

P6 S5 Development of Assessment Instruments

INTRODUCTION

Forus Training, as a further education and training provider, strives to enhance the skills and flexibility of its learners by developing and running programmes that are employment market focused, cost-effective yet valuable and quality assured. Forus Training recognises that relevant qualifications assist learners to gain employment and/or gain access or progression to further education and training, while giving assurance to employers that learners have attained the prescribed standards of competence that will be needed in the workplace.

To facilitate Forus Training learners to develop relevant skills and competencies through its training programmes, and to receive national recognition through an award, Forus Training ensures that its approach to assessment development, marking and grading is compatible with best practice for workplace competence focused assessment and the requirements of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 2012. The Act sets out that the Awards Councils are responsible for determining award standards for qualifications.

These award standards are developed in consultation with relevant national stakeholders and are expressed in terms of skill, knowledge and competence statements. Under the act Forus Training as a provider responsible for ensuring that the programmes that we provide to learners to these nationally agreed award standards.

The development of assessment is one part of the overall process of preparing a training programme for validation by QQI. As part of an application to have a programme validated, Forus Training sets out assessment arrangements that adequately address the assessment requirements in the award standard.

The procedure outlined in this document sets out Forus Training's approach to the development of assessment instruments in line with the requirements of QQI to whose awards its programmes lead.

It describes the thinking and safeguards that underpin Forus Training assessment, the particular emphasis on criterion-referencing and assessment of competence, the range of assessment techniques

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that Forus Training supports, and the approach used for marking and grading that ensures that Forus Training learners attain awards that are graded/classified in accordance with QQI's policies.

THE FUNCTIONS OF ASSESSMENT

Assessment is the process that determines the extent to which an individual has reached a level of knowledge, skill and competence. It reflects achievement of the standards of the award to which a programme is intended to lead.

Assessment involves making a judgement, which is based on appropriate evidence of a learner's knowledge, skill or competence by comparison with a standard.

Assessment of learners may take place in a range of settings including: classrooms, training workshops, the workplace, or in a community or on-the-job setting. More recently and in line with Forus Training's Covid-19 Pandemic Contingency Plan, assessment is also undertaken via VLE. Forus Training have a range of policies in place to risk manage and quality assure these processes.

Forus Training assessments are expected to fulfill the following functions:

1. Learning:
 - a. Provides feedback to learners,
 - b. Motivates learners,
 - c. Builds on previous achievements,
 - d. Establishes learner achievement levels on completion of a training programme,
 - e. Provides feedback to Forus Training on the learning outcomes of training.

2. Quality Assurance:
 - a. Helps monitor programme effectiveness over time,
 - b. Provides data indicating that the programme is achieving the required national standards,
 - c. Demonstrates compliance with awarding body requirements.

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3. Certification:
 - a. Outlines achievements on completion of a training programme,
 - b. Grades a learner's level of performance,
 - c. Facilitates learner progression within the workplace or further education and training.

MAIN PRINCIPLES THAT UNDERPIN FORUS TRAINING ASSESSMENT

Fairness - Forus Training ensures that its procedures for the assessment of learners are fair. In this context, the organisation strives to ensure that both assessment personnel and learners consider the assessment arrangements to be appropriate to the standards set out in the programme's training objectives/learning outcomes. Throughout the programme, the learner should be given adequate opportunities and resources to prepare. This implies an open system whereby prior to the assessment event, learners are, in general terms, made aware of the expected performance criteria and assessment conditions and receive timely, constructive and appropriate feedback on their performance following assessment.

Fairness in assessment provides equity of opportunity for Forus Training learners in line with Equality Legislation and is unbiased, impartial and inclusive.

To help ensure fairness, it is Forus Training policy that learners should be made aware of:

- Forus Training publication "Learner Handbook"
- Forus Training Assessment Appeal Procedure

Consistency - A fair assessment requires consistency in terms of assessment procedures, including marking and grading.

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Accuracy - Although a variety of assessment techniques can be used to measure attainment, Forus Training endeavours to ensure that any measurement carried out is accurate. To be accurate, measurements must be valid and reliable.

Validity - Any assessment system is valid to the extent that it can accurately measure what it claims to measure:

1. Does the assessment measure the training programme's intended objectives/ learning outcomes i.e. skills, knowledge and competence?
2. Is the assessment technique used fit for/appropriate to the purpose (e.g. a practical assessment should be used to assess practical skills)

In order to ensure the validity of the assessment it is therefore Forus Training policy to:

1. Clearly define what is being assessed
2. Select appropriate techniques and methods to measure learner attainment

Reliability - Reliability refers to the consistency of measurement of the assessment system. Reliable assessment will produce similar results in similar conditions. The question that arises is whether the assessment will produce the same results in similar, but not identical conditions. If there is a reasonable comparison in the cases selected, then the test is deemed to be reliable.

A reliable assessment produces consistent assessment decisions. To be reliable an assessment must:

1. Be based on valid assessment techniques
2. Ensure evidence is generated under consistently-applied conditions of assessment
3. Produce reasonably consistent decisions across the range of assessors applying the assessment in different situations and contexts and with different groups of learners

In order to strengthen the reliability of assessment it is Forus Training policy that:

1. Assessment is undertaken against appropriate criteria
2. Assessors know and apply procedures consistently

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3. Assessment practices are subjected to both internal and external verification as per Forus Training Transition Quality Assurance procedure

Practicality - Practical considerations for Forus Training include the ratio of assessment time to training time, ease of use, and administrative efficiency. Forus Training also examines the cost/benefit ratio of assessment and by extension the amount of resources that can be reasonably applied for the purposes of assessment.

Transparency - Transparent assessment policies and guidelines exist within Forus Training to ensure clarity and understanding. These include clear and unambiguous definitions and requirements with regard to fairness, accuracy and reliability.

APPROACH TO ASSESSMENT

All assessment is undertaken consistently with Assessment Guidelines, Conventions and Protocols for Programmes Leading to QQI Awards. The programme's assessment procedures interface effectively with Forus Training's QQI approved quality assurance procedures.

The programme includes specific procedures that are fair and consistent for the assessment of enrolled learners to ensure the minimum intended programme/ module learning outcomes are acquired by all who successfully complete the programme

The programme includes formative assessment to support learning. There is a written programme assessment strategy for the programme as a whole and there are module assessment strategies for any of its constituent modules. Guidance on giving formative feedback on drafts or assessments is detailed in Forus Training's Trainer Handbook

Sample assessment instruments, tasks, marking schemes and related evidence have been provided for each award-stage assessment and indicate that the assessment is likely to be valid and reliable

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Forus Training only puts forward an enrolled learner for certification for a particular award for which a programme has been validated if they have been specifically assessed against the standard for that award.

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CRITERION-REFERENCING

In common with the learning outcomes approach adopted as part of the National Framework of Qualifications, Forus Training assessment is standards-based and criterion-referenced; that is to say it is undertaken against predetermined standards of occupational performance that relate to the learning outcomes included in a stakeholder-agreed award standard and a validated programme.

COMPETENCY BASED ASSESSMENT

In addition to being criterion-referenced, some Forus Training assessments are also competence based, because they involve certain assessment items that are designated as “essential” in order to achieve a pass grade. Assessment items are designated as “essential” only if identified as such in the related award standard and in the programme and assessment specifications prior to assessment development. The “essential” items can relate to areas such as health and safety or other critical legislative or industry standards.

ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUES

It is Forus Training policy to use appropriate assessment techniques. Sometimes these are already specified in the award standard by the Awards Council. It is Forus Training policy to ensure that all learning outcomes are assessed as required by the awarding body’s policy. Assessments should include assessment techniques in sufficient numbers and mix to test the achievement of programme learning outcomes. The following assessment techniques may be used in Forus Training programmes:

COURSEWORK

Coursework assessments can have both summative and formative functions. They are useful to assess problem-solving skills and creativity, both of which are difficult to address adequately in a formal examination. Coursework can include essays, assignments, projects, portfolios etc.

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ASSIGNMENT

An assignment is an exercise carried out in response to a brief with specific guidelines as to what should be included. An assignment is usually of short duration but may be carried out over a specified period of time. Assignments may take the form of a practical activity e.g. a practical assignment or a research activity/evaluation following investigation of a particular topic e.g. a written assignment.

PROJECT

A project is a response to a brief and is usually carried out over a period of time specified as part of the brief. Projects may involve research, may require investigation of a topic, issue or problem, or may involve a process such as a design task, a performance or practical activity or production of an artifact or event.

PORTFOLIO/COLLECTION OF WORK

A portfolio or collection of work is a collection and/or selection of pieces of work produced by the learner over a period of time that demonstrates achievement of a range of learning outcomes. Guidelines and instructions are devised for the learner. Using these, the learner compiles a collection of their own work. The collection may be self-generated or may be generated in response to a particular brief or tasks/activities devised by the assessor.

LEARNER RECORD

A learner record is the learner's self-reported and self-reflective record in which he/she describes specific learning experiences, activities, responses and skills acquired. The record may take a number of forms: it can be a structured logbook, a (reflective) diary, a selective record of events or experiences over a period of time, a learning journal, a lab notebook or a sketchbook. For example, a lab notebook could record specific tasks or activities carried out and the analytical results obtained by the learner.

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SKILLS DEMONSTRATION/PRACTICAL TESTS

A skills demonstration is used to assess a wide range of practical based learning outcomes including practical skills and knowledge, such as laboratory skills, interpersonal skills or oral language skills. The demonstration of skill including process skills related to practical achievement is assessed by means of practical test. It is essential to use practical tests where key objectives state that the learner must demonstrate practical achievement in defined tasks.

Practical assessments are generally used where a set period of time is allocated to the learner to demonstrate practical knowledge, skills or competence. Additional/alternative evidence may include;

- Product/outcome of the tasks where applicable e.g. computer print out
- Photographic or video evidence of learner completing the task
- Learner account of task completed assessment sheets/checklists completed assessment sheets/checklists.

A skills demonstration may take place in the workplace i.e. in a live environment, or in a simulated environment. In some specific cases the demonstration must take place in a real/live environment.

THEORY TEST

A theory test provides a means of assessing a learner's ability to recall and apply knowledge, skills and understanding within a set period of time and under clearly specified conditions. Theory tests are a form of assessment which normally require a fixed timeframe and a sight unseen question paper and range of questions. The assessment instrument for theory test is the examination paper i.e. questions or tasks are devised for the learner. The examination may involve assessing listening and interpretation skills (aural testing), or may involve assessment through verbal questioning (one-to-one or in a group), or written responses.

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Assessment instruments used in Forus Training for the testing of theory can include:

- Short answer questions: these require a response of limited length and may take a number of forms. Some short answer questions may seek specific words or phrases in the response. Short answer questions are generally easy to construct and with the assistance of model answers are relatively easy to mark.
- Multiple choice tests/questions: these may be used to test factual knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, problem solving and evaluation. As multiple choice questions are not open-ended, they are not useful in assessing communication skills such as the ability to organise and express information and to write fluently and quickly. Although multiple choice questions provide objectivity and reliability as regards marking, assurance of their reliability is an important factor in their design.
- Structured questions: these are divided into a number of related parts and generally require the learner to demonstrate more in-depth knowledge and understanding of a topic.
- Structured questions are useful for seeking evidence of cognitive skills such as ability to discuss, compare, analyse, evaluate, translate or solve an issue, problem or topic. However, structured questions can be difficult to mark reliably.
- Essay type questions: like structured questions, these require the learner to demonstrate an in-depth knowledge and understanding of a topic. Essay type questions usually focus on one particular area of knowledge and are useful for seeking evidence of cognitive skills such as the ability to discuss, compare, analyse, evaluate, translate or solve an issue, problem or topic. Essay questions can be difficult to mark reliably.

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ASSESSMENT PLANNING

- All assessment is undertaken consistently with Assessment Guidelines, Conventions and Protocols for Programmes Leading to QQI Awards
- The programme's assessment procedures interface effectively with Forus Training's QQI approved quality assurance procedures.
- The programme includes specific procedures that are fair and consistent for the assessment of enrolled learners to ensure the minimum intended programme/ module learning outcomes are acquired by all who successfully complete the programme.
- The programme includes formative assessment to support learning.
- There is a satisfactory written programme assessment strategy for the programme as a whole and there are satisfactory module assessment strategies for any of its constituent modules.²⁸
- Sample assessment instruments, tasks, marking schemes and related evidence have been provided for each award-stage assessment and indicate that the assessment is likely to be valid and reliable.
- There are sound procedures for the moderation of summative assessment results.
- Forus Training only puts forward an enrolled learner for certification for a particular award for which a programme has been validated if they have been specifically assessed against the standard for that award.

We plan the assessment of each programme in advance of commencing learning and assessment activities. This includes:

- A. Specific Learning Outcomes (Module Descriptor).
- B. Assessment techniques and instruments as outlined below.
- C. Timing of assessment activities as outlined below.
- D. Deadlines and due dates.
- E. Mark allocation and assessment criteria (Module Descriptor).

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Learners have sufficient opportunity to generate evidence to demonstrate achievement of the standards of knowledge, skill or competence. We have devised an assessment plan for each programme to include when assessments will take place, deadlines for submission etc. (detailed below).

- Prepare an assessment plan including assessment briefs / marking schemes portfolio checklist.
- Prepare assessment briefs and marking schemes. Learners receive a copy of the assessment brief at the earliest possible stage in the course. (Level 4, 5 and 6)
- Ensure that assessment methodologies are adapted as necessary and reasonable so as to cater for the needs of learners with specific needs this information can be taken from the [Student Application Booking Form](#)
- Follow Assessors Instructions for the invigilation of examinations. [P9 S9 C8 Examinations policy](#)
- Ensure Assessment Timetables are strictly adhered to.
- Ensure you keep a signed record of the acceptance of a learner's assignment (i.e. final draft) as per Record of Receipt of Assignments or Portfolios
- Carry out regular checks of learners' portfolios. This is to ensure learners are keeping materials and assignments in the correct fashion. The use of subject dividers can facilitate this. This will alleviate a great deal of pressure when it comes to putting the portfolios together for external accreditation. Learners returning to education after a period of absence can experience some difficulties in managing their learning.
- Ensure your learners sign the Learner Declaration as to the authenticity of their work.

Please note that while poly-pockets are useful for keeping work neat and tidy for the duration of a course, they are not acceptable to QQI's external authenticators. Therefore when preparing folders for external assessment, learners are asked not to use poly pockets.

Where the course being delivered is being assessed by more than one trainer it is necessary the cross moderation take place, to ensure the consistency in marking between assessors. Trainers must also accommodate unannounced visits to facilitate internal verification of Skills Demonstration Assessments.

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Trainers are also asked to pay particular attention to the procedures that must be implemented by the internal verifier in the assessment section of this booklet. They must also maintain each folder for each module right from the beginning and ensure that learners are aware of the necessity of keeping drafts and back-ups of their work.

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DEVELOPMENT OF ASSESSMENT BRIEFS

Assessment briefs are developed in line with the module specification produced by QQI. The assessment briefing and the associated weighting are predetermined by QQI. All learning outcomes need to be assessed. Assessment briefs are printed on green paper and examinations are printed on pink paper. The assessment brief contains the following elements;

A. Assessment Brief cover page, this is standardised and appears as follows:

This is your assessment brief. It details all the work you have to do to demonstrate that you have successfully achieved this component award. All learning outcomes are assessed – on the next page you will find a list and the following page will display how they are assessed.

Please follow all instructions carefully.

DO


1. Use the checklist in the declaration at the back to ensure complete submission,
2. Sign the declaration,
3. Complete sections 1 and 2 of the cover sheet within fully for each assessment,
4. Submit this brief with your work,
5. If you need an extension and you meet the criteria outlined to you in the induction - apply for it on time before the submission due date,
6. Use registered post if posting,
7. Make sure you receive a receipt or an email from Forus Training confirming your submission,
8. Keep a full copy of your work.

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DON'T

1. Plagiarise,
2. Submit late,
3. Use poly pockets.

Your work will not be processed if

1. You have a payment still outstanding,
2. Submitted without signing the declaration,
3. Submitted in anything other than  or uploaded as instructed.

Good luck in your assessment



Certification at Forus Training

- B. Assessment Brief - List of Learning Outcomes and a table of each learning outcome mapped to each assessment instrument.

Number	Skills Demonstration	Learner Record	Examination-Theory
1	✓		✓
2	✓		
3		✓	
4		✓	

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5	✓	✓	
6	✓	✓	
7			✓
8			✓
9	✓		
10			✓
11		✓	

- C. Standard information on plagiarism and the use of Harvard Referencing.
- D. [P9 S9 C12 Work Experience Arrangement Form](#) if applicable
- E. Letter to Work Experience Supervisor if applicable
- F. Marking Rubric & detailed marking instructions
- G. Marking Sheet
- H. Learner Feedback Form
- I. Learner Declaration - [P9 Learner Declaration](#)

STANDARD COVER PAGE FOR INCLUSION IN THE ASSESSMENT BRIEF

1. Contact Details
 - a. Your Name,
 - b. Contact Number,
 - c. PPS Number,
 - d. Module Title, Module Code,

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- e. Title of Assignment,
- f. Trainer Name
2. Brief: Signed and Dated on the Learner Declaration sheet
3. Contents Page – every page within the submitted document must be numbered and titles referenced on the contents page.
4. Presentation – Work should be presented in a clear soft document holder. – all parts in 1 folder
5. Typed:
 - a. All headings / questions to be in bold underlined.
 - b. Use size 14 font for headings and font size 12 for content.
 - c. Use plain white paper to print projects.
 - d. Use 1.5 line spacing.

Proof read and avoid spelling and grammatical errors.

MARKING AND GRADING

Forus Training approach to grading assessment results

For programmes leading to awards at levels 1 to 3, Forus Training learners are graded as follows:

- When a learner has not achieved the minimum standards in an assessment, the grade is recorded as 'Referred'
- A 'Successful' grade is awarded to a learner who has achieved all required learning outcomes
- For Forus Training programmes leading to further education and training awards at levels 4 to 6, the following grading approach applies:
 - When a learner has not achieved the minimum standards in an assessment, the grade is recorded as 'Referred'
 - A 'Pass' is awarded to a learner who has attained the minimum standard. To be awarded a pass grade, a learner must have achieved a mark of between 50-64%
 - A 'Merit' is awarded to a learner who has exceeded the minimum requirements. To be awarded a merit grade, a learner must have achieved a mark of between 65-79%
 - A 'Distinction' is awarded to a learner who has substantially exceeded the minimum requirements. For a learner to be awarded a distinction he/she must have achieved a mark of 80% or over.
- The system of grading major awards is in accordance with Awards Councils policies (see Appendix 1: QQI's System of Grading Major Awards).

FORUS TRAINING POLICY ON MARKING ASSESSMENT

It is Forus Training's policy that a fair, transparent and reliable marking system is devised for each assessment, which identifies assessment criteria and allocates marks to each criterion.

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The acceptable evidence expected in a learner's response is indicated in a model answer or checklist that shows expected performance against each assessment criterion.

With the exception of assessments leading to awards at Levels 1 to 3 on the National Framework of Qualifications, and assessments leading to competence based awards (as per 4.2 above), all Forus Training results for assessments are expressed in marks of 100.

For reasons of arithmetical convenience, but mainly to assist discrimination between pass, merit and distinction performance, the total assessment marks allocated to a test are set at 100 or multiples of

Individual test weightings are determined in accordance with the weightings assigned in the assessment specification of the award standard, or as set out by the appropriate Awards Council's assessment policy.

Assessment criteria are marked in a way that is appropriate to the assessment technique i.e. one mark or multiple marks may be applied to an assessment criterion as required. Assessment criteria are allocated marks that reflect their relative difficulty, and partial marks may be awarded for partial answers.

ASSESSMENT EVIDENCE, MARKING SHEETS AND RECORDS

Clear marking schemes and records are a necessary part of an assessment system in Forus Training, as they help to ensure that the assessment is fair, reliable, and transparent. Assessment records include the assessor's marking sheets, summary assessment sheets, assessment attendance records etc.

It is Forus Training's policy that assessment evidence will be authentic i.e. created by the learner during the assessment event, relevant to the assessment criteria and sufficient to satisfy the requirements of assessment criteria.

Marking sheets are devised for the purpose of capturing, grading and approving results. Retention of records and evidence complies with the administrative requirements of Forus Training and with legal and QQI requirements. These requirements are reflected in assessment regulations. Provision is made within our Information Management System to contain the scores within "Scores Templates" which can be reported upon to view individual or aggregate scores.

ENDORSEMENT OF ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUES

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It is Forus Training's policy that an essential part of the assessment design process is verifying that tests work as intended (testing the test). This is in order to ensure that any design flaws are eliminated prior to the test being used in a live assessment environment.

ASSESSMENT REVIEW

Forus Training is committed to ongoing assessment review as part of its Quality Assurance policy. Processes must be put in place to ensure that assessments are fit for purpose, and that they continue to adhere to the principles of assessment and remain capable of determining the relevant standards of knowledge, skill and competence. This is particularly relevant where programme design or delivery may alter over a period of time.

APPENDIX

Assessment: the process whereby learner performance in a range of areas is established to ensure that the knowledge/skill/competence is demonstrated to meet the requirements of the National Awards Standards for the award.

Assessment Technique: a method of assessing learner evidence for a particular range of learning outcomes, which can take the format of an assignment, theory test, skills demonstration, project, portfolio, learner record, coursework etc.

Assessment Instrument: the specific test that is devised based on the specified assessment technique, such as the test paper being used in a short answer test, or the brief for a portfolio.

Award: that which is conferred, granted or given by an Awards Council and which records that a learner has acquired a programme's standard of knowledge, skill or competence.

Competence: the practical application of knowledge or skill in a specific situation or context.

Competence Based Awards: Some awards, because of the critical nature of their learning outcomes, may be considered 'competence based' and, in such cases, it is not appropriate to apply a percentage marking scheme to determine levels of learner performance. For QQI's competence based awards involving specific legislative requirements, health and safety requirements or other critical industry standards regarding levels of competences, the assessment grading criteria specified by the Standards

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Development Group in the Award Specification will specify the minimum standard of achievement required by the learner. Forus Training assessments will reflect these grading criteria.

In a competence based assessment devised for such an award, specific performance criteria will clearly outline the competence to be demonstrated by the learner to achieve the minimum performance required for a Pass. A learner who fails an “essential” item will be deemed to have failed the assessment.

In addition to establishing the minimum performance required for Pass, additional assessment criteria will outline the level of performance required to achieve the grades of Merit or Distinction.

Knowledge: the cognitive representation of ideas, events or happenings.

Learner: a person who is acquiring, or who has acquired knowledge, skills or competence as per the learning outcomes of a particular programme.

Learning Outcomes: Learning outcomes describe what a learner is expected to know, to understand and/or be able to do following successful completion of a period of learning.

National Framework of Qualifications: the single structure mechanism for recognising all education and training in Ireland. The National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) is a system of ten levels. A ‘fan diagram’ helps to illustrate the levels on the NFQ and each level is based on nationally agreed standards of knowledge, skill and competence i.e. what an individual is expected to know, understand and be able to do following successful completion of a process of learning.

Programme: the process by which learners may acquire knowledge, skill or competence. It includes courses of study or instruction, apprenticeships, training and employment.

Skill: the goal-directed performance of a task, underpinned by know-how of the procedural knowledge required.

Standards: Standards identify the knowledge, skill and competence that must be attained to achieve an award.

Validation: the process by which an awarding body shall satisfy itself that a learner may attain knowledge, skill or competence for the purpose of an award made by the awarding body.

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COVID-19 - CHANGES TO QQI ASSESSMENTS

The health and wellbeing of our learners and staff is Forus Training's main priority. Due to Further Education and Training (FET) Centres being closed in order to control the spread of COVID-19, changes will need to be made to some of the QQI assessments that were planned for the coming weeks and months. We have considered all aspects of this situation and have been working hard, in consultation with trainers, to ensure that our learners are not disadvantaged, while at the same time preserving the academic integrity and standards of all awards offered.

After careful consideration, the following decisions have been made by Forus Training in relation to QQI assessments:

- Taking a consultative approach in developing alternative assessment. Where appropriate, we have and continue to seek the guidance and advice of professionals in the Further Education field in line with our policy on Externality. This includes stakeholders such as trainers, external authenticators and other competent experts across the scope of provision.
- Quality assuring all assessment processes;
 - Ensure that learners have the opportunity to complete their course by successfully evidencing their skills, knowledge and competencies that they have gained through their engagement and effort.
 - Offer a fair and equitable alternative assessment to the standard which is detailed in the validated programme.
 - Accommodate learners with special requirements in line with policy
- Ensuring that the assessment of all skills, knowledge and competencies are criterion referenced and that any new assessment technique introduced

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maintains the same weighting as the original assessment, and reflects the validated programme.

- Ensuring that all changes to the assessment technique are approved within Forus Training's governance structures.
- Clearly and timely communicating all relevant information to assist in the changes to assessment.

In collaboration with the Head of Centre, Forus Training Trainers identify where there is a need for an alternative assessment.

Trainers will draft an alternative assessment and through the support of an external authenticator and collaboration with programme leaders, the draft assessment is 'assessed' for credibility, integrity and level against the NFQ Grid of Level Indicators.

The reliability and validity are revised until the following objectives are achieved:

- The module learning outcomes and the teaching and learning approaches are aligned with the proposed alternative assessment. For example, if the exam question is framed in terms of learner discussing a topic/concept then the alternative assessment should also require this outcome and the teaching and learning approaches used in the module should be similarly aligned,
- There are samples of alternative assignments at the end of this document before and after revision,
- Learners are able to follow the revised instructions laid out,
- Assessors are able to follow the marking guidelines,
- Marking schemes accurately reflect any alterations (further break down of marks where applicable),

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- There is indication of knowing when to defer assessment rather than take unacceptably high risks to academic integrity (e.g. problems with fairness, validity, reliability, or cheating) with unfamiliar methods.

Inform learners and other stakeholders regarding the replacement of the current assessment technique with the alternative technique:

- Learners are given clear comprehensive instructions on all aspects of the operation and completion of the online assessment including such information as the required file formats and the number of attempts allowed for that assessment component for which they have the responsibility for submitting online.
- Learners are informed, at the very earliest opportunity of all changes to assessment methods.
- Communicated alternative arrangements to learners are done so in a timely and efficient manner to ensure learners have sufficient time and resources to adequately and confidently engage with alternative assessments.
- Proactively contact learners to ensure they have all the support needed to complete the alternate assessment. Accommodations where necessary, are made - the assessment may need to be posted, we may need to accept handwritten submissions as learners may not have access to a workstation/laptop.
- Follow our data protection policy making sure not to send group communication where learners may have access to each other's personal data.
- Preparation of a presentation* outlining the revised assessment to be uploaded and shared to the learners on the learning management system.

*This presentation can also be viewed by the Quality Assurance & Academic Governance Council (QAAGC), Head of Certification and EA in due course in line with their meeting and assessment schedule.

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Assessors

- When assessments are submitted, allocate marks and grade in accordance with the assessment rubric/marking scheme.
- Ensure that learners have completed a Learner Declaration and Authorship Statement verifying that the work is their own.
- Once the marking is complete, the internal verification and authentication process will apply where possible i.e., portfolios will be internally verified, externally authenticated and results submitted for approval to the Results Approval Committee.
- We have moved to horizontal grading where all assessments for the same module are being assessed by an experienced assessor whose work has been commended by the process of External Authentication to be fair and consistent in terms of their marking and feedback to learners.
- Conduct integrity checks and follow-ups with learners via Zoom to talk through at least one of their assessment responses. If the learner can talk about the assessment and, how they know what they know, this can indicate that they completed the assessment with integrity.
- Inform learners and trainers about the new laws in relation to provision of *cheating* and academic integrity; <https://www.qqi.ie/Articles/Pages/Academic-Integrity.aspx>
- Consider how requirements to record and store assessments in new formats may be met; this may be particularly pertinent for formats such as video which are storage space intensive.
- Consult with QQI and other relevant stakeholders as necessary, including professional and regulatory bodies, and notify them when the alternative assessment arrangements have been agreed and published.
- Whilst these are exceptional circumstances, the amendments made to assessment at this time should be evaluated at a later stage in order to help inform whether they were successful and can lead to long term system learning and enhancement. Highlight any weaknesses that might arise, for example, in the context of learner appeals.
- The need to provide increased special consideration during this time of uncertainty is fundamental.

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Appendix 1 - Sample Assessment before the changes

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CODE: 6N1957 Special Needs Assisting
Assessment Brief



QAI AWARD



Centre Number
Forus Training (38181S)

Skills Demonstration; Total Marks Available: 50 Marks or 50%

Skills Demonstration Details

PLEASE USE BLOCK CAPITALS

Skills Demonstration Title:	Special Needs Assisting Skills Demonstration	Due Date:	<input type="text"/>
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This brief requires you to produce evidence that demonstrates an understanding and application of a range of specific learning outcomes from the module. Read the entire brief before you start.

Skills Demonstration Part 1	50 marks
50%	
Skills Demonstration	
Learning Outcomes Assessed: 5, 7, 9, 11, 12	
<p>You are required to conduct a needs/strength analysis on a child. You will then recommend and carry out two activity plans based on a thorough analysis of the child's needs.</p> <p>Introduction (10 marks)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● COMPREHENSIVE BACKGROUND PROFILE of the focus child, clear evidence of consultation with relevant persons including written consent (4 marks) ● OBSERVATIONAL REPORT (observations -physical, intellectual, language, emotional, social) including detailed interventions /recommendations (6 marks) <p>Activity Plans (20 marks) (2 Separate Activity Plans)</p> <p>Clear evidence of a comprehensive overview of the activities to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● AIM, OBJECTIVES AND RATIONALE of each activity/ how the activity will meet the key areas i.e. health and wellbeing and education (7 marks) ● DETAILED PLAN for each activity identifying resources/ material and equipment (8 marks) ● DESCRIPTION of how the specific needs of the child will be met (2 marks) ● EVIDENCE of learner's ability to carry out each activity efficiently – observations (3 marks) 	

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Evaluation of the Intervention (10 marks)

Clear evidence of a comprehensive evaluation of the activity with a critical reflection on:

- **IDENTIFICATION** of achievement/ non-achievement of the aims and objectives of each activity were key support areas (health & wellbeing and education) met and the specific needs of the individual addressed (4 marks)
- **APPROPRIATENESS** of the chosen resources and health and safety measures (2 marks)
- **IDENTIFICATION** of challenges encountered during the implementation process including recommendations/ changes or extensions of the planned activities (4 marks)

Critical Reflection (10 marks)

Clear evidence of a critical reflection on the learner's performance as follows:

- **COMMUNICATION** Effective communication promoted throughout the activity with adherence to confidentiality addressed during each activity (4 marks)
- **IDENTIFICATION** of key learning points during the process with acknowledgement of the learner's key strengths and weaknesses/ recommendations on how to improve future work practice as an SNA (6 marks)

(approximately 2,500 words)

Evidence for this assessment technique may take the form of written, oral, graphic, audio, visual or any combination of these. Any audio, video or digital evidence must be provided in a suitable format.

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Appendix B - Alternate Assessment

Skills Demonstration; Total Marks Available: 50 Marks or 50%

Skills Demonstration Details	PLEASE USE BLOCK CAPITALS	
Skills Demonstration Title:	Special Needs Assisting Skills Demonstration	Due Date: <input style="width: 80px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>

This brief requires you to produce evidence that demonstrates an understanding and application of a range of specific learning outcomes from the module. Read the entire brief before you start.

Skills Demonstration Part 1	50 marks
50% Skills Demonstration Learning Outcomes Assessed: 5, 7, 9, 11, 12	
<p><i>You are required to conduct an analysis on a child with special needs.</i></p> <p><i>You will then recommend and carry out two activity plans based on the child.</i></p> <p><i>If you do not have access to a child we welcome you to use "Harry" page 299 of your learner manual. Also Please look at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DO_sneeTZDQ Playing with Toys Real Look Autism Babble (Pretend Marcus is Harry!, he is a very similar little boy and may give you a more realistic feel for his abilities)</i></p>	
<p><u>Introduction (10 marks)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COMPREHENSIVE BACKGROUND PROFILE of the focus child. In this section you will provide a clear description of the child and his/her background to include their likes, dislikes, personality, education, family life and all relevant information to form a full picture of the child and their day to day life. (4 marks) • OBSERVATIONAL REPORT to include physical, intellectual, language, emotional, social. A paragraph on each is required. (6 marks) 	
<p><u>Activity Plans (20 marks) (2 Separate Activity Plans)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACTIVITY PLANS clear evidence of activities. <i>Please follow the template provided page 351 – 355 of your learner manual. Use all headings in the template.</i> • AIM, OBJECTIVE AND RATIONALE OF EACH ACTIVITY. Information from your observational report will guide you in this area. (7 marks) • Include a DESCRIPTION of how the specific needs of the child will be met (2 marks) • DETAILED PLAN, please see template for structure and guidance. Follow all headings. If using Harry please refer to all information and implementation plan in future tense. (8 marks) • EVIDENCE of learner’s ability to plan the activity efficiently (3 marks) 	

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Evaluation of the Intervention (10 marks)

TIP. You will need to figure out, give an educated guess as to what will be achieved with Harry, the video will help you with this.

Clear evidence of a comprehensive evaluation of the activity with a critical reflection on:

- **IDENTIFY** achievement/ non achievement of the aims and objectives of each activity knowing the specific needs Harry (1 mark)
- **APPROPRIATENESS** of the chosen activity, resources and health and safety measures (2 marks)
- **IDENTIFY** challenges that may arise/arouse during the implementation process. (2 marks)
- **INCLUDE** recommendations/ changes of the activity (2 marks)
- **PROVIDE** information on the child/children's learning (1 marks)
- **PROVIDE** information on your own personal and professional learning (2 marks)

Critical Reflection (10 marks)

Clear evidence of a critical reflection on the **learner's** performance as follows. *This section is based on the two activities.*

- **COMMUNICATION:** effective communication promoted throughout the activity (2 marks)
- **CONFIDENTIALITY** addressed throughout the observation and activity stages (2 marks)
- **IDENTIFICATION** of key learning point to include the learner's strengths and weaknesses (3 marks)
- **RECOMMENDATIONS** on how to improve future work practice going forward as an SNA (3 marks)

(approximately 2,500 words)

Evidence for this assessment technique may take the form of written, oral, graphic, audio, visual or any combination of these. Any audio, video or digital evidence must be provided in a suitable format.

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