Good practice guide

Designing and creating centre-based assessment activities for generating Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs)

Contents

Introduction

Welcome to this **Good Practice Guide to designing and creating centre-based assessment activities.**

The government's intention is that exams and assessments will take place in the academic year 2021 to 2022, therefore moving away from results being based on Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs). This is because assessments and exams continue to be the fairest way for students to evidence what they know, all other things being equal.

The government recognises, however, that students who will be taking exams and assessments have experienced significant disruption to their education and that these students may also need continued support in the face of any further disruption.

We recognise that students who will be taking exams and assessments in 2021 to 2022 have had significant disruption to their education since March 2020, and we remain committed in continuing to support students in the face of any further disruption.

Teachers must assess their learners' performance, only on what content has been delivered to them by their teachers, to determine the grade each learner should receive. Teachers can use evidence of a learner's performance from throughout the course to inform their judgement and should use a broad range of evidence across the taught content to determine the grades.

The purpose of this document is to support teachers to design, develop and use alternative assessment methods where required to support with learning loss. The centres need to ensure they generate sufficient and reliable evidence of learners' skills, knowledge, and competencies for any centre devised assessments.

There are many factors which can ensure that assessment methods and activities are valid and reliable, this document summarises the factors which should be taken into consideration when planning and designing assessment activities.

Overview of writing internal assessment tasks

Assessment must evidence a learner's own knowledge, understanding and skills within their chosen subject. Evidence must be gathered through effective and reliable assessments, and this guidance document is designed to support teachers and assessors to ensure the integrity of all internal assessments.

There are 4 essential elements in the production of successful centre-based assessment tasks. These are:

- ensuring the assessment tasks are meaningful with clear, assessable outcomes.
- that there is appropriate coverage of the content, learning outcomes, or assessment criteria.
- having a valid and engaging context or scenario.
- including sufficient opportunities for stretch and challenge for higher attainers.

Good practice for internal assessment

Stretch and Challenge
The assessment tasks must provide enough evidence of achievement for different levels of competence to be recognised.

It follows that the assessment tasks must support:
- accurate differentiation between higher and lower performing leaners in attainment across all grades/levels.
- the opportunity for high performing learners to demonstrate sufficient evidence of distinction quality to be awarded that grade.
- qualitative differences in learners' performances.

Outcome focused assessment
The responses (outcomes) that you expect from learners can help to determine whether the task will differentiate between higher and lower performing learners effectively. The assessment tasks must provide enough evidence of achievement for different levels of competence to be recognised.

The below table provides an example of what a pass, merit and distinction response may look like. In this instance the task is a short answer question on a cookery qualification.

Task: Short answer question Describe safe and hygienic working practices to prepare the cooking environment		
Pass	Merit	Distinction
Cooking environments can range from the home to a café kitchen. It is important that safe and hygienic working practices are followed. These include cleaning the cooking environment and ensuring the kitchen is set up to avoid cross contamination.	Cooking environments can include the home, schools and catering kitchens. There are a number of safe and hygienic practices to consider in preparing the cooking environment. These include: • cleaning – ensuring workspaces and sinks are clean • ventilation – ensuring the cooking area is well ventilated • kitchen utensils are stored safely • complete risk assessments.	Cooking environments can include the home, schools, catering kitchens and food production factories. There are a number of safe and hygienic practices to consider in preparing the cooking environment. These include: • cleaning – ensuring workspaces and equipment are clean and in good condition, only using suitable cloths to minimise the risk of cross contamination. • ventilation – ensuring the cooking area is well ventilated • kitchen utensils and knives are stored safely with knives being stored in wooden blocks to reduce risk of injury. • applicable safety signage is clearly displayed • regular checks are carried out for slip and trip hazards to reduce the risk of injury.

Meaningful assessment

The key requirement for writing tasks is that they must be meaningful / purposeful and have clear, assessable outcomes. The tasks should also:

- be valid, assessing what you want to assess without additional barriers, and reliable, assessing consistently across the cohort.
- be practicable, particularly in light of public health restrictions and learner access to certain resources and settings.
- be stated separately from any scene-setting information such as the scenario.
- allow for various levels of achievement.
- be consistent with the specification.

- address the required learning outcomes / assessment criteria in a balanced way and cover all the required content.

Setting the scenario

The key requirement in setting the scenario is that it needs to be valid. In practice, that means in practice that it should present a context which is as realistic as possible and where possible appropriate for including tasks that link to skills or knowledge that are occupationally authentic to the industry or sector (if relevant).

The scenario should also:
- set a challenge or problem for learners to address.
- allow for the generation of a range of assessment tasks with a minimum of additional information.
- be accessible for the level of the learners.
- be free from obvious bias (gender, race, ethnicity etc)
- allow for the scene to be set in around 150 words.

Language

Assessment tasks should be written using accessible language appropriate for the level of demand of the qualification. All language should:
- use active sentences when possible.
- use familiar everyday language appropriate to the level.
- avoid using double negatives.
- not use sentences with more than one clause.
- avoid colloquialisms.
- ensure careful consideration of words which have dual or different meanings in subject specific or everyday language.

Images and Diagrams

Images and diagrams included in assessments must be necessary for the task, and not included for 'decorative' purposes. Where images are used, they must support learners' understanding of the scenario, contexts or assessment tasks.

When contextualising, images should:
- be suited to the task.
- not be of poor quality.
- not cause any offence to any learner or group of learners
- not represent any political, religious, or other beliefs (unless it forms part of the assessment criteria / outcomes)
- not be open to misinterpretation or risk causing confusion or distraction.

Images are recommended to be in black and white. If colour is used the centre should consider whether the image or diagram is accessible to learner.

Providing Stimulus Material

Centres may choose to provide stimulus material, such as videos, textbook chapters, or articles, or direct learners to where useful information can be located, as appropriate to the level of

assessment. This is particularly appropriate where learners are required to undertake independent, research-based tasks.

Using an assessment grid

The simplest way to ensure you cover all the required content in a balanced way across the assessment tasks you design, is to check this by completing an assessment grid.

The purpose of an assessment grid is to:

- map where evidence can be found for each learning outcome / assessment criteria from already existing learner work
- identify any gaps in evidence required
- support the planning and designing of new assessment tasks.

When using the grid to plan and design assessment tasks you should ensure that:
- there is an appropriate balance between learning outcomes / assessment criteria and tasks
- you do not over assess the same learning outcomes / assessment criteria.

A grid used to plan and design the assessments might resemble the following example:

Learning outcome 1	Understand how to prepare self and the environment for cooking			
Assessment task and evidence:	Existing (e) evidence or new (n) evidence required	1.1 Describe safe and hygienic working practices to prepare self for cooking	1.2 Describe safe and hygienic working practices to prepare the cooking environment	1.3 Assess potential risks and hazards in the cooking environment
Task: Presentation: **Evidence:** Tutor observation report and presentation slides	e	x		
Task: Written response **Evidence:** Workbook questions 6-8	e	x	x	
Task: Practical risk assessment **Evidence:** Risk assessment document	n			x

The grid shows clearly which learning outcomes / assessment criteria will be assessed in which task, whether this has come from already existing learner evidence or from a newly designed assessment task required to target gaps in evidence.

Steps to designing an internal assessment task

We suggest a 3-step approach to the designing of internal assessment tasks for the purposes of forming a centre devised assessment.

These are:
1) Analyse - consider current evidence
2) Design - your assessment tasks
3) Review - your assessment tasks

Step 1 - Analyse

Analyse - Consider current evidence.

Consider all the relevant subject and qualification specific teaching, learning and assessment that has been carried out to date.

Once all existing and available evidence of learner achievement has been collated, reviewed, and mapped on an assessment grid, teachers will need to identify any areas of the curriculum which have been taught but do not have evidence of the learners' skills, knowledge or understanding.

Following this, alternative assessment tasks should be designed and used to ensure that any gaps relating to the relevant qualification learning outcomes or assessment criteria have been covered.

Look at the overall structure of the relevant qualification specification and consider:

- what evidence do you currently have?
- what aspects of the specification / assessment components does it cover?
- what work have learners done within this content that represents their attainment?
- what aspects of the specification / assessment components are still outstanding?

Some examples of types of evidence could include:
- practice tests and completion of sample assessments.
- externally or internally assessed work completed to date.
- learner work completed which links directly to the qualification specification, including:
  - substantial classroom, guided learning, or homework tasks
  - project work
  - work experience or placement evidence of performance
  - professional / subject specific observation records or expert witness testimonies

Step 2 – Design

Design your assessment tasks

The next step is to design your assessment tasks. There are a range of things to consider at the design stage, let's look at some of them below.

Grouping assessment components (learning outcomes, assessment criteria or assessment objectives)

There will be opportunities to apply a holistic approach to assessment of evidence. Teachers should consider how a single piece of evidence could demonstrate competency for multiple learning outcomes / assessment criteria. Use the assessment grid to map when content overlaps and to recognise and record when evidence can be used for multiple components.

> For example, in our Level 3 Uniformed Services qualification, there are the following 2-unit components titled:
>
> • Skills for land-based outdoor and adventurous activities
> • Skills for water-based outdoor and adventurous activities
>
> In both unit components above, the learner undertakes a risk assessment in the different contexts of each assessment, however, what is being assessed is the learners' performance to be able to undertake a risk assessment.

Therefore, where evidence of achievement has been demonstrated in one assessment component, this evidence could also be used to support evidence of performance in the other assessment component.

It is good practice to carry out Step 1 to check the gaps in existing evidence prior to designing new tasks so that you can ensure that the evidence generated will build up a better picture of student attainment in areas not yet covered. The simplest way to check that an internal assessment task sufficiently covers all the learning outcomes / assessment criteria that still need evidencing is to complete an assessment grid. The assessment grid will allow you to record what has already been assessed and where and identify where these gaps are to enable you to plan and design new assessment tasks. For further details see the section on 'Using an assessment grid'.

When designing your assessment tasks you should:
- Decide how many tasks are needed to achieve the assessment's purpose, whilst still being realistic about the time available for assessment.
- List what you want to assess, whether that is learning outcomes / assessment criteria, unit numbers or assessment objectives. This list should include every item that can be mapped to cover evidence.

This guidance is adapted from Evidence Based Education's 'Designing Great Assessment' eBook (2019).

It's also good practice to draft outline responses for each grade to check that learners are likely to produce outcomes in line with the grade descriptors and that the tasks will differentiate effectively.

Where should the internal assessment tasks take place?

Most assessment tasks will normally take place in class or other centre-based settings like workshops, IT suites, etc. Ofqual guidance however does allow for assessment tasks be set as homework. In setting homework tasks centres need to be aware of the authenticity of the work submitted and any time limits. Centres should be wary not to over rely on work created at home or out of supervised sessions, rather aim to achieve a sensible balance between the two.

When setting/specifying homework tasks it's important to make sure learners have clear guidance and instructions. Centres should also consider providing guidance to learners on managing their studies at home including guidance on time management, establishing a routine, working environment, staying safe online, etc.

Types of tasks that are better suited for home include:
- application style tasks where understanding and knowledge are applied to a scenario or a case study.
- project work.
- research tasks.

Choosing the assessment task

There are many different assessment tasks that can be used to gather learner evidence. When deciding on the type of assessment task to use, it should be considered in conjunction with the learning outcomes / assessment criteria.

Here are some examples of different types of assessment tasks you may want to consider:

- presentations
- posters
- work products
- case studies
- reflective journal / learning logs

- multiple choice and short answer questions
- interview

These several assessment tasks can be prescribed as part of a portfolio.

Portfolio
Portfolios are a key assessment tool for creating, collating, ordering, and presenting evidence of learner knowledge and skills. There are a wide range of evidence sources that can be used in a portfolio ranging from e.g., reflective logs to a presentation poster.

A portfolio could include a wide range of discrete tasks, ranging from e.g., setting a piece of written work to demonstrate knowledge and understanding through to a practical task to demonstrate skills. To make a portfolio more engaging and motivating for learners, consider using an overarching brief which links the task together with a common theme. This is most effective when set in the context of a project brief.

There is no single best way to organise a portfolio of evidence. Digital Portfolios do offer the advantage of being able to freely move pages and evidence between sections and also to copy and paste pages/sections where they are being used to support more than one assessment criteria.

Some issues to consider and support you in facilitating the organisation of portfolios include:
- Learners should carefully select the evidence they collect to present in their portfolio.
- All evidence should be clearly marked / annotated to show which specific learning outcomes or assessment criteria the evidence relates to, with the inclusion of a reference system / page summarising the Portfolio/Logbook contents.
- It should be the responsibility of the learner to ensure that they include sufficient and reliable evidence, which can also be authenticated.
- Support learners by making the most of every single piece of evidence, by including documents which meet multiple learning outcomes or assessment criteria.
- Encourage learners not to aim low and submit just one piece of evidence for every criteria; Learners should map their Portfolio contents to all the learning outcomes / assessment criteria.

Posters
Posters are usually appropriate for the summarising of key points from a wide range of sources in response to a brief. Posters can be most effective where they form the basis of a presentation.

A good poster should aim to include a variety of information types, including, text, images, graphs, etc. Where the poster does not form part of a presentation it should be accompanied by a short rationale explaining how the poster meets the brief and any supporting research, evidence, etc. The poster, if possible and not to large, could be incorporated into a portfolio. Alternatively, a photograph could be taken of the poster and incorporated digitally into a portfolio.

Work Products
Work products are physical/tangible items produced by learners, normally in response to a brief. They are primarily evidence of learner skill in the creation of a range of items which may include, for example:
- a design prototype.

- a sculpture.
- an engineering product.

Where these cannot be submitted as live artefacts they can be captured on video or photographed and uploaded to a digital portfolio. It would be good practice to capture not only the final work product but capture the various stages of development with some accompanying narrative.

Case Studies

Case studies depict real-life situations in which problems need to be solved. They give learners opportunities to engage with current issues in their area of learning, making their learning clearly relevant to real-world situations. Case studies can be used to assess individual learners or groups of learners. Typically, a case study will consist of a scenario or situation and be accompanied by a set of questions to answer or an issue to resolve.

Case studies can be fictitious and designed by centres with a view to provide learners opportunities to meet assessment criteria. They can also be actual 'real life' case studies located in the learners' place of work, or work placement.

There is a range of sub-tasks/activities that can be specified as part of an overarching case study. These could include:
- a formal report
- briefing note/s
- a presentation
- marketing literature
- a work product

Practical tasks

Practical assessment tasks are most appropriate where learners need to demonstrate their level of skill in a particular area. This approach is particularly relevant in subjects like engineering, performance, art and design. In setting practical tasks you should consider:
- The length of time it will take to set up and conduct the task/s.
- Timetabling issues such as, the number of learners that can assessed at one time, access to suitable settings, social distancing and cleaning equipment.
- Any resources learners will need to complete the tasks.

Practical assessment task evidence

The key issue to consider in setting a practical assessment task is the evidence required to support a grading decision. Some of the evidence you may consider includes:

- Observation report / expert witness statements
  - Should be used in conjunction with other forms of evidence e.g., presentations, photographic or video evidence etc.
  - Statements should identify which assessment components / objectives / outcomes etc were addressed by the learner.

- Video recordings
  - Useful for the demonstration of technical processes and / or skills
  - Demonstration of kinaesthetic skills e.g., dance, sport, cookery etc

- Demonstration of cognitive process e.g., use of software, machinery etc.
- For cognitive processes, it's best accompanied with a verbal narrative.

- Photographic evidence
  - Can be used for similar circumstances to video evidence.
  - Good practice to show not only the final piece of work, but also photographs at different stages of the process.

Reflective Journal / Learning Logs

Reflective Journals are written records of work-related activity that has happened while the learner is on their learning programme. Reflective Journals use the experiences of the learner to review their individual progress and development.

Reflection should be a purposeful task in which the learner analyses their experiences, skills, practice, and responses, in order to learn and improve. Throughout the programme of study, for both on and off-the-job learning, the learner should record their learning, reflect on it, and draw conclusions in relation to how it impacted on their future development activities and practice.

This is still a task that learners can undertake in conjunction with another task, such as a practical task as mentioned above. Reflective Journals can be completed by hand or digitally, but again where paper copies are not possible due to Covid19 restrictions digital journals are easily set up and organised in tools like Microsoft OneNote.

There's no single type of evidence that's recommended above any other, however it is expected that you will take into account contextual factors (such as command words, assessment outcomes and level) when determining how much notional weight to assign to each piece.

Final considerations

You should now be able to use the previous steps to design your assessment task whilst considering the following:
- Restrictions - There are no restrictions on the number of pieces of evidence, or the number of different types of evidence. It would be advised to use a range of evidence which demonstrates the learner's knowledge, skills and competencies in the subject area.
- Coverage of assessment objectives and content – in designing your assessment tasks ensure you cover all assessment objectives through consideration of combining similar objectives and taking a more holistic approach to assessment.
- Consistency of evidence - Where possible you should aim to be consistent in specifying the evidence across a group or cohort of learners. So, for example, if you feel a recording of a practical task is the most appropriate type of evidence you should try and ensure this evidence is used across the whole cohort as opposed to allowing several different types of evidence within one task brief.
- Authenticity – It is important that you are confident that the work submitted is the learner's own work. To ensure authenticity you could:
  - Conduct the internal assessment tasks in controlled conditions.
  - Locate the task in a case study or a project that learners may already be working on. This gives to you the opportunity to ask questions that relate to that case study and garner specific responses as opposed to generic responses which could easily be obtained from elsewhere.

o When designing you need to consider if the task is an individual task which can be clearly associated/linked to a specific student or if it is a group task. Where it is a group task you need to consider and ensure that within the group task, each student has the opportunity to meet each learning outcome / assessment criterion and not just some of them. If within a group task a student does not meet all the learning outcomes / assessment criteria, they should be allowed other opportunities to meet that outcome / criteria.

- Remember to ensure that standardisation of assessment marking practice takes place as appropriate.

While there is no one type of evidence that takes precedence, evidence that you believe is an authentic representation of the learner's performance will give confidence in your centre based assessment.

Step 3 Review - Review your assessment tasks

It is good practice to carry out an internal quality assurance process on the assessment task that has been designed. The internal quality assurer should check the assessment task to ensure that it will allow for the production of evidence that will be:
- Valid: does it sufficiently assess the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed?
- Authentic: does it reflect a real-life situation?
- Sufficient: does it assess in enough depth to make a claim about attainment?
- Reliable: have the assessment criteria for deciding assessment outcomes been applied in the same way for each student?

A standard checklist is a useful tool for the internal reviewer to review and check that key components of the task are included. A sample checklist template is included in appendix A

Summary

We understand that centres are working incredibly hard to deliver teaching, learning and assessment activity and support learners through the academic year of 2021-22, where public health restrictions may still be in place or supporting learnings impacted learning loss. We are committed to doing everything we can to support you by providing timely and clear advice, guidance and support – and by making our requirements and processes as simple and streamlined as possible. We hope you found this guidance document helpful and that it will enable you to successfully collect the evidence needed to submit reliable assessment outcomes and support your learners' progression.

We have drawn together the key points covered in this document below and provided signposting to further information:

- Try to design holistic assessments tasks to meaningfully evidence across all assessment objectives
- Design assessment tasks that have engaging and challenging scenarios that everyone can access
- Follow the 3 step - analyse, design and review process as closely as possible
- Make effective use of assessment grids to ensure you have a clear plan of what has been covered and what is still outstanding.
- Most assessment tasks will normally take place in class or other centre-based settings like workshops, IT suites, etc. Ofqual guidance however does allow for assessment tasks be set as homework.

We are here to help and support you with the generation of centre devised assessments, so if you have any questions, simply call us on 0191 239 8000 or email customersupport@ncfe.org.uk.

Appendix A

Internal Quality Assurance Review of the Assessment Task	
Assessment title	
IQA name	
Assessment designer	

Checklist		
Step	**Details / Information**	**Y / N**
1	Analysed current learner evidence.	
2	Identified missing / incomplete assessment evidence.	
3	Decide Assessment task e.g.: • Case study • Simulation • Journals • Project • Multiple choice • Interview • Scenario • Presentation • Report • Synoptic • Discussions • Practical	
4	Appropriate scenario / context where applicable.	
5	Accessible e.g., SEND, EAL etc.	
6	Contains stretch and challenge.	
7	Allows accurate differentiation in attainment across all grades / levels.	
8	Use of a taxonomy such as Bloom's or SOLO where applicable.	
9	Explicit / clear instructions.	
10	Meets the necessary assessment criteria / learning outcomes.	
11	Appropriate method for producing / recording evidence.	
12	Learners will have access to the necessary resources.	
13	Allows for the production of quality evidence.	
14	Evidence produced can be authenticated / attributed to an individual learner.	
15	Clear / appropriate timeframes.	
16	Grading system produced e.g., rubric.	
Feedback to the assessment designer		
Overall, is the assessment fit for purpose?		