



# **Quality Assurance System**

## **PL01 - Policy on Assessment**

Rev 1.0

## Policy on Assessment

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## Assessment

### 1.1 Policy

LASNTG is committed to ensuring that Learners are assessed in a fair, transparent, manner and clearly understand all assessment procedures. These assessment procedures must be in line with the Programme's assessment requirements and national standards and are implemented consistently.

### 1.2 Responsibilities

- The Secretary, working with the RTC Managers, is responsible for the implementation of the assessment processes and procedures according to the Quality Assurance System (QAS).
- The Trainers and assessors are responsible for ensuring all assessment activities are carried out as set out in the Programme Specification/Modular Assessment Plan (MAP).
- The Results Approval Panel (RAP) approves and signs off assessment results and recommends the final approved results for certification.

### 1.3 Monitoring and Evaluation

The Quality Assurance (QA) Team reviews and evaluates the assessment/certification process following each certification and draws up an improvement plan based on recommendations and corrective actions agreed by the Results Approval Panel.

### 1.4 Overview of LASNTG Assessment Process

#### 1.4.1 Assessment

- Assessment policies, processes and procedures are developed, implemented and agreed with the awarding body or as required by the Programme
- The Programme Design and Development Team devises assessment instruments, marking schemes and assessment criteria
- The Trainers and assessors assess, mark and grade the Learner evidence
- The Trainers and assessors submit the required paperwork to the RTC Verifier who records the outcomes

#### 1.4.2 Authentication

- The LASNTG Verifier verifies that all assessment procedures have been applied and monitors the outcome of the assessment process using the LASNTG sampling strategy.
- The LASNTG Verifier identifies any deviations in marking as part of the internal verification process and brings them to the attention of the Secretary.
- The Secretary assigns a suitably qualified External Authenticator from the panel of External Authenticators approved by the sectoral Training Groups
- The External Authenticator moderates assessment results by sampling Learner evidence using the LASNTG sampling strategy

#### 1.4.3 Results Approval and Issue

- The Secretary convenes meetings of the Results Approval Panel
- The Panel reviews, approves and signs off assessment results

- The LASNTG Verifier makes results available to the Learners

#### **1.4.4 Request for Certification**

- The LASNTG Verifier submits Learner results to QQI via the QBS

#### **1.4.5 Appeals**

- Learners are allowed 10 working days to lodge an appeal
- The Secretary processes appeals

### **1.5 Assessment Design and Planning**

All aspects of assessment are considered, and comprehensive assessment guidelines are produced by the Programme Design and Development Team at the design stage. The guidelines contain a standard set of procedures, assignment briefs, marking schemes, assessment schedules Modular Assessment Plan based on award specifications (if applicable) and details of resources required for assessment. This detail is set out clearly in the Modular Assessment Plan (MAP), which is an important component of the Programme Specification. The MAP is reviewed and signed off by the Programme Coordinator to ensure that it is compliant with quality assurance procedures.

### **1.6 Role of the Programme Design and Development Team in assessment design**

- Ensuring that there is an appropriate and coherent mix of assessment tasks and that the overall assessment workload is not excessive
- Ensuring that there is an even and logical spread of formative and summative assessment throughout the duration of the Programme
- Ensuring that assessment is aligned with demonstrating attainment of learning outcomes

#### **1.6.1 Formative Assessment**

Trainers use formative assessment on an ongoing basis throughout Programmes to monitor learning, to engage and motivate the Learners and to monitor their own performance. The formative assessment strategy for each Programme is designed by the Programme Design and Development team at the assessment design stage and the strategy is detailed in the Programme Specification. Formative assessment helps to develop a Learner's understanding of their own strengths, weaknesses and gaps in knowledge/skills and improve their learning. It also helps Trainers to improve their own performance

#### **1.6.2 Summative Assessment**

Summative assessment is used for certification purposes and is based on the cumulative learning experience that takes place. Assessment undertaken for the purpose of achieving QQI certification is summative assessment. Summative assessment instruments are designed by the Programme Design and Development team, based on the award specification and validated Programme and are discussed and agreed with the Trainer at the pre-Programme briefings which details are issued to Learners at induction.

### **1.7 Information and Feedback to Trainers and Learners**

There is general information regarding assessment in Programme Specifications. Information regarding assessment is available to applicants initially via the employers who will have received an Information Pack from the RTC Manager.

The RTC Manager makes up-to-date copies of all assessment instruments available to the Trainer at the pre-Programme briefing. The Trainer distributes a copy of the Modular Assessment Plan which includes deadline dates for submission of assessments and examination dates at Learner Induction. All critical assessment-related dates are highlighted on the Modular Assessment Plan and at induction. Learner responsibilities around assessment are detailed in the Learner Handbook and on the assessment briefs and are reinforced throughout the Programme by the Trainer. The Trainer issues an assessment brief for each assessment event setting out assessment requirements, deadlines, submission procedures and other Programme-specific information about assessment to the Learners throughout the Programme. A notice of examination is set out in the Modular Assessment Plan.

The Secretary, Programme Coordinator or the RTC Manger is available to advise Trainers in relation to assessment and quality assurance aspects of assessment as required. Assessment is addressed in detail in the Trainer Handbook.

### **1.8 Feedback on Assessment to Learners**

Trainers provide timely and constructive, formal and informal feedback to Learners on formative and summative assessments throughout the Programmes which helps to ensure a successful outcome to assessment for the Learners. Feedback contains enough detail to enable Learners to evaluate and improve their performance. The Trainers also encourage Learners to ask for further clarification if they need it. Trainers provide written feedback using the Assessment Feedback Form usually no longer than 3 weeks following a continuous assessment deadline and no longer than 4 weeks following the completion of summative end of Programme assessment.

How, when, how often and in what format feedback is provided to Learners is agreed and is set out in the Modular Assessment Plan. It is usually given at specific times during the Programme and provided in the form of written comments on Learners' work or, in some instances, formal written feedback is provided using a template. When giving feedback Trainers are advised to use positive language, identify and note strengths, give objective, specific feedback, with examples or direct references and specific recommendations for improvement using the assessment criteria and marking schemes to help them give objective feedback. Guidelines on providing feedback to Learners is included in the Trainer Handbook, and this is also addressed at Trainer induction. Learners are informed about the procedures for providing feedback at induction and their views of the adequacy of feedback, and on their assessments, is provided in the Learner Handbook. Assessors are asked to comment on the assessment scripts when they are marking and the Local Verifier checks for evidence of feedback provided by the Trainers on the scripts and throughout the Programme. The Trainers are available at all stages throughout the Programmes to provide formative feedback to Learners on a one-to-one basis and/or group basis.

## **1.9 Security and Integrity of Assessment**

Systems are in place to ensure the security and integrity of assessment related processes and materials and the recording, storage and access of assessment records. Copies of assessments (examination papers and assessment briefs) are printed as and when they are needed. Trainers return marked and graded assessments to the RTC on or before a specified date set out in the certification plan personally or by courier. The RTC Manager records the outcomes at the earliest available time. The RTC Manager is responsible for ensuring that all assessment related materials are securely stored in the RTC pre/post assessment until they are submitted to the LASNTG Verifier. Learner evidence is maintained in a secure storage area in the RTC that remains locked at all times with access restricted to the RTC Manager and Local Verifier.

On conclusion of the Results Approval Panel meetings, the LASNTG Verifier destroys Learner evidence, which have been ratified by the RAP except Learner evidence pertaining to any Learner who has appealed results. These are retained until the completion of the appeals process timeframes.

Trainers are responsible for the secure storage of all assessment related materials while in their possession and must report any breaches to the RTC Manager as a matter of urgency.

Procedures are in place for dealing with incidents of cheating/suspected malpractice and this is highlighted at Learner induction and in the Learner Handbook

Detailed security arrangements are in place for the conduct of examinations and all examination papers issued are previously 'unseen'. There is a strict protocol around issue/receipt of examination papers/scripts etc.; seating plans, attendance records, examination regulations, verification by LASNTG Verifier/Trainers as appropriate.

## **1.10 Assessment Submission Process**

LASNTG have robust and consistent systems and processes to manage the submission, receipt and return of assessments.

### **1.10.1 Submission of Assignments**

Learners must submit a signed authorship statement which includes a plagiarism disclaimer confirming that the assignments they are submitting is their own work. They attach the coversheet to their printed assignment and submit these documents either electronically or by registered post as advised by the Trainer. The assignments are date stamped on receipt and recorded by the Local Verifier.

In order to ensure fairness in assessment, all assignments must be submitted on or before the dates set out on MAP (unless otherwise indicated to the Learners by the Trainer). Assignments received after the due date will not be accepted unless an extension has been granted in advance. However, arrangements can be made to accommodate Learners who have genuine difficulty in meeting submission deadlines. Requests for extensions, granted for extenuating circumstances only, must be submitted in advance of the submission date to the RTC Manager using the Extension Request Form

with supporting verifiable evidence if relevant e.g. medical certificate in case of sickness. The RTC Manager liaises with the Programme Coordinator if necessary.

### **1.10.2 Dealing with Examination Misconduct/Cheating**

LASNTG assumes that Trainers and Learners will be honest in all matters. However, if a Learner is suspected of cheating in an examination, the invigilator witnessing the suspected misconduct will retrieve the evidence of cheating and complete a Cheating and Plagiarism Form, which is forwarded, with the alleged evidence, to the RTC Manager who meets with the Learner with the Trainer. If there is an unsatisfactory explanation from the Learner, the matter will be referred to the Secretary to review the circumstances of the incident.

### **1.10.3 Consistency of Marking**

It is recognised that, as a multi-site centre using contracted Trainers and assessors to deliver and assess Programmes throughout the country, we must have systems in place to ensure that there is consistency in marking and grading, across Programmes and Trainers, and that that marking and grading is consistent and in line with national standards. The Programme Coordinator is responsible for systems to ensure consistency and for monitoring and evaluating the efficacy of these systems.

Marking and grading is addressed at Trainer Induction and in the Trainer Handbook. A detailed marking scheme is set out for all assessment briefs which shows clearly how the Learner evidence is to be marked and graded. These are set out at Programme design stage by the PDDT. The marking schemes are reviewed and updated as necessary as part of Programme review.

The LASNTG Verifier reviews all marks and grades across all RTCs and all Trainers, highlights any inconsistencies, discusses them with the Secretary and comments in the Internal Verification report which is presented to the External Authenticator and the Results Approval Panel.

The External Authenticator is also asked for feedback on consistency of marking and grading and is asked to record any observations in relation to inconsistencies in marking in the External Authentication Report. If the LASNTG Verifier and/or the External Authenticator have any concerns in this regard, they are discussed at the Results Approval Panel meeting and a decision made with regard to corrective action. Any changes made to marking by the External Authenticator is noted and reviewed by the Results Approval Panel.

The quality of marking and grading of Learner is monitored closely by the Secretary on an ongoing basis and is discussed at QA Team meetings.

## **1.11 Moderation of Marking**

Moderation involves the review of a sample of marks and comments on assignment tasks by the External Authenticator to ensure that marking criteria have been fairly, accurately and consistently applied by the assessor. The External Authenticator reviews marks of a sample of work across all grade bands. The size and choice of the sample depends on the type of assignment task and the nature of the material being assessed. Closely structured or factual material usually requires a small sample, while essays and open-ended analytical work is sampled more frequently.

### 1.11.1 Purpose

- To support the internal verification process
- To ensure that assessment tasks and marking are accurate, appropriate to the level of the assessment and comparable with equivalent assessments.
- To take an overview of the quality and consistency of assessment decisions
- To give feedback to LASTNG with regard to marking and grading

### 1.12 Reasonable Accommodation

A fair and consistent assessment process is in place for all Learners and insofar as possible we accommodate Learners with specific learning requirements in accordance with their distinct needs. In the context of assessment, reasonable accommodation relates to the adaptation of assessment to cater for the needs of Learners whose personal situation means that the assessment might otherwise be unfair e.g. Learners with a disability, and/or other Learners covered by equality legislation.

Details of the reasonable accommodation policy are in the Learner and Trainer Handbooks and reasonable accommodation is discussed at Learner and Trainer Induction. Trainers explain what is meant by 'reasonable accommodation' at Learner Induction. Examples of adaptations LASNTG can/have made include: -

- Rest periods during examinations
- Using a scribe or reader
- Oral (as opposed to written) examinations
- Extended time to complete assignments

LASNTG advise employers to let them know if their Learners need/think they may need additional supports when they are applying for a place (or at the earliest possible opportunity). If an employer is booking a group of Learners, it is the employer's responsibility to find out from the Learners if they have any special requirements and to advise the RTC Manager in advance of submitting a Reasonable Accommodation Request form

The RTC Manager reviews requests for reasonable accommodation and signs-off on a request only if it is reasonable and practicable and that it does not affect the standards of the given award. The Trainers are guided by the RTC Manager with regard to adapting assessment and providing accommodation for assessment. The RTC Manager makes Trainers aware of any adaptations to assessment agreed and informs the Local Verifier of any adaptations made/ reasonable accommodation implemented who in turn notes it on the Local Verification report for the information of the LASNTG Verifier. The LASNTG Verifier makes the External Authenticator aware of any accommodation provided and retains record of requests and accommodations provided and correspondence with applicants and retains details of accommodation on the Learner records

### 1.13 Internal Verification

Internal verification is a two-stage process;

- Stage 1: Local verification is undertaken in the RTCs by the Local Verifier.



- Stage 2: This stage is undertaken at an organisational level by the LASNTG Verifier, a member of the LASNTG office team.

This 2-stage process is designed to ensure that documentation is fully verified and double-checked before External Authentication

#### **1.13.1 Process**

Local Verifier forwards stage 1 report to LASNTG for verification.

The LASNTG Verifier liaises with the Local Verifier in documenting an Internal Verification Plan for each assessment period.

Verification of results data are input to QQI system by the LASNTG Verifier

The LASNTG Verifier retains IV reports at the LASNTG office and makes them available to the External Authenticator, the Results Approval Panel and to QQI on request.

The LASNTG Verifier draws up a certification plan for each assessment period in consultation with the Local Verifier.

The LASNTG Verifier carries out verification using the Internal Verification step-by-step process and the sampling strategy and completes a Checklist for Internal Verification for each certification period.

When carrying out Internal Verification both the Local Verifier and the LASNTG Verifier check for:

- Missing or inappropriate evidence
- Missing or inappropriate assessment briefs
- Data omission, transcription / calculation errors
- Inaccurate data entry – award codes, name spelling, results etc.
- Provisional results

The LASNTG Verifier completes the process by completing and signing the Internal Verification Report and forwarding it to the External Authenticator in advance of authentication. This report confirms the outcome of the IV process. The LASNTG Verifier makes arrangements for external authentication and liaises with the External Authenticator before, during and after his/her visit and is in attendance to meet the External Authenticator to ensure all is in order and provide any assistance/clarification required in advance of external authentication. The LASNTG Verifier attends the Results Approval Panel meetings to present the Internal Verification report and discuss issues highlighted in the Report.

#### **1.13.2 Local Verifier**

- Prepares assessment briefs before distribution to Trainers
- The Trainer returns the assessment portfolios in the order set out in the Internal Assessor QA Checklist to the Local Verifier when the assessments are marked and graded.
- The Local Verifier undertakes local verification

- The Local Verifier submits the locally verified Learner evidence to the LASNTG Verifier on or before the date set out in the Certification Plan by courier and liaises with the LASNTG Verifier until the award certificates are presented to the LASNTG Verifier

### 1.13.3 LASNTG Verifier

- Liaises with the Local Verifier
- Inputs the Learner data into the QBS
- Internally verifies the Learner evidence
- Produces one Internal Verification report per certification period
- Makes them available to the External Authenticator
- Inputs the results onto QBS
- Attends the RAP meeting to present the Internal Verification report
- Amends results on the QBS if directed to do so by the RAP
- Refers appeals to the Secretary
- Arrange distribution of award certificates

### 1.14 External Authentication

Learner evidence is externally authenticated by a suitably qualified independent person as part of the assessment process. This provides independent confirmation that Learners have been assessed fairly and consistently that the marking and grading is valid and reliable and that the Learner evidence meets the national standard for the award. Suitably qualified External Authenticators are assigned for each major/minor award by the sectoral Training Group on the recommendation of the Secretary, based on their suitability for the role as outlined in the QQI Policy '*Quality Assuring Assessment, Guideline for Providers*', section 4.3.2 and on the LASNTG External Authenticator selection criteria. External Authenticators are rotated ensuring that the same authenticator is not used for more than 3 certification periods. The Secretary issues a Terms of Reference to the External Authenticator setting out in detail what is involved and what the expectations are. The LASNTG Verifier makes an agenda and the Internal Verification Report available to the External Authenticator prior to the authentication visit. The Secretary informs relevant staff/Trainers that the External Authenticator may need to contact them while they are authenticating.

The External Authenticators appointed will:

- Confirm the fair and consistent assessment of Learners in line with the agreed QA procedures
- Review internal verification report(s) and authenticate the findings/outcomes
- Apply a sampling strategy to moderate assessment results.
- Moderate the assessment results in accordance with standards outlined in the Award Specification
- Participate in the results approval process, if requested
- Identify any issues/irregularities in relation to the assessment process
- Produce the External Authentication report which is made available to the Results Approval Panel.

Authentication is carried out in line with the defined sampling strategy.

The External Authentication's report comments on the effectiveness of the application of the assessment process and procedures and, in particular, comments on the extent to which the marks/grades conform to national standards.

The LASNTG Verifier attends the Results Approval Panel meetings to report on the outcomes of the authentication process and the results moderation against national standards. This helps to identify strengths, gaps and areas for improvement.

The Secretary retains External Authentication reports and makes them available to the Results Approval Panel and to QQI on request.

### **1.15 Results Approval**

Results are approved, quality assured and signed off before being submitted to the awarding body/s for certification. LASNTG appoints a Results Approval Panel (RAP) to formally review and approve results data and to confirm that the assessment results are fully quality assured and signed-off prior to submission to the awarding body for certification and issued to Learners. Terms of reference are in place for the (RAP). The Secretary convenes a meeting of the Panel for each certification period and issues an agenda to all Panel members in advance. At the RAP meeting the results/outcomes are reviewed, including internal verification reports and External Authenticators' reports. The Secretary prepares a report of the meeting which is signed by the Chair and retained for auditing and monitoring purposes. The Panel highlights any issues identified and improvements recommended at the meeting and any need for corrective action. The Secretary monitors these on an ongoing basis and reviews at the subsequent meeting of the RAP and discusses at Programme review meetings. The Secretary also records examples of best practice identified during the authentication process with a view to sharing these with relevant staff/Trainers.

### **1.16 Issue of Results and Certification**

The outcome of the results approval process is that final results are submitted to QQI by the LASNTG Verifier via the QBS who confirms that LASNTG has implemented all elements of the authentication process and adhered to all agreed procedures. The LASNTG Verifier makes results available to Learners immediately on approval by the RAP

When the LASNTG Verifier has completed the data entry, quality assurance and data edits, s/he then submits the results to QQI for certification via the QBS. At this point, the data can only be edited by QQI. The LASNTG Verifier is responsible for the final step of the submission process i.e. to do a signoff / declaration on the QBS that the data is ready for certification. The LASNTG Verifier prints off the Final Statement of Results from the QBS (available after the certification date for the period) and distributes them to individual Learners.

### **1.17 Issue of Award Certificates**

QQI issues award certificates for all results received except those flagged as being under appeal according to a pre-defined schedule at the end of February, April, July, August, October and December each year. LASNTG receives the award certificates from QQI approximately 2 to 3 weeks after the Final Submission Date for the certification period.

On receipt of the award certificates, the Secretary

- Logs receipt of the award certificates
- Stores the award certificates securely in a locked facility until they are issued
- Issues the award certificates to Learners by registered post within 14 days of receipt unless there are exceptional circumstances
- Attaches a personalised letter of congratulations
- Maintains records.

If the Secretary issues the copies of award certificates to an employer for a group of Learners (on request) the following procedure is followed:

The Secretary;

- Sends the batch of award certificates by registered post to a named person in the organisation who must agree to store them securely in a locked facility.

### **1.18 Assessment Appeals**

Learners who wish to appeal an assessment result which they consider to be invalid or unfair or who wish to make a complaint about any aspect of the assessment process are facilitated. The Secretary is responsible for ensuring that there is a fit-for-purpose appeals process in place, that Learners are aware of, and familiar with, the process and that the process is implemented fairly and effectively.

The Trainers let the Learners know about the opportunity to appeal approved results at induction and appeals are also addressed in the Learner Handbook. The LASNTG Verifier reminds Learners of the opportunity to appeal when the results are issued to them. The Learner is allowed 10 days to appeal the result from when they receive their results. The Secretary retains copies of Completed Appeals or Complaints Forms and correspondence with appellants/complainants. An appeal is handled by an independent adjudicator and the original assessor has no part in the review.

A Learner Complaints Procedure is in place which may be used by Learners if they wish to make a complaint regarding any aspect of assessment.

### **1.19 Corrective Action**

Corrective action is taken in the event that any error, omission and/or deliberate act on the part of a Learner or any member of the Programme team which impacts or potentially impacts on the validity of the assessment process occurs.

The External Authenticator is asked if they have identified any areas where they consider there is a need to instigate corrective action or if they have identified any irregularities and if so, to detail their concerns in the External Authentication report. The report should provide sufficient detail to allow the Results Approval Panel to make recommendations for corrective action. The Results Approval Panel considers any issues identified and makes recommendations. Decisions regarding corrective action are recorded by the Secretary in the form of a corrective action plan. The Secretary is responsible for oversight of the implementation of this plan and monitors the actions on an ongoing basis and presents details of the outcomes at the subsequent RAP meeting. If the implementation of

corrective action results in a delay in the issue of results to a Learner, the LASNTG Verifier contacts the Learner to explain.

### **1.20 Replacement/Reissue of Results and Certificates**

LASNTG can issue a final statement of results from the QBS for past Learners for any certification period. Learners can request a replacement certificate or record of awards directly from QQI by clicking on the *I Am a Learner* page on the QQI website [www.qqi.ie](http://www.qqi.ie). A record of awards is a list of all major and component awards achieved and is printed in QQI secure paper.

### **1.21 Retention of Assessment Evidence**

On conclusion of the certification process, the Secretary destroys hardcopies of all Learner evidence except evidence pertaining to any Learner who has appealed results. In the event of an appeal, as described, assessment evidence is retained for one year after the Learner has been informed of the outcome.