

Access to Fair Assessment Guidance

Access to Fair Assessment

All Open Awards recognised centres must be aware of and adhere to the assessment requirements of the courses / qualifications that they offer. For Open Awards QCA approved qualifications including Progression Qualifications (or units of these qualifications) these will be clearly spelt out in the Qualification Guide. All tutors / assessors and internal moderators must have a copy of this and these can be downloaded from the Open Awards website <http://www.openawards.org.uk>.

Qualifications with External Assessment

Where a QCA approved Open Awards qualification includes a requirement for external assessment, the regulations surrounding the use of the external assessment, including all the security arrangements that must be put in place must be complied with. These can be found on the Open Awards web site <http://www.openawards.org.uk>.

Internally Devised Assessment

For many Open Awards courses / qualifications including Progression Qualifications the assessment activities are internally devised. Progression qualification units are in the “Unit Plus” format. This indicates if any particular assessment methods are prescribed for achievement of the unit. In choosing the range of assessment methods that you will use for a unit you should refer to the Open Awards Credit and Qualifications Framework “Assessment Definitions Document” for guidance as to what is required at a specified level. <http://www.openawards.org.uk>.

Open Awards accredited courses/ qualifications are built from units of assessment, which have clearly defined learning outcomes and associated assessment criteria. Assessment of a learner’s achievement is criterion referenced to the unit. In order to be awarded credit for a unit the assessment evidence generated must demonstrate achievement of all of the learning outcomes for the unit at the level specified by the assessment criteria.

The QCA provides guidance for awarding bodies on ensuring that fair assessment is built into their qualifications. For Internally assessed qualifications assessors should ensure that they are aware of these principles and that they have a fair assessment policy. See Fair Access by Design http://www.qca.org.uk/592_15188.html for further details.

Designing an Assessment Strategy and individual Assessment Tasks

In devising an assessment strategy for a unit therefore assessors need to be able to demonstrate that assessment is fair to all students and does not discriminate on grounds that are irrelevant to the achievement of the outcome.

For internally assessed units this will be the role of the Tutor / Assessors
The internal moderator will be responsible for verifying the assessment strategy and the assessment tasks at the design stage to ensure that the following principles of assessment have been adhered to:

Reliability

Reliability in this context means asking the questions;
“Is the assessment outcome repeatable?”

Consider

“Would two or more assessors reach the same judgement about the same assessment?”

“Would the assessment outcome be the same on different occasions?”

Validity

Valid in this context means asking the question;

“Does the method of assessment measure the required competence skill or knowledge ?

Consider

“Does the method match the assessment criteria?”

“Are all the required criteria covered?”

Fitness for Purpose

Fit for purpose in this context means asking the question; “Are the assessment arrangements affordable, practical and flexible?”

Consider

“Are timings realistic and achievable?”

“Is access to equipment and buildings readily available?”

“Are staffing requirements realistic?”

“Are arrangements cost effective?”

Transparency

Transparency in this context means that it is clear to students, staff and external verifiers, the criteria and the methodology by which learners work is being judged.

This is particularly important for the purpose of determining the “reasonableness” of any adjustments to the design or conduct of the assessment.

Consider

“Is everyone involved in the assessment process clear about when and how assessment will take place and what criteria are to be met?”

“Are there any time constraints or deadlines for the submission of the assessment evidence?”

“Is there a resubmission policy and is everyone aware of it?”

Recognises and Respects Equality and Diversity

Fairness implies that learners should have equal opportunities to demonstrate the achievement of outcomes. This does not imply that they should all be assessed on the same task indeed achievement of an outcome might be shown in quite varied ways.

Assessment should be sensitive and responsive to differences amongst students. These may include their gender, ethnicity, language, race socioeconomic circumstances, personalities, talents and disabilities.

Fair assessment does not demand that all learners be judged on the same task but rather that judgements about their learning and achievement should clearly reflect the same outcomes to the same standard.

Consider

“Does this assessment task discriminate against a learner with a particular need?”

Could the evidence of achievement of the outcome be generated in another way?”

Use of Appropriate Language in Assessment Tasks

It is important to ensure that the language used in internally devised assessment tasks is free from bias, and appropriate to the level of the qualification/unit.

Assessors should consider whether the language used in assessment tasks could present an unintentional barrier to learner achievement.

Writing your “Access to Fair Assessment “policy for Open Awards Provision

Good practice in Assessment

Centres should ensure that their Fair Assessment Policy” contains policy statements that include all of the above principles.

Procedures that Underpin the Policy Statements

Centres will need to have in place procedures to ensure that the policy statements are translated in practice, and ensure that;

Tutor/ Assessors;

- Are inducted into Open Awards principles of assessment and understand criterion referenced assessment
- Produce assessment activities with due regard to equality and the diversity of learners, and ensure that assessment tasks allow for the generation of evidence in diverse ways.
- Ensure that they use plain language at a level suitable to the unit.
- Ensure that the assessment strategy allows for the generation of evidence against all the Learning Outcomes for a unit.
- Record the outcomes of all assessment activities
- Feedback to learners against the achievement of the learning outcomes
- Plan their assessment strategy and the timing of assessments so as not to unnecessarily overburden learners or discriminate against particular groups of learners.
- Review assessment tasks on a regular basis and as part of any course review.

Internal Moderators;

- Verify the appropriateness of the assessment strategy for a unit
- Verify the appropriateness of individual assessment tasks against the principles itemised above and any particular requirements of the qualification.
- Ensure that tutor records are clear and current
- Ensure that tutor feedback to learners is clear unambiguous and related to the assessment criteria.
- Ensure that all assessment decisions are valid
- Provide written feedback to assessors on all aspects of the assessment process.
- Ensure that all quality improvement recommendations are monitored and actioned.

Learners

- Are inducted into Open Awards Assessment and understand criterion referenced assessment
- Are made aware of the centres assessment appeals policy and how to access any documentation to support its use
- Are provided with an assessment plan
- Are made aware of any time constraints attached to the achievement of the qualification
- Receive feedback from all assessment activities to a realistic timescale and which relates to the achievement / non achievement of the assessment criteria.
- Receive regular feedback against their achievement of individual units and their progress towards the overall qualification.

Open Awards Quality Reviewers

Are given access to all relevant documentation and assessment evidence to support the award of credit/ qualifications as requested.

Many of these will be covered by;

- A robust Internal Moderation Procedure that includes the induction of new staff
- A commitment for staff to attend Open Awards training.
- A thorough learner induction process
- An assessment appeals procedure