and further or higher-level study and is aligned with the occupational requirements of the Lead Adult Care Worker role

Qualification at a glance

Qualification feature	Requirement
Qualification title	NCFE CACHE Level 3 Technical Occupational Entry in Social Care (Diploma)
Qualification number	610/6200/5
Qualification level	Level 3
Minimum age	16
Number of units	23 mandatory units
Guided Learning Hours (GLH)	1,080 hours, including 30 work or placement hours
Total Qualification Time (TQT)	1,390 hours
Minimum placement requirement	30 hours
Assessment method	Internally assessed portfolio of evidence
Quality assurance	Internally quality assured by the centre and externally quality assured by NCFE
Unit grading	Not Yet Achieved, Pass, Merit or Distinction
Overall qualification grading	Pass, Merit, Distinction or Distinction*

These requirements are taken from the qualification specification currently available from NCFE. Centres should always check that they are using the latest published version when planning delivery and assessment.

Original regulated unit structure

The qualification consists of **23 mandatory units**, covering the breadth of knowledge, skills and professional practice required within social care. These include:

- working in social care;
- equality, diversity, dignity and rights;
- duty of care;
- communication and partnership working;
- person-centred care and support planning;
- safeguarding;
- health, safety and infection prevention;
- mental health and wellbeing;
- anatomy, physiology and the sociology of health and illness;
- learning disabilities, dementia and autism;
- end-of-life care; and
- research, reflective practice and professional development.

Each regulated unit contains its own Learning Outcomes (LOs), Assessment Criteria (ACs), content and grading requirements. Learners must successfully achieve all 23 units and provide sufficient evidence to meet all required ACs. The simplified model presented in this guide does not remove, merge or replace any of these requirements.

Assessment requirements

The qualification is assessed through an **internally assessed portfolio of evidence**. Assessment is completed by centre staff, supported by the centre's internal quality assurance processes, and externally quality assured by NCFE.

Assessment evidence should be generated through meaningful and occupationally relevant activities. Tasks should provide:

- clear and assessable outcomes;
- appropriate coverage of the relevant LOs and ACs;
- a valid and engaging vocational context or scenario; and
- opportunities for learners to demonstrate higher levels of knowledge, application and judgement.

NCFE sample assessment tasks may be used to support planning, but they are not mandatory and may be contextualised or combined where the centre can demonstrate full and valid coverage.

Placement and practical evidence

Learners must complete a minimum of **30 hours of work or practical placement** to support their learning. Where competence-based criteria are being assessed, evidence should ideally be generated within the workplace.

Where workplace assessment is not feasible, an appropriately designed **realistic work environment (RWE)** may be used. The environment, resources, activities and expectations should reflect authentic social care practice. Simulation should only be used where permitted and where genuine workplace evidence cannot reasonably be obtained.

Relationship to the simplified model

The regulated qualification structure remains the foundation of all delivery, assessment and quality assurance decisions. The simplified model reorganises the learner experience by:

- sequencing delivery through four coherent phases;
- grouping related content into 10 thematic delivery units;
- integrating evidence through 12 streamlined assessment briefs; and
- retaining detailed unit, LO and AC mapping within the centre's assessment and quality assurance records.

This allows centres to provide a clearer and more connected curriculum without changing the qualification's regulated requirements.

[Appendix 1](#) provides a high-level summary showing how each of the 23 original regulated units connects to the thematic curriculum structure and integrated assessment briefs. This overview supports curriculum and assessment planning but does not replace the centre's detailed LO- and AC-level assessment tracker.

Curriculum and assessment framework

Four-phase curriculum roadmap

The four phases show the broad journey learners take across the two-year programme. They are intended to help centres avoid fragmented delivery and create a clearer professional development pathway

Phase	Focus	Approx. GLH	What learners are doing	Assessment briefs
Phase 1	Foundations of practice	290	Introduce the sector, roles, responsibilities, rights, values, duty of care, communication and partnership working.	A01-A04
Phase 2	Safe and person-centred care	296	Apply person-centred planning, positive risk-taking, safeguarding, safe environments and infection prevention.	A05-A07
Phase 3	Working with complexity	364	Apply practice to mental health, psychology, health/illness, learning disabilities, dementia, autism and end-of-life care.	A08-A11
Phase 4	Professional development and progression	130	Consolidate research, reflective practice, good practice, PDP and portfolio completion.	A12

Ten thematic delivery units

The 10 themes provide a simpler teaching structure. They are not a replacement for the original regulated units. They show how content can be taught more coherently while still mapping back to the original unit structure.

For a high-level overview of how each original regulated unit connects to the thematic delivery units and integrated assessments, see [Appendix 1](#).

Thematic delivery unit	Phase	Approx. GLH	Assessment	Unit
Social care sector, legislation, duty of care and professional accountability	Phase 1	89	A01, A03	U01; U03.1-3.3
Values, rights, dignity, inclusion and advocacy	Phase 1	111	A02	U02; U07; U08
Communication, recording, teamwork and partnership working	Phase 1	90	A04	U04; U14; U07 AC4.1-4.3
Care planning, person-centred practice and positive risk-taking	Phase 2	76	A05	U05; U06
Safeguarding, protection and responding to concerns	Phase 2	80	A06	U09
Safe environments, infection prevention and everyday care procedures	Phase 2	140	A07	U11; U12; U03 AC4.1
Mental health, wellbeing and psychological approaches	Phase 3	104	A08	U10; U17
Health, illness, body systems and social determinants	Phase 3	97	A09	U18; U19
Complex needs, neurodiversity and end-of-life support	Phase 3	163	A10-A11	U20; U21; U22; U23
Evidence-informed practice, reflective development and progression	Phase 4	130	A12	U13; U15; U16

Note: A03 sits within Theme 1 because duty of care, consent, dilemmas and complaints are part of professional accountability. It also draws on Theme 2 rights, dignity and values, so it should be revisited after A02 has been introduced.

Twelve lean integrated assessment briefs

The 12 assessment briefs are designed to reduce assessment fragmentation. Each brief should feel like one coherent professional task, not a collection of unrelated posters, leaflets, reports and presentations.

Assessment economy principle: one brief should normally have one realistic scenario, one main learner product and no more than two or three total outputs. The assessor should do the complex mapping in the background

ID	Phase	Assessment title	Main learner product	Recommended outputs	Burden
A01	Phase 1	Social care sector, law and accountability	Professional induction guide	1-2	Low / Medium
A02	Phase 1	Rights, inclusion, dignity, values and advocacy	Rights-based practice toolkit	2-3	Medium
A03	Phase 1	Duty of care, consent, dilemmas and complaints	Ethical decision-making case file	2	Medium
A04	Phase 1	Communication, records and working with others	Workplace communication and partnership portfolio	2-3	Medium
A05	Phase 2	Care planning, person-centred practice and positive risk-taking	Person-centred support plan	1-2	Medium
A06	Phase 2	Safeguarding, protection and responding to harm	Safeguarding case conference pack	2-3	High
A07	Phase 2	Safe environments,	Safe practice portfolio	2-3	High

ID	Phase	Assessment title	Main learner product	Recommended outputs	Burden
		health and safety, IPC and nutrition			
A08	Phase 3	Mental health, wellbeing and psychological approaches	Wellbeing support case study	2	Medium
A09	Phase 3	Health, illness, social determinants and body systems	Health and illness explainer pack	1-2	Medium
A10	Phase 3	Learning disabilities, dementia, autism and inclusive support	Complex needs support portfolio	2-3	High
A11	Phase 3	End-of-life care, ethics and support	End-of-life care and support plan	2	Medium / High
A12	Phase 4	Evidence-informed practice and professional development capstone	Professional practice capstone portfolio	2-3	Medium

Designing lean assessment briefs

This table gives the practical design note for each assessment. It should be used when writing or reviewing assessment briefs to prevent the model becoming 12 large bundles of tasks.

ID	Coverage summary	Simplification note	Suggested supporting evidence
A01	U01; U03 AC1.1-1.3	Use Unit 1 SAMs as inspiration; do not require separate report and presentation unless needed.	Optional short assessor question-and-answer discussion
A02	U02; U07; U08	Combine reference guide, dignity, inclusion and advocacy into one toolkit.	One observed or simulated dignity or advocacy interaction, if needed
A03	U03 AC 1.4-3.3	Use one scenario with linked consent, rights, complaints and dilemma sections.	Professional discussion focused on judgement
A04	U04; U14; U07 AC4.1-4.3	Use real or realistic communication evidence where possible.	Observation or witness testimony
A05	U05; U06	One support plan should include assessment, plan, risk, review and rationale.	Risk assessment and short rationale within the same product
A06	U09	Keep as one pack, not 12 separate safeguarding tasks.	Professional discussion or role play
A07	U11; U12; U03 AC 4.1	Prioritise observation and workplace/RWE evidence to reduce written burden.	Practical observation or witness evidence
A08	U10; U17	Use one individual/context to link wellbeing, mental health and psychology.	Professional discussion
A09	U18; U19	Use case examples to connect body systems with social determinants.	Short presentation or assessor question-and-answer discussion, if needed
A10	U21; U22; U23	Do not make three separate full assessments; use a repeated case structure.	Three short case sections using the same headings
A11	U20	Keep distinct due to legal, ethical and emotional content.	Reflective discussion

ID	Coverage summary	Simplification note	Suggested supporting evidence
A12	U13; U15; U16	Use selected evidence only; do not require every journal entry as a separate task.	Selected reflective extracts and PDP review

Principles for coherent and manageable delivery

Evidence economy rules

These rules are the most important part of the simplified approach. They protect learners from excessive task burden while keeping the assessment valid and traceable.

Rule	What it means	Quick check question
One brief = one realistic scenario	Anchor each assessment in one service-user, workplace or service-improvement context.	Can the learner clearly see the real-practice context?
One main learner product	Use a case file, toolkit, support plan, conference pack or portfolio instead of disconnected products.	Is there one main output rather than several separate tasks?
Maximum 2-3 outputs	Normally use one main product, one applied judgement element and one practice-based evidence item.	Have we avoided report + poster + leaflet + presentation + booklet?
SAMs are inspiration	Use SAM tasks selectively and adapt/combine them; do not copy every SAM task into the brief.	Are we using the SAMs to design evidence rather than duplicate all tasks?
Assessor mapping is not a learner task	The centre maps evidence to ACs in the background; learners should not complete complex AC trackers.	Is the administrative burden kept away from learners?
Use placement/RWE evidence first	Where appropriate, use observation, witness testimony and workplace products.	Can this be evidenced authentically rather than through another written task?
Avoid duplicate evidence	Do not assess the same skill repeatedly unless it is being deepened in a new context.	Is this a revisit for progression, or accidental repetition?

Spiral practice threads across the curriculum

The curriculum should not feel linear. The following practice threads should be introduced, developed, applied, assessed and revisited across the two years.

Practice thread	Where it appears	Why it matters
Rights, dignity, values and voice	A02; revisited in A05, A06, A10 and A11	Prevents rights and dignity being treated as one early topic only.
Legal, ethical and professional accountability	A01 and A03; returns in safeguarding, H&S and end-of-life care	Supports professional judgement and compliance.
Communication, recording and partnership working	A04; then used in every case-based assessment	Prevents communication becoming isolated.
Person-centred planning, risk and safeguarding	A05 and A06; then applied in complex needs and end-of-life contexts	Makes care planning the spine of the programme.
Health, wellbeing and complex needs	A08-A11	Supports transfer of learning across different care contexts.
Evidence-informed and reflective practice	A12; reflective checkpoints at the end of each phase	Builds professional growth throughout the course.

Quality assurance and implementation

Quality assurance safeguards

The simplified model only works if assessment traceability is protected. These safeguards should be included in centre planning and internal quality assurance discussions.

- Every original unit, LO and AC must be mapped to at least one assessment evidence point.
- The centre should record where the learner has evidenced each AC, even if the learner only sees the simplified brief.
- Each integrated assessment should still allow separate unit-level assessment judgements where required.
- IQA sampling should include different phases, evidence types, assessors and high-burden assessments.
- Where SAM tasks are adapted, the centre should check that coverage, scenario validity, learner instructions and stretch/challenge remain appropriate.
- Observation, witness testimony and workplace/RWE evidence should be used where this gives better evidence than additional written tasks.

Minimum behind-the-scenes tracking requirements

The simplified curriculum and assessment model should be supported by a detailed centre tracker. This should record where each original unit, Learning Outcome (LO) and Assessment Criterion (AC) is taught, practised, assessed and evidenced. The tracker is primarily a centre-facing curriculum, assessment and quality assurance tool and does not need to be completed or viewed by learners.

Minimum tracker field	What the centre should record	Purpose	Primary users
Original unit, LO and AC	The original regulated unit number and the specific LO and AC reference.	Confirms that every regulated requirement is included within the curriculum and assessment plan.	Curriculum leads, teachers and assessors, IQA staff and EQA staff
Assessment ID	The integrated assessment brief, from	Links the original qualification	Teachers and assessors, IQA

	A01 to A12, through which the AC is principally assessed.	requirements to the simplified assessment model.	staff and EQA staff
Evidence location	The precise location of the learner's evidence, such as a task section, portfolio page, observation record, professional discussion or workplace evidence item.	Enables assessors, IQA staff and EQA staff to locate and verify evidence efficiently.	Teachers and assessors, IQA staff and EQA staff
Assessment judgement	The assessment decision for the relevant AC and, where required, the associated unit-level judgement.	Provides a clear record of achievement and supports accurate assessment and quality assurance decisions.	Teachers and assessors, IQA staff and EQA staff
Revisit status	Whether the knowledge or skill is being introduced, developed, applied, assessed or revisited at that point in the programme.	Supports coherent sequencing and shows how learning is developed across the four phases rather than delivered as isolated content.	Curriculum leads, teachers and assessors, and IQA staff

Assessment brief review RAG checklist

Use this RAG checklist when reviewing each assessment brief.

Question	RAG
Is the brief anchored in one clear scenario or workplace context?	
Is there one main learner product?	
Are there no more than 2-3 outputs unless there is a clear reason?	
Have duplicate posters, leaflets, presentations or reports been removed or combined?	
Can any evidence be captured through observation, witness testimony or workplace/RWE evidence?	
Is the AC mapping held by the centre rather than turned into a learner task?	
Does the brief still allow stretch and challenge?	
Is there enough evidence for assessors and IQA/EQA to trace achievement?	

Appendices

Appendix 1: Simple unit-to-assessment coverage summary

This table provides a high-level unit-to-assessment overview. It does not replace the centre's detailed LO- and AC-level assessment tracker.

This is likely to be particularly valuable to:

- curriculum leads checking the overall structure;
- assessors moving from the original unit model;
- IQA staff reviewing integrated assessment decisions; and

Original unit	Unit title	GLH	Integrated assessment	Phase	Simple coverage note
U01	Working in social care	58	A01	Phase 1	Complete through induction guide.
U02	Equality, diversity, dignity and rights in social care	50	A02	Phase 1	Integrated into rights-based toolkit.
U03	Duty of care	43	A01, A03, A07	Phases 1–2	Split across foundations, ethics/complaints, and nutrition/fluid care.
U04	Communication in social care	55	A04	Phase 1	Formal evidence in A04, revisited in later case work.
U05	The care and support planning process	34	A05	Phase 2	Integrated with person-centred risk assessment.
U06	Person-centred approaches and risk assessments	42	A05	Phase 2	Integrated with care planning.
U07	Values and behaviours	41	A02, A04	Phase 1	Values in A02; boundaries and

Original unit	Unit title	GLH	Integrated assessment	Phase	Simple coverage note
					applied behaviour in A04.
U08	Advocacy in social care	20	A02	Phase 1	Integrated with rights, voice and inclusion.
U09	Safeguarding in social care	80	A06	Phase 2	One safeguarding case conference pack.
U10	Mental health and wellbeing	57	A08	Phase 3	Integrated with psychology.
U11	Health and safety in social care	100	A07	Phase 2	Long safe practice portfolio.
U12	Prevention and control of infection	28	A07	Phase 2	Integrated with health and safety practical evidence.
U13	Personal and professional development	62	A12	Phase 4	Capstone portfolio; reflective activity begins earlier.
U14	Working with others	35	A04	Phase 1	Integrated with communication and partnership working.
U15	Research in social care	52	A12	Phase 4	Capstone research project.
U16	Good practice in social care	16	A12	Phase 4	Integrated with good-practice improvement recommendation.
U17	Psychology in social care	47	A08	Phase 3	Integrated with mental health and wellbeing.
U18	Sociology of health and illness	47	A09	Phase 3	Integrated with health and illness.

Original unit	Unit title	GLH	Integrated assessment	Phase	Simple coverage note
U19	Understanding anatomy and physiology	50	A09	Phase 3	Integrated with sociology and body systems.
U20	End-of-life care	53	A11	Phase 3	Kept distinct due to legal/ethical sensitivity.
U21	Learning disabilities	30	A10	Phase 3	Complex needs portfolio.
U22	Dementia awareness	40	A10	Phase 3	Complex needs portfolio.
U23	Understanding autism	40	A10	Phase 3	Complex needs portfolio.