

## External Assessment

### 1 General

- 1.1 External assessment is a form of independent assessment where assessment tasks are set, marked or assessed by the Awarding Organisation. Skills and Education Group Awards<sup>1</sup> seeks to ensure that its assessments are clear and transparent, accurately measure the purpose of the qualification/end-point assessment and show no bias towards any particular group.
- 1.2 We may use one or more of the following methods of external assessment in our regulated qualifications or end-point assessments:
  - Examinations which may be handwritten or provided as onscreen tests. They may be made up of multiple-choice questions (MCQ); short answer questions (SAQ); long answer questions (LAQ);
  - Coursework which will involve the production of an end product such as a project portfolio, a finished garment, a piece of artwork;
  - A professional discussion or interview;
  - A practical demonstration of skills.
- 1.3 We provide on-demand onscreen tests and assessment windows throughout the year. Where assessments are only available within a certain timeframe, timetables are published on our website.
- 1.4 Exemplar questions for assessments are available and centres<sup>2</sup> will be directed to where these can be accessed.
- 1.5 Assessment evidence submitted directly to us is retained whilst any period for enquiry and appeal is valid. It is then treated as confidential waste and destroyed. Some assessments may be retained for standardisation and benchmarking purposes beyond this period but will continue to be stored securely and anonymised if used.
- 1.6 External assessment evidence will not be returned to the centre but individual test grades and examiner reports are published on our secure portals or website as appropriate.

<sup>1</sup> Skills and Education Group Awards is a recognised awarding organisation and part of the Skills and Education Group.

<sup>2</sup> A 'centre' in the context of this document applies to organisations, whether a training organisation, educational institution or employer, that deliver qualifications and / or assessments to individuals and as such have a duty of care with respect to the individual as a learner.

- 1.7 All external assessments must be conducted in English unless the purpose of the assessment is to test proficiency in a language other than English.

## **2 General Procedures for Centres**

- 2.1 Our requirements for the conduct of examinations managed in the Centre are published in our Instructions for the Conduct of Examinations and other External Assessment.
  - 2.1.1 We reserve the right to visit a centre to check its examination procedures in practice. 24hrs notice for a visit will usually be provided. In cases of suspected malpractice/concern, we reserve the right to visit without notice.
- 2.2 Centres can schedule an online test on-demand through the BTL platform once they have been approved to deliver online tests.
- 2.3 Centres delivering traditional paper tests must give the appropriate 28 working day notice of the examination date.
- 2.4 Centres must notify us in writing of any candidates requiring **Reasonable Adjustments** which require our permission (E2B Permissions Table) on the appropriate form (E2) 28 working days prior to the examination date<sup>3</sup>.
- 2.5 Centres must notify us in writing (on form E2A) within 7 working days of the date of the examination for candidates requesting **Special Consideration**.<sup>4</sup>

## **3 Registration Procedures for Paper-based External Tests**

- 3.1 Centres must register candidates online (via ORS) at least 28 working days prior to the examination date, indicating in which examination session they wish to register their candidates.
  - 3.1.1 If insufficient notice is received we may not be able to process requests. If processing at short notice is possible, a late entry fee will be charged to cover the additional administration and/or postage costs incurred.
- 3.2 Centres will receive hard copy examination papers and instructions 5-10 working days prior to the date of the examination or 5-10 working days prior to the first date of a set examination period.
  - 3.2.1 Centres must contact [centresupport@skillsedugroup.co.uk](mailto:centresupport@skillsedugroup.co.uk) immediately if papers have not been received within this period.

<sup>3</sup> See Access to Assessment Policy and Centre Guidance when applying for Special Arrangements

<sup>4</sup> Access to Assessment Policy and Centre Guidance when applying for Special Arrangements

## 4 Security and Confidentiality of Examination Papers and Scripts

- 4.1 All examination packs must be opened on receipt by the centre's named representative (usually the Examinations Officer) to check that the appropriate number of papers has been despatched and that the information on the attendance register (EX4) is correct. Centres must inform [centresupport@skillsedugroup.co.uk](mailto:centresupport@skillsedugroup.co.uk) immediately if any information is incorrect or missing.
- 4.2 After checking, packs must be resealed and initialled by the Examinations Officer in authority and stored in a secure location until required<sup>5</sup>. Papers must only be re-opened by the invigilator assigned to that examination, and then only in the examination room immediately before the examination.
- 4.3 All completed candidate scripts, signed attendance registers (EX4) and any unused papers must be forwarded to the named examiner within the timescales specified. Examiners will inform us if the appropriate number of scripts / unused papers has not been returned by the centre. We will note all instances of this and report these as non-compliance to the centre.
- 4.4 Examination question papers must not be retained by centres under any circumstances, nor must they be photocopied for any reason<sup>6</sup>.
- 4.5 In exceptional circumstances candidates may be allowed to sit an examination at a different time to that prescribed in the examination timetable, or at a different time to the rest of their cohort. All such requests must be put in writing to [centresupport@skillsedugroup.co.uk](mailto:centresupport@skillsedugroup.co.uk) and a declaration of non-disclosure signed by the candidate/s and centre (3008 EX8/EX8a).
- 4.6 External assessments which are not conducted under examination conditions must be stored securely by the centre and submitted to us or to the named examiner as instructed.

## 5 Despatch of Scripts and Assessments<sup>7</sup>

- 5.1 All candidate scripts/portfolios subject to external marking must be forwarded directly to the named examiner / independent assessor. They are confidential documents and must be kept secure and not be marked or copied by the centre.

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<sup>5</sup> Exceptions to this rule may apply where tutor and/or candidate preparation is required prior to the examination taking place.

<sup>6</sup> The photocopying of question papers may be allowed under exceptional circumstances but permission to do so must be requested first from [centresupport@skillsedugroup.co.uk](mailto:centresupport@skillsedugroup.co.uk).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Instructions for the Conduct of Examinations and other External Assessment

- 5.2 Course work which is independently assessed is the responsibility of the learner and it is incumbent upon them to retain a copy if it is to be printed and posted for marking by the centre.
- 5.3 It is the centre's responsibility to ensure that all work is despatched without delay, postage or carriage paid by the centre.
- 5.4 All packages must be addressed accurately to the specified examiner and include a return address to the centre. Any such package of work should be capable of withstanding rough treatment in transit.
- 5.5 Where local postal arrangements prevent the despatch of examination scripts on the day of the examination, the sealed packages must be locked up in secure conditions overnight and despatched the next working day.
- 5.6 Other assessments for external marking, which are not conducted under invigilated conditions, must be securely stored until despatched for marking. The timing of such despatch will depend upon the qualification, and centres are asked to consult their Centre Support Officer for any additional guidance.
- 5.7 In the event of work being lost in the post between the centre and the examiner we will take one or more of the following actions:
  - request the centre to make the appropriate investigations with the carrier;
  - request the assessment is re-taken on an alternative date/series;
  - request alternative evidence from the centre upon which an assessment decision may be made.

Any decision will be made on a case by case basis.

## 6 Examination and Entry Procedures for Onscreen Tests

- 6.1 Centres will not be able to access our online test platform until they have been approved to deliver online tests. Centres must complete and submit form CR1e to [centrerecognition@skillsedugroup.co.uk](mailto:centrerecognition@skillsedugroup.co.uk)
- 6.2 Once approved we will provide access to the relevant instructions, software and/or account facilities to enable centre scheduling of tests.
  - 6.2.1 Centres must run a practice test on the online platform prior to completing any live tests.

- 6.2.2 Centres will be responsible for ensuring that it conducts onscreen tests in accordance with the Instructions for the Conduct of Examinations and Other External Assessment.
- 6.2.4 Centres are responsible for ensuring that any point in time workstations and/or other IT equipment used in onscreen test delivery are fit for purpose, accessible and do not disadvantage the learner in any way.

## **7 Candidate Attendance**

- 7.1 Candidates who absent themselves from an examination will be allowed to sit on an alternative date without charge subject to the centre providing acceptable evidence that the learner was unfit to sit the examination at the time scheduled.
- 7.2 Candidates, who are simply absent without explanation from an examination for which they have been entered, may re-enter but such entry will be considered a re-sit and a fee charged.

## **8 Examination and Entry Procedures for Achievelive**

- 8.1 This facility is only currently available to centres delivering the Level 4 Diploma in Therapeutic Counselling. Those centres wishing to use this system must first request a Centre Manager account via [centresupport@skillsedugroup.co.uk](mailto:centresupport@skillsedugroup.co.uk)
- 8.2 Further detailed guidance can be found in Qualification Info for Counselling Tutors on the website.

## **9 Repeating External Assessments**

- 9.1 Candidates may re-sit/re-take or re-submit assessments subject to the requirements of specific qualifications/assessments.
  - 9.1.1 Exceptions to this rule are published in the relevant guidance documents e.g. Qualification Guides; End Point Assessment Guides; Programme Guides. Centres must ensure that their learners are aware of any restrictions on re-sits or re-submissions.
- 9.2 Centres must inform [centresupport@skillsedugroup.co.uk](mailto:centresupport@skillsedugroup.co.uk) in writing of a candidate's intention to re-sit a traditional paper exam or re-submit work for marking/assessment. This will normally be at least 28 working days before the examination date/period. A re-sit/re-take or re-submission fee will be charged.
- 9.3 Onscreen tests are on-demand and require no period of notice but a re-sit fee will be charged.

- 9.4 We will expect centres to register such candidates with integrity. Centres should ensure that candidates have received the appropriate guidance and support to successfully complete a re-sit of the assessment.

## **10 Malpractice and Maladministration in External Assessment**

- 10.1 Examiners/Assessors who suspect malpractice or maladministration during marking/assessment are instructed to inform [complianceandregulation@skillsedugroup.co.uk](mailto:complianceandregulation@skillsedugroup.co.uk) immediately.
- 10.2 Centre staff who suspect or witness malpractice or maladministration<sup>8</sup> must complete a Notification of Suspected Malpractice (Form MM2) and send it immediately to [complianceandregulation@skillsedugroup.co.uk](mailto:complianceandregulation@skillsedugroup.co.uk). Candidate scripts/assessments should still be sent directly to the named Examiner/Assessor where applicable.

## **11 Enquiries and Appeals in External Assessment including Special Consideration**

- 11.1 Centres must follow our published procedures when submitting an enquiry/appeal into results<sup>9</sup> or when applying for Special Consideration<sup>10</sup>.

## **12 Quality Assurance**

- 12.1 This policy and guidance is reviewed annually to ensure it continues to meet our needs and those of our centres and Regulators<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> See Malpractice and Maladministration Policy and Guidance

<sup>9</sup> See Enquiries and Appeals

<sup>10</sup> See Centre Guidance when applying for Special Arrangements

<sup>11</sup> Ofqual in England; Qualifications Wales; CCEA Regulation in NI; ESFA; IfA or any other regulator to which we may be subject.