

# **Unit 1: Understanding the Principles and Practices of Assessment**

**Unit code: D/601/5313**

**QCF level 3: Specialist**

**Credit value: 3**

**Guided learning hours: 24**

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## **Unit aim**

The aim of this unit is to assess the learning and development practitioner's knowledge and understanding of the principles and practices of assessment. Practitioner means anyone with a learning and development responsibility as the whole or part of their role.

## **Unit introduction**

This is a knowledge based unit which gives learners an understanding of the principles and requirements for different types of assessment methods. This understanding will help learners make assessment judgments using evidence of knowledge, skills, understanding and occupational competence.

By having a better understanding of the function of assessment, it is possible for learners to review the strengths and weaknesses of different types of assessment method. This will enable those in assessor roles to plan assessment for different learners, acknowledging different needs and contexts. It also identifies the need to involve the learners themselves, in the assessment process. This ensures that learners feel actively involved in the assessment process and then it becomes a natural extension of their learning. By understanding the principles behind a holistic approach to assessment, the best possible use can be made of a range of possible evidence opportunities.

Assessors need to be able to make assessment decisions that are fair and based on appropriate assessment criteria. They must also provide appropriate feedback to the learner along with information that will provide valid, reliable and current data relating to learners' achievements.

An assessor should be aware of the need to collect, collate and record assessment decisions in a way that is clear, concise and accurate – making use of technology where appropriate. This should be seen as a way to contribute to the quality assurance process in order to meet legal, equality and good practice requirements in relation to assessment.

## Learning outcomes and assessment criteria

In order to pass a unit, the evidence that the learner presents for assessment needs to demonstrate that they can meet all the learning outcomes for the unit. The assessment criteria determine the standard required to achieve the unit. Learners must reference the type of evidence they have and where it is available, for quality assurance purposes. See *Annexe B*.

### On completion of this unit a learner should:

| Learning outcomes   | Assessment criteria  |
|---|--|
| 1 Understand the principles and requirements of assessment    | 1.1 Explain the functions of assessment in learning and development<br>1.2 Define the key concepts and principles of assessment<br>1.3 Explain the responsibilities of the assessor<br>1.4 Identify the regulations and requirements relevant to assessment in own area of practice  |
| 2 Understand different types of assessment method             | 2.1 Compare the strengths and limitations of a range of assessment methods with reference to the needs of individual learners  |
| 3 Understand how to plan assessment                           | 3.1 Summarise key factors to consider when planning assessment<br>3.2 Evaluate the benefits of using a holistic approach to assessment<br>3.3 Explain how to plan a holistic approach to assessment<br>3.4 Summarise the types of risks that may be involved in assessment in own area of responsibility<br>3.5 Explain how to minimise risks through the planning process   |
| 4 Understand how to involve learners and others in assessment | 4.1 Explain the importance of involving the learner and others in the assessment process<br>4.2 Summarise types of information that should be made available to learners and others involved in the assessment process<br>4.3 Explain how peer and self-assessment can be used effectively to promote learner involvement and personal responsibility in the assessment of learning<br>4.4 Explain how assessment arrangements can be adapted to meet the needs of individual learners |

| Learning outcomes   | Assessment criteria   |
|---|---|
| 5 Understand how to make assessment decisions                                   | 5.1 Explain how to judge whether evidence is: sufficient, authentic, current<br>5.2 Explain how to ensure that assessment decisions are: made against specified criteria, valid, reliable, fair   |
| 6 Understand quality assurance of the assessment process                        | 6.1 Evaluate the importance of quality assurance in the assessment process<br>6.2 Summarise quality assurance and standardisation procedures in own area of practice<br>6.3 Summarise the procedures to follow when there are disputes concerning assessment in own area of practice  |
| 7 Understand how to manage information relating to assessment                   | 7.1 Explain the importance of following procedures for the management of information relating to assessment<br>7.2 Explain how feedback and questioning contribute to the assessment process  |
| 8 Understand the legal and good practice requirements in relation to assessment | 8.1 Explain legal issues, policies and procedures relevant to assessment, including those for confidentiality, health, safety and welfare<br>8.2 Explain the contribution that technology can make to the assessment process<br>8.3 Evaluate requirements for equality and diversity and, where appropriate, bilingualism in relation to assessment<br>8.4 Explain the value of reflective practice and continuing professional development in the assessment process |

## Unit content

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### 1 Understand the principles and requirements of assessment

*Functions of assessment in learning and development:* functions eg measurement and recording of achievement, identification of individual learners' needs, formative or summative assessment, fit-for-purpose, reflecting required standards and performance/assessment criteria, monitoring development, evidence for performance review/targets/benchmarking, contributing to quality assurance, development of best practice

*Key concepts and principles of assessment:* purpose eg who is it for? Learner, trainer, assessor, organisation, employer; assessment as a part of the learning or training cycle eg to recognise prior learning, to identify specific assessment requirements; assessment of specific learning domains eg Bandler and Grinder's Psychomotor/Cognitive/Affective – skills, knowledge or understanding

*Responsibilities of the assessor:* range of responsibilities eg to the learner, the employer, the organisation, occupational standards, awarding organisation; practical responsibilities eg planning, managing and delivering assessment; maintaining the integrity of the qualification; learner-centred assessment

*Regulations and requirements relevant to assessment:* regulatory bodies of standards eg Ofqual, Sector Skills Councils, awarding organisations, Institute for Learning (IFL); other regulations eg health and safety, equality and diversity/DDA4, data protection, safeguarding learners during assessment; recording/tracking and logging assessment decisions, communication decisions with learners, standardisation, moderation and quality assurance of assessment

### 2 Understand different types of assessment method

*Strengths and limitations of assessment methods in relation to the needs of individual learners:* range of assessment methods for performance-based assessment of skills or knowledge-based assessment of understanding, individual or group assessment, fit-for-purpose eg learners' needs, context, measures of achievement, performance criteria, assessment criteria, levels standards; practical limitations eg numbers involved, range, opportunity, reliability, time constraints, resources, staffing

### 3 Understand how to plan assessment

*Key factors in planning assessment:* eg addressing regulations or standards, learner, employer, business needs; timing of assessment eg initial/pre-course, formative, summative, recognising prior learning (RPL); methods/activities eg observation, performance evidence, discussion, witness/learner statement; knowledge/understanding eg tests, multiple-choice questions, written assignment/task, reflective journal, verbal questioning; naturally occurring evidence; specific learners' needs

*Holistic approach to assessment:* benefits eg cost and time effectiveness, motivational for learners eg promoting learner responsibility and learner involvement, use of naturally occurring evidence, experiential learning, linking different aspects of learning through assessment, transference of skills, work-based opportunities, rationalising collection of assessment evidence, meeting number of learning outcomes/assessment criteria, linked knowledge-based and performance-based assessment opportunities

*Planning a holistic approach to assessment:* range of assessment requirements and opportunities eg comprehensive approach, logical progression and sequencing, related to specific context, learner needs, preferences, workplace; opportunities to use linkages particularly between knowledge and understanding to skills requirements, naturally occurring evidence, appropriate assessment opportunities, evidence appropriate to number of learning outcomes/assessment criteria

*Risks involved in assessment:* organisational risks eg organisational culture, appropriate opportunities for assessment, staff occupational, assessment experience; practical risks eg health and safety, equality and diversity, data protection, specific occupational risks; learner-based risks eg occupational competence, responsibility, motivation; assessment risks eg timing, range, sufficiency, bias, fairness

*Minimising risks through planning the assessment process:* clear criteria for assessment eg identifying, addressing specific requirements, standardisation of planning, negotiating with learner; selecting appropriate range of assessment methods appropriate to context to generate the required evidence; safeguarding learners eg planning for health and safety, equality and diversity, negotiating with learners, appropriate timing of assessment; clear recording, tracking, logging of assessment decisions

#### **4 Understand how to involve learners and others in assessment**

*Importance of involving the learner and others in the assessment process:* recognising needs eg initial assessment, learning, training needs analysis, RPL (recognising current level of knowledge, understanding, skills and experiences); negotiating learning eg targets, goals, objectives for assessment, self-assessment, 'bite size chunks', meaningful, relevant, motivation, engagement, involvement, individual responsibility; involvement with others eg organisation, colleagues, employers, peers, witnesses

*Types of information to be made available:* standards, criteria against which they will be assessed eg awarding organisation requirements, occupational standards, other specific requirements; assessment plan eg specific criteria they will be assessed against, timing, venue, methods, expected outcomes, opportunities for feedback, benefits of assessment, appeals procedure; requirements of the learner eg preparation, specific needs, activity, evidence required; assessment decisions

*Use of peer- and self-assessment to promote learner involvement and personal responsibility:* peer formal, informal eg witness statements, peer observations, feedback, working collaboratively, sharing goals, targets, giving and receiving feedback, awareness of risks of appearing challenging or confrontational; self-assessment formal, informal eg SAR (self- assessment review) initial assessment, current knowledge, understanding, skills, occupational competence, SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats), reflection, identifying targets, target setting, action planning

*Adapting assessment arrangements to meet the needs of individual learners:* negotiating assessment needs with individual learners eg identifying specific learning, assessment needs, range of assessment methods, activities to meet different learner, context needs, alternative assessment activities where appropriate, repeating assessment to provide opportunity for experiential learning, use of alternative assessor, learning support, discussion to supplement primary evidence; recording evidence of assessment to suit learners needs eg digital recording – audio/visual, scribe

## 5 Understand how to make assessment decisions

*Judging evidence:* understanding rules of evidence eg meeting outcomes and objectives identified in assessment plan, evidence is coherent, accessible, realistic, relevant, attributable, achieved within time constraints; credible and compatible with learning programme and required assessment outcomes, context, adhering to organisation, industry, awarding body and government requirements and standards

*Ensuring assessment decisions are made against specified criteria, valid, reliable and fair:* range of evidence eg clearly identified, current, appropriate criteria, valid currency, level, attributable; reliable and can be repeated or learning transferred; assessment decisions are fair eg without bias and relate to the identified criteria, complying with organisation and or industry, awarding body and government requirements, addressing specific learner needs

## 6 Understand quality assurance of the assessment process

*Importance of quality assurance in the assessment process:* ensuring organisation, occupational, awarding organisation and government requirements eg standardisation, quality assurance of practice, consistency, across learners, assessors, contexts, units; comprehensive approach to assessment from preparation, planning (process) to assessment outcomes (product); benchmarking and measures of achievement; identifying development and Continuing Professional Development needs for quality improvement

*Quality assurance and standardisation procedures:* organisation assessment policies and procedures eg complying with Sector Skills Council, National Occupational Standards (SSC/NOS) requirements; team, assessor standardisation eg observations of practice, standardisation meetings, sharing good practice, observation of peers, work shadowing, feedback, comparisons of process and product; internal/external quality assurance reviews, evaluation procedures

*Procedures to follow when there are disputes concerning assessment:* organisation policies and procedures eg clearly written appeals, grievance procedures, accessible systems for appeals eg documents for appeals, appropriate staffing for management of appeals, confidentiality, non-discriminatory policy, application in practice, recording of outcomes, clear paper-trail

## 7 Understand how to manage information relating to assessment

*Procedures for the management of information:* policies for management of assessment evidence eg portfolios, assessment records, observation records, physical evidence, learner and witness statements; management of assessment records eg storage and retrieval, confidentiality, data protection, use of technology; sharing information with relevant parties eg learners, other assessors, employer, colleagues, organisation; regulations covering sharing information eg Ofqual, awarding organisation, SSC, data protection

*Contribution of feedback and questioning to assessment:* supporting range of evidence; confirming learning eg knowledge, understanding, skills, reward, motivation, linking learning of product and process, transferability of learning, identifying further learning requirements, target setting and action planning, recording distance travelled, value-added, progression; corroboration of assessor decision-making process, judgment; identifying specific needs or need for support

## **8 Understand the legal and good practice requirements in relation to assessment**

*Legal issues, policies and procedures relevant to assessment:* organisation policies and procedures eg associated with Ofqual, awarding organisation requirements, SSC/national occupational standards, specific requirements eg confidentiality; health, safety and welfare; inclusion, equality and diversity; staff development needs eg standardisation, sharing good practice, work shadowing, peer observation, in-service training, cascading training, Continuing Professional Development

*Technology in assessment process:* appropriate technology eg initial assessments, online testing, recording of evidence including audio or visual, submission of assignments electronically, electronic feedback to learners, emailing feedback, discussion forums, web-based learning including distance or blended learning, issues of authenticity; technology for recording and storing assessment evidence eg software, awarding organisation online provision, learners managing own electronic records; security

*Equality and diversity in relation to assessment:* forms of inequality and discrimination and their impact on individuals, the relevant legislation, employment regulations and policies and codes of practice relevant to the promotion of equality and valuing of diversity eg visual auditory impairment, physical disability, bilingualism; flexibility in approach to planning of assessment and quality assurance eg negotiating timing, context, providing additional resources where appropriate, recognising additional support needs, alternative approaches, evidence

*Reflective practice and CPD in assessment process:* reflective practice eg self-assessment, SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats), realistic targets for own development, use feedback from learners, colleagues, managers, external evaluators, other individuals and professionals, self and team reviews, observation reports, outcome from appraisal, monitoring and modifications, updating knowledge, occupational expertise, skills and self-confidence, modifications to assessment plans, developing technologies to extend and enhance assessment process, contributing to curriculum development

## Essential guidance for tutors

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### Delivery

It is important for learners to experience a holistic approach to learning and assessment as this helps relate their own achievements to the underpinning theory, Professional Standards (PS) and National Occupational Standards (NOS). This unit provides the underpinning theory for the practical units *Unit 2: Assess Occupational Competence in the Workplace* and *Unit 3: Assess Vocational Skills, Knowledge and Understanding*. Learners should be made aware of the importance of their own professional practice and the opportunities for naturally occurring evidence to be used at all times where available or appropriate. Learners should be encouraged to evaluate their own experiences and assess relevant past and present practice.

The unit emphasises the importance of the shared knowledge and experience of peers and colleagues for good practice and reflection on assessment approaches. When dealing with peers and colleagues, any issues of confidentiality should be considered at all times.

The delivery of this knowledge-based unit needs to take into account the different contexts in which learners may be undertaking assessments. It is necessary to make as much use as possible of naturally occurring evidence so that learners can relate to evidence from their own practice. This makes learning more meaningful and will help underpinning knowledge to be put into a practical context, used to help build effective assessment processes and used in the practical units *Unit 2: Assess Occupational Competence in the Workplace* and *Unit 3: Assess Vocational Skills, Knowledge and Understanding*.

The unit should focus on the knowledge required to improve understanding of the assessment process and on the different methods that can be used to engage learners more actively in their own learning through assessment. Learners will need to examine a wide range of assessment methods in order to develop an understanding of the different purposes of assessment and the wide range of assessment tools, including those used for diagnostic, formative or summative purposes.

Learners should be given opportunities to explore with peers, colleagues and senior staff within different organisations how data is used in the planning, management and quality assurance of the delivery of the assessment of learning – whether it is of knowledge, skills or understanding. It is especially important to recognise the role of assessment in enabling individual learners to feel greater ownership of their own learning, whilst providing appropriate support and guidance in accordance with the requirements of the assessment process.

Delivery should emphasise links with the current professional standards and National Occupational Standards and should allow for formal and informal discussion of the issues raised by the unit content. Learners should be given opportunities to demonstrate their understanding of both organisational and external requirements. Reference should be made to the need to maintain standards of quality that will meet the requirements of external moderation, examination and quality assurance and ways to address the needs of those learners unable to access usual assessment strategies.



Learners should be encouraged to evaluate the requirements of their own assessment process and assess relevant past and present practice, identifying areas of strength and need. They should also evaluate the qualities and transferable skills needed to meet the needs of the learners being assessed. It is also important for learners to recognise the need to be adaptable to changing circumstances and to develop both the confidence and flexibility to adapt and develop assessment methods. The unit should encourage individuals to explore aspects of their own assessment approaches in order to contribute effectively to the quality assurance process. Learners should be encouraged to follow best assessment practice, and should understand the need to share information with others.

Support for learners can be offered through a mentoring system to provide informal support and guidance, with the opportunity for learners to record their own professional development, along with possible routes for progression, with the aid of an individual learning plan.

### **Assessment**

Although this is a knowledge-based unit it is important that links are made to the practical units *Unit 2: Assess Occupational Competence in the Workplace* and *Unit 3: Assess Vocational Skills, Knowledge and Understanding*. These will provide opportunities to generate a range of evidence that can effectively cover assessment criteria in this unit whilst providing the underpinning knowledge required for the practical units through a holistic assessment strategy that links theory to practice and generates transferable skills. At this level learners should show creativity and originality in the ways in which they present evidence.

Assessment criteria requiring knowledge- or understanding-based evidence require the use of reflective journals and other forms of evaluation that can draw on research which supports the evidence of practical experience.

### **Supporting evidence for this unit can potentially include any of the following:**

- summaries of key documentation, eg awarding organisation documentation, quality assurance policy, documents, procedures and legal requirements
- assessment plan indicating when/how learners are involved, eg through providing feedback/action planning/recordkeeping
- written report including examples of assessment methods and procedures devised, developed and used with learners relevant to a specific programme. At least two different methods should be included to show how they can be fairly and reliably used to produce valid results
- justification and evaluation of selected assessment tools to suit specific learners and/or contexts
- identification of approaches to make assessment accessible for learners with specific needs within a specific subject area
- records of formal/informal assessment according to organisational and/or awarding body requirements to demonstrate how they can be used to inform changes and/or modifications to a selected curriculum/training area
- evidence of the use of assessment records to inform/manage/develop assessment practice individually and through negotiation within a teaching team.

It is important, however, for the assessor to interview the candidate assessor/learner so they can demonstrate the knowledge underpinning their presentation of any documentary evidence.

## Sample holistic assessment activity

The assessment for this unit is in three parts. All parts have to be completed to achieve the unit.

Before beginning this assignment, learners need to be familiar with:

policies and procedures relating to assessment and quality assurance processes (standardisation, moderation, internal and external quality assurance) of their organisation, appeals procedures and equality of opportunity (in relation to assessment).

(The range will depend on availability within different organisations.)

awarding organisation regulations about assessment

### Part one - the principles and requirements of assessment

Describe how, within your own organisation, the functions of assessment in learning and development can be explained in relation to the key concepts and principles of assessment.

Use your organisation documentation to review the ways in which assessment is affected by concerns over the regulations, legal issues, policies, procedures and requirements relevant to assessment and the responsibilities of the assessor in the management of the process. (This may be done through discussion or in writing.)

*(Assessment criteria 1.1; 1.2; 1.3; 1.4; 8.1)*

### Part two - the assessment process

Use the principles from part one to identify assessment opportunities for TWO specific learners with different levels of occupational competence or individual needs.

You need to include:

- types of information that need to be made available to learners and others involved in assessment
- the use of a holistic approach to assessment that makes use of different methods
- how self-assessment can be used to involve the individual learner and promote personal responsibility
- how peer assessment can be used to promote involvement
- ways in which others can be involved in the assessment process
- how risks for individual learners as well as the procedures can be minimised
- procedures to follow when there are disputes concerning assessment in your own area of practice. (This may be done through discussion or in writing.)

*(Assessment criteria 3.1; 3.3; 3.5; 4.1; 4.2; 4.3; 6.3)*

Identify a range of assessment methods you could use to enable you to make a judgement as to whether the evidence was sufficient, authentic and current. The methods identified must also provide appropriate evidence to show the assessment decisions are made against specified criteria, valid, reliable and fair. (This may be done through discussion or in writing.)

*(Assessment criteria 5.1; 5.2; 7.1)*

Produce a written report to explain the benefits of using a holistic approach to assessment, as well as the strengths and limitations of your selected assessment methods. Explain the risks involved in assessment and how you would plan assessment arrangements to meet the needs of selected learners, equality and diversity needs and minimise possible risks in the assessment process.

(*Assessment criteria 2.1; 3.2; 3.4; 4.4; 8.2*):

### **Part three - Quality assurance of the assessment process**

Explain what happens to the results of the assessment process once you have completed it with learners. Include in the explanation:

- procedures for the management of information
- importance of quality assurance in the assessment process
- quality assurance and standardisation procedures
- ways to use technology in assessment.

Explain how you can now use this reflective practice in your own continuing professional development to improve your assessment practice. (This may be done through discussion or in writing.)

(*Assessment criteria 6.1; 6.2; 6.3; 7.1; 8.3; 8.4*)

### **Links to professional standards**

New Professional Standards in Initial Teacher/Tutor/Trainer Education Standards  
New Learning and Development Standards

These standards are available at <http://www.ukstandards.co.uk>, within the Skills for Business website.

### **Essential resources**

Learners should be supported by access to a wide range of assessment materials, which use different methods and are designed for different purposes. Opportunities for discussion with more experienced colleagues will provide an essential source of support and guidance.

Academic and professional literature will help learners to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of different assessment strategies and the development of approaches that are fit for purpose for particular subject areas and different learners' needs. Suitable venues for individual/group study and assessment should be organised in advance.

### **Indicative reading for learners**

Dadzie S - *Equality Assurance: Self-Assessment for Equal Opportunities in Further Education* (Further Education Development Agency, 1998)

Gibbs G, Habshaw S and Habshaw T — *53 Interesting ways to Assess your Students* (Technical and Educational Services, rev ed 1993) ISBN 0947885102

Marshall B - *Preparing to Teach in the Learning and Skills Sector - BTEC* textbook/CD ROM (Pearson, 2006)

Morgan C and O'Reilly M -*Assessing Open and Distance Learners* (Kogan Page, 1999) ISBN 0749428759

Murphy P -*Learners, Learning and Assessment* (Sage Publications Ltd, 1998) ISBN 1853964247

Read H – *Excellence in Assessing* (Readon Publications, 2006) (distributed by ENTO) ISBN 1 872678 22 X

Read H – *Excellence in Reviewing Learners' Progress* (Readon Publications, 2005) (distributed by ENTO) ISBN 1 872678 21 1

Read H – *Excellence in Initial Assessment* (Readon Publications, 2004) (distributed by ENTO) ISBN 1 872678 25 4

Wolf A -*Competence-Based Assessment* (Open University Press, 1995) ISBN 0335190235

Wolf A -*Assessment Issues and Problems in a Criterion-based System* (FEDA/Institute of Education, 1993) ISBN 1853382973

#### **Journal**

Times Educational Supplement

#### **Websites**

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|--|---|
| <a href="http://www.dcsf.gov.uk">www.dcsf.gov.uk</a>   | Department for Education and Employment (DfEE)            |
| <a href="http://www.dius.gov.uk">www.dius.gov.uk</a>   | Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) |
| <a href="http://www.dcsf.gov.uk">www.dcsf.gov.uk</a>   | Department of Education and Science (DfES)                |
| <a href="http://www.ento.co.uk">www.ento.co.uk</a>     | ENTO  |
| <a href="http://www.ifl.ac.uk">www.ifl.ac.uk</a>       | Institute for Learning (IfL)                              |
| <a href="http://www.lluk.org">www.lluk.org</a>         | Lifelong Learning LLUK                                    |
| <a href="http://www.niace.org.uk">www.niace.org.uk</a> | NIACE   |
| <a href="http://www.ypla.gov.uk">www.ypla.gov.uk</a>   | Young People's Learning Agency                            |