

Fair & Consistent Assessment of Learners & Learners Supports

Policy & Procedure

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QA Committee

Approved By: Tony O' Brien

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CEO

This policy pertains to **Northridge House Education and Research Centre at St Luke's Cork**, hereafter referred to as **the Centre**.

1. Purpose of Policy

The Centre aims to implement fair and consistent assessment of learners. The Centre will develop and review its processes on a continuous basis which will assist learners to achieve their specific learning outcomes, monitor learner progress and provide learner feedback in compliance with the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012. This policy further identifies who can avail of learning support and identifies what those services are.

2. Definitions

QQI – Quality & Qualifications Ireland

External QQI Authenticator – External individual who according to the QQI Guidelines for Providers, is to ensure fairness, consistency and validity of assessment and ensure accurate and quality assured learner results.

3. Scope of Policy

This policy applies to all Learners undertaking QQI courses and to all tutors delivering QQI courses.

4. Policy Statement

In all our assessment practices the Centre adhere to the policies, criteria and guidelines outlined in the QQI documents: *Assuring Assessment, Guidelines for Providers* 2013 edition, available at:

<http://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Quality%20Assuring%20Assessment%20-%20Guidelines%20for%20Providers%2C%20Revised%202013.pdf>

In addition, reference is made to QQI's *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines and Sector Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines - Independent/Private* (both published April 2016), available at:

www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Core%20Statutory%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines.pdf

www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Sector%20Specific%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines%20V2.pdf

The Centre is committed to a teaching and learning approach that fosters active learning and allows Learners to take ownership of their learning. This approach encourages Learners to actively understand their subject, interact with the content and link new knowledge with already known concepts and principles.

The Centre endeavours to provide a range of suitable supports for Learners on all its training and education programmes. These supports are monitored and updated on a continuing basis with a view to identifying opportunities for improvement.

Co-ordinated Planning & Assessment:

1. The tutor will inform the Learners of the agreed assessment dates.
2. The Director of Education will ensure that a suitable room will be made available and that there will be no disturbances during an assessment.
3. Tutors will be provided with tutor marking sheet appropriate to the assessment, which they will be expected to return with completed assignments.
4. Learners who need extra support to complete assessments should discuss this with their tutor. Details of Learner Supports are outlined in full in the Learner's Handbook which the students receive on registration. (See Learner Handbook).

Information to Learners:

1. A Learner Handbook will be distributed to all Learners – (See Learner Handbook)
2. Tutors will provide a course overview to all Learners at the beginning of a programme.
3. Tutors will provide individual assignment briefs pertinent to the assessment to all Learners at the beginning of a programme. Learners will review the briefs and the tutor will provide any clarification as required. Learners will keep one copy of each appropriate brief and a second copy will be signed and returned to the office by the tutor.
4. Tutors will monitor and review Learners understanding and progress at regular intervals throughout the programme.
5. Learners will be notified of the following at the beginning of the programme:
 - Any additional requirements, expected input from Learners etc
 - Assessment schedules.
 - Exam timetables (if applicable).
 - Appeals procedures.
 - Portfolio checklist.
 - Work experience briefing (if applicable).

Security of Assessment & Related Processes & Materials.

1. All learner assignments and related materials will be stored in a secure (lockable) cabinet in the offices of the Centre.
2. Tutors are expected to ensure that Learner assignments are stored securely for the duration that they have them in their possession.
3. All assignments, materials and Learner correspondence including notes and letters relating to and belonging to Learners must be returned to the Centre for safe storage.
4. All learner correspondence and tutor correspondence relating to course activities should be directed through tutor email address, this will be provided to students at the first course date– no other email should be used. This is indicated on all individual assignment briefs.
5. Tutors will make themselves aware of the Data protection and GDPR policy of the Centre and will indicate their understanding by signing the policy awareness statement (See Privacy & GDPR policy ED 5).
6. All learners must sign a verification of authorship form for all written assignments.
7. On receipt of assignments from tutors, the Centre will complete an Internal Verification Report which will monitor and evaluate key elements of the assessment process.
8. On submission all learners must complete, sign and date the supplied assignment submission form. This form must also be counter-signed by administration and dated.

Reasonable Accommodation and Learner Supports.

The Centre is committed to providing the learner with a range of supports to enable them to succeed in all aspects of their learning journey. The Centre's commitment to supporting Learners is evidenced across many aspects of its Quality Assurance system. Learner Support guidelines are included in the following:

- Learner Handbook
- Tutor Handbook
- Access to Reasonable Accommodations
- Learning Management System (Access to online resources via drobox for selected programmes)
- Company Website – <http://www.northridgehouse.ie/>
- Course Evaluation Forms (F13)
- Facilities that are accessible and fit for purpose / Facilities Checklist (F11)
- Equality & Accessibility Policy (ED 8)
- Course briefs outline assessment instructions and Learner Supports available for each module.
- QQI Website
- Special Requirements Form (F3)
- Late Submission of Assignment for Assessment form (F1)
- Tutorial Review of draft written material

1. Tutors must always endeavour to accommodate Learners with special needs so that they can progress unless the measures needed would place a disproportionate burden on the provider.
2. The Centre and tutors will make every effort to provide reasonable accommodation to students with a disability or who are covered by the 9 grounds of equality legislation to:
 - Gain access to programmes.
 - Participate and advance on programmes.
 - To progress towards further education and/or training. (See Equality & Accessibility Policy ED 8)

Reasonable accommodation may include the following:

- Modification of assignment briefs.
 - Approved scribes/readers for examinations.
 - Rest periods or additional time for completion of exams (if applicable).
 - Compassionate consideration.
 - Adaptive materials/equipment – tape recorders, dictaphones, video recording, voice recognition software.
3. The Centre will provide a special requirement form to Learners from the above categories. (See Learners Handbook for specifics)
 4. The Centre will ensure that, where necessary, training equipment will be adapted to the needs of Learners with disabilities. (Equality and Accessibility Policy ED8)
 5. The Centre will review Learner evaluation sheets on a regular basis to ensure that learner's needs are accommodated.
 6. The Centre is committed to the practice that all training venues are wheelchair accessible.
 7. The Centre provides an individual learning plan where required to meet the needs of a learner with disabilities.

Consistency of Marking Between Assessors.

1. All tutors will be provided with a Tutor Handbook outlining the principles of setting and marking assessments. (See Tutor Handbook)
2. All tutors will be provided with the QI assessment Handbook (Assessments and Standards 2013).
3. All tutors will be made aware of the Centre's appeals procedure. (See Assessments, Submissions, Plagiarism, Appeals & Deadlines Policy ED 1)
4. Less experienced tutors will be provided with mentoring support for an interim period of 6 months.

5. Mentoring records will be filed and stored by the Centres Administrator.
6. The above procedures will be monitored and reviewed on an annual basis.

Internal Verification Process

The Centre is committed to ensuring fairness, consistency, and validity of assessment and outcomes of assessment throughout all programmes. The Centre aims to ensure that all assessments sent to QQI are deemed to have been fairly and accurately marked in compliance with Quality Assurance Guidelines. In order to achieve this the following procedures, apply in all cases:

Responsibility:

The Internal Verification process will be organised by the Director of Education (DOE). The DOE will appoint an independent internal verifier (a person who has not been engaged with the learners and who has not set or marked the assessments).

1. Before the course begins the DOE must have met with the tutor/s for any given programme and confirm that the tutors are suitably qualified to (A) deliver the programme and (B) qualified to assess the work of the learners.
2. A record of this meeting and copies of tutor qualifications should be placed on record in the Centre's training file.
3. The DOE should ensure that all assignments are prepared and documented in the tutor (assessor) folder and the training file in advance of the programme delivery.
4. The DOE must agree on an internal verification schedule with the internal verifier who will be responsible for conducting the verification in accordance with the agreed schedule.
5. Monitoring of assessments will take place on a sampling basis.

Sampling Strategy

Assessment portfolios for ALL minor awards will be internally verified and externally authenticated.

The sampling strategy below will be applied by the internal verifier and the external authenticator.

A minimum of 12 assessment portfolios will be included in the sample. If there are 12 or less assessment portfolios for a minor award, all portfolios will be internally verified and externally authenticated.

If there are more than 12 assessment portfolios, the sample will be selected using the following formula: $\sqrt{n} + 1$, where n is the total number of assessment portfolios in a specified range. See below.

Number of portfolios (range)	Minimum Sample size
0 - 12	all
13 – 50	13

Where the same minor award is offered in a number of courses (and/or locations) these portfolios may be combined for the purposes of sampling. If this is the case, the assessment portfolios will be clearly identified per course (and location) and per assessor so the internal verifier and the external authenticator can ensure the sample chosen includes assessment portfolios from each course (and location) and each assessor.

Assessment portfolios selected by the External Authenticator must include the following in the sample, so as to allow the External Authenticator to determine the cut-off points between the grades:

- The lowest Pass
- The highest Unsuccessful
- The lowest Distinction
- The highest Merit
- The lowest Merit
- The highest Pass

The remaining number of assessment portfolios will be randomly chosen, across all the grade bands, until the sample quota is reached.

Other Factors which must be considered when choosing a sampling of Learner Assessments:

- The inclusion of assessed work from all tutors must be sampled.
- The inclusion of assessed work from all programmes must be sampled.
- Identification of evidence which is borderline between grades – i.e., Learners who have not or who have only barely achieved within a given grading band.
- Consideration must be given to situations where tutors use a variety of assessment methods the sample should take account of the variety and reflect same.

6. All meetings/communications will be stored/filed in compliance with General Data Protection (GDPR) policy – (See Data Protection and GDPR Policy ED 5)

7. The Internal Verifier will compile an Internal Verification Report confirming the accuracy of the assessment process and results. This report will also highlight any irregularities identified in the process.

8. The Internal Verifier will issue a Provisional Results Summary Report.

9. The DOE will arrange a meeting between the Internal Verifier and the Results Approval Panel to discuss the report.

10. The Panel will issue approval of provisional results.

11. Programme review meetings will be held on an ongoing basis to monitor and evaluate this Process

Frequency: Internal Verification will take place (for all programmes delivered) in conjunction with QQI deadline submission dates and prior to External Authentication

The Centre is committed to ensuring independent and authoritative confirmation of fair and consistent assessment of learners in accordance with National standards and in compliance with QQI quality assurance policy. The Centre is committed to assuring all learners and stakeholders that assessment results have been validly marked and are in compliance with the stated requirements. To achieve this standard, the following measures are in place:

The DOE will meet to decide an External Authenticator from the QQI approved list of External Authenticators. The following criteria should be applied when choosing an External Authenticator:

External Authenticator Profile:

- An External Authenticator (EA) will have technical/subject matter expertise appropriate to the award/area/field of expertise that they will be assessing.
- An EA must have relevant experience in the delivery and assessment of programmes or currently work in the industry or field of learning being assessed.
- EAs must display the ability to interact positively with learners, tutors, and Northridge House staff members.
- EAs must be proficient in administration, IT, time management and report writing.
- EAs must agree to operate within the Centre's code of practice and QQI guidelines.
- EAs must be available to the Centre at the pre-scheduled agreed times.
- EAs must be independent of the centre – i.e., Must not be engaged in any other work or service provision to the Centre.

Frequency

External Authentication will take place (for all programmes delivered) in conjunction with QQI deadline submission dates.

Process

1. The DOE must have met with the External Authenticator for any given programme and confirmed that they are suitably qualified.
2. A record of this meeting and copies of the external authenticator qualifications should be placed on record in the Centres training file.
3. The DOE should ensure that the Internal Verification process has been completed and signed off in advance of the External Authenticator's visit.
4. The DOE must agree on an External Authentication schedule with the External Authenticator who will be responsible for conducting the authentication in accordance with the agreed schedule.
5. Monitoring of assessments will take place on a sampling basis as above.

6. All meetings/communication between the External Authenticator, Internal Verifier, tutor (assessor), Learners and the DOE must be documented and recorded in the training folder.
7. The External Authenticator will compile an External Authentication Report confirming the accuracy of the Internal Verification process and results. This report will also highlight any irregularities identified in the process.
8. The DOE will arrange a meeting between the Internal Verifier, External Authenticator, and the DOE to discuss the report.
9. The Results Approval Panel will sign off on the approved results and recommend appropriate corrective action on any outstanding issues.
10. Approved results should immediately be made available to Learners with information pertaining to the Appeals Process.
11. Following the meeting of the Appeals Process requirements, results should be forwarded to QAI.
12. Programme review meetings will be held on an ongoing basis to monitor and evaluate this process.

Feedback to Learners (Refer to Feedback to Learners Policy ED 11)

1. Tutors will provide both formative and summative feedback to Learners throughout the programme.
2. Learners will be provided with a Learner Feedback Form (Feedback to Learners Policy ED 11 Appendix 1) for all assignments.
3. Tutors will provide Interim Feedback for Learners in relation to draft assignments when required.
4. Learners on work placement will receive feedback from employers (Work Placement Supervisors Report) (Form F16)
5. Informal feedback via email between Learner and Tutor is encouraged but must first be agreed between both parties. Records are held within the email account as per GDPR policy.
6. Learners may request an additional tutorial from their tutor. This arrangement falls outside of the standard course schedule and is an additional service to support Learners towards course completion. (See Tutor Responsibility Policy ED 24)

Issue of Results to Learners

1. All Learners should receive a copy of the Centres procedures on submitting results and awarding of Provisional Results etc (See Learner Handbook and Course Briefs)
2. Tutors will inform Learners that it will be 4-6 weeks from completion to notification of provisional results – as per the Centre policy.
3. Provisional results are subject to Internal Verification (IV) – an IV report is prepared and signed off by designated personnel.
4. Provisional results will be emailed to Learners, following EA review, in a standard template document which outlines the next steps in the process and estimated certification date.
5. Results Approval Panel signs off Provisional Results.
6. All queries, requests for feedback, appeals are dealt with diligently and any associated policies, forms etc are issued to the learner.

QAI Certificates:

1. All certificates will be scanned for record keeping purposes
2. Certificates will be posted to Learners on receipt from QAI. It is the Learners responsibility to inform the Centre of any change of address.
3. If a certificate replacement is requested refer to QAI guidelines – note only change of name requests will result in a replacement certificate being issued by QAI

Learner Appeals: (see Assessments, Submissions, Plagiarism, Appeals & Deadlines Policy ED 1)

Learners have 7 days from receipt of provisional results to appeal their grade. Please refer to the Assessment, Submissions, Plagiarism, Appeals & Deadlines Policy ED1 for the procedure to follow.

Results Approval:

1. The Centre will establish a Results Approval Panel to review all submissions.
2. The panel will consist of the DOE, tutors, and course leaders.
3. The Results Approval Panel will sign off on all results prior to submission to QAI.

4. The Results Approval Panel will meet on a regular basis and will review any learner queries or assessment issues arising.
5. The Academic Committee will monitor and review the activities of the Results Approval Panel on an ongoing basis. For full details on this panel please refer to Quality Assurance Policy and Results Approval Panel Policy (See Results Approval Panel Policy ED 20)

Roles and Responsibilities

1. The Centre Tutor Handbook outlines tutor roles and responsibilities
2. The Centre Learner Handbook outlines guidelines for Learners with particular emphasis on verification of authorship and plagiarism (see Assessment Submissions, Appeals, Deadlines & Plagiarism Policy ED1).
3. The Centre Quality Assurance within Northridge House Policy outlines all policies and procedures in relation to staff, learners, tutors, stakeholders, and ethical responsibilities.
4. The Assessment Process will be evaluated regularly by Internal Verifier and independent External Authenticators as above and a results approval panel.
5. Northridge House provides a comprehensive QAI assessment overview to all contracted tutors which contains an account of the assessment process adopted by Northridge House under the QA agreement.
6. Both the Academic Committee and the Governance Committee will oversee the implementation of this policy.
7. It is the Learners responsibility to ensure that all expectations set out in this policy are met.
8. It is the Tutors responsibility to inform Learners of this policy
9. It is the Director of Educations responsibility to determine the correct course of action where the standards of this policy are not being met.

6. Referenced Policies

Quality Assurance Policy ED 18

Equality and Accessibility Policy ED 8

Assessment Submissions, Appeals, Deadlines & Plagiarism Policy ED 1

Feedback to Learners Policy ED 11

Results Approval Policy ED 20

Learners Handbook

Tutor Handbook

7. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed periodically and as required.