

GUIDELINES FOR ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS DEVELOPMENT/REVISION

The following document has been written by City of Dublin ETB's QA Office to help support those involved in the process of updating or writing assessment instruments that are used by training programmes.

The 'Writer' is the term used to describe the person who writes or updates the assessment instrument and the 'Evaluator' refers to the person who evaluates the draft copy of the assessment instrument that has been prepared by the writer.

Documentation

1. Any assessment instrument development work must use the AS template supplied by City of Dublin ETB QA Office. Any existing AISs may also be supplied in softcopy
2. You must complete the relevant QA reports following the completion of your work

Resources you will need to support your writing/evaluation

3. The relevant City of Dublin ETB Programme and Programme module to which the AS relates.
4. The QQI award component specification
<https://qsearch.qqi.ie/WebPart/Search?searchtype=awards>
5. Quality Assuring Assessment, Guidelines for Providers, Revised 2013
<https://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Quality%20Assuring%20Assessment%20-%20Guidelines%20for%20Providers%20Revised%202013.pdf#search=quality%20assuring%20assessment%2A>
6. NFQ Grid of Level Indicators - <https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/NFQLevelindicators.pdf>
7. QQI's Grading Criteria - found in Section 3.6.1, pages 22 and 23, of QQI's Quality Assuring Assessment, Guidelines for Providers, Revised 2013
8. Log of any issues relating to the AIS that have been recorded and collected by the QA office

Note: The learning outcomes as indicated in the award specification(s) are determined by QQI and therefore, are not part of this review process

Guidance on Fair and Consistent Assessment

1. All learning outcomes for the validated City of Dublin ETB programme including those in City of Dublin ETB module descriptors must be covered and assessed, and special validation requirements met, for example, access to certain resources.
2. **An assessment technique** is a valid and reliable way of assessing learner evidence for a particular range of learning outcomes, e.g. practical skills should be assessment in a practical manner e.g. by a skills demonstration. Valid and reliable assessment techniques for QQI awards are grouped into the following six broad categories:
 - a. Assignment
 - b. Project
 - c. Portfolio
 - d. Skills Demonstration
 - e. Examination
 - f. Learner Record¹
3. Learners must be assessed by using a valid and reliable assessment technique. Different techniques will be appropriate and valid to generate different forms of learner evidence for a range of specific learning outcomes. The assessment technique(s) will be outlined in the City of Dublin ETB programme module descriptor and should be adhered to.
4. **An assessment instrument** is the specific activity/task or question(s) devised by the writer based on the specified assessment technique. All instruments devised by writers must relate to one or more of these techniques e.g. a case study may be used as a part of an assignment, project. For example, if the assessment technique specified in the programme module is a Learner Record, the assessment instrument could be a Blog created by the learner. The design of the assessment instrument must:
 - be appropriate to the technique and fit for purpose
 - allow learners to generate sufficient evidence
 - enable evidence to be generated which can be measured against the learning outcomes outlined in the Award Specification
 - enable reliable assessment decisions by writers
 - be selected to make the best use of available resources i.e. is 'practicable'².

¹ This guidance has been extracted from the *QQI, Quality Assuring Assessment Guidelines for Providers, Revised 2013, (Version 2 - revised 2018*)*

² Supra

The designed assessment instrument must have an assessment brief issued to learners with:

- Clear tasks devised based on the learning outcomes being assessed
- accompanying instructions for completing the assessment e.g. deadlines etc.
- assessment criteria/rubric (as per the validated programme module marking sheet or devised for alternative assessment instrument)
- and have a marking scheme based on the above

5. All assessment instruments must be:

- **Valid:** A valid assessment means that the assessment should measure what it is supposed to measure i.e. only the standards of knowledge, skill or competence required for the award should be assessed. An assessment is valid when it is fit for/appropriate to the purpose, i.e. a practical assessment should be used to assess practical skills allows the learner to produce evidence which can be measured against the standards facilitates reliable assessment decisions by writers is accessible to all candidates who are potentially able to achieve it.
- **Reliable:** Reliability refers to the accuracy with which an assessment measures the skill or attainment it is designed to measure. An assessment which is unreliable cannot be valid. A reliable assessment consistently gives the same result under similar conditions. A reliable assessment produces reliable assessment decisions. To be reliable an assessment must:
 - be based on valid assessment techniques
 - ensure evidence is generated under consistently-applied conditions of assessment
 - ensure reliability of learner evidence
 - produce consistent decisions across the range of writers applying the assessment in different situations and contexts and with different groups of learners
 - be consistent over time
- **Fair:** A fair assessment in addition to being valid and reliable provides equity of opportunity for learners. Unfairness in assessment is based on unequal opportunities i.e. lack of resources/equipment, inappropriate techniques, inexperienced writers. For assessment procedures and practices to be fair and equitable for learners the influence of these factors must be taken into account in the design and implementation of assessment.
- **Quality Assured:** Quality is a key principle in ensuring the credibility of assessment. Quality must be assured through City of Dublin ETB's providers' own quality assurance and the process of self-evaluation and monitoring.
- **Transparent:** A transparent assessment policy and guidelines will ensure clarity and understanding by all relevant stakeholders. This will include clear and unambiguous definitions and requirements with regard to fairness, consistency, validity and reliability.

6. To ensure fair and consistent assessment of learner evidence, writers should devise marking schemes which are informed by the marking sheet/and or rubric in the validated City of Dublin ETB programme module. Where rubrics are used as an alternative to a marking scheme, the descriptors in the rubric should be in line with the programme module and be sufficiently detailed to uphold the principles of assessment outlined above. For additional information please see <https://www.nuigalway.ie/media/celt/files/coursedesign/Rubrics.pdf>
7. Writers are encouraged to be innovative and to devise assessment instruments with their learners in mind. City of Dublin ETB promotes the use of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles in assessment design, subject to what is permitted under the City of Dublin ETB programme/module specification. All writers must ensure to check the programme/module descriptor thoroughly and ensure that all requirements set out in paragraph 3 are adhered to. If a Writer is unsure, please direct queries to a member of your Quality Team who can if necessary submit a QA query to FETQA@City of Dublin ETB.ie for clarification.
9. The 'Assessment Mapping' table in the AS, must correctly 'map' the learning outcomes to the assessment techniques that are noted in the relevant City of Dublin ETB programme module specification.
10. The weighting of each assessment technique in the AS must adhere to the assessment techniques contained in the City of Dublin ETB programme module.
11. The achievement of all learning outcomes, as well as all elements of the learning outcomes, must be assessed in the AS. Pay attention to words such as 'for example', 'to include' 'and' 'or' that are included in the learning outcomes

The writer must be mindful of the statement of level indicators on the National Framework of Qualifications to ensure the pitch is correct e.g. level of autonomy at level 5 is maintained see <https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/NFQLevelindicators.pdf>. The AS therefore should reflect the standard and content of these relevant statements. For example, there is a significant difference in what you would expect from learner evidence for the verb 'describe' used in a level 3 assessment versus describe used for assessment purposes at level 5

12. The instructional/action word in the learning outcome cannot be changed as it is changing what must be demonstrated by the learner e.g. you cannot change 'analyse' to 'describe'. In this example not only is there a change but it is being dropped to a lower order instructional/action word. purposes https://cpb-us-e1.wpmucdn.com/wordpress.uark.edu/dist/a/315/files/2013/09/Blooms_Taxonomy_pyramid_cake-style-use-with-permission.jpg
13. writers should use the instructional word/definition of the learning outcome(s) in the learner task(s) and ensure the task requires the learner to demonstrate the relevant learning outcome(s). Additional

guidance on what is expected of the learner and how this might be achieved can also be given. Please see **Appendix 1 for examples of definitions of instruction/action words** used in learning outcomes.

14. The instruction and guidelines to learners must contain sufficient detail and clarity so that the learner knows exactly what they have to do and how they have to do it.
15. Sequence the written instructions in a logical order and in the order that learners will likely approach the task
16. The language used in the AS must be appropriately pitched to the level of the award. You will need to consider the NFQ Grid of Level Indicators to reference the indicators of the level you are reviewing for standards expected
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17. Ensure that you use words and phrases that are accessible to all learners eg avoid 'bear in mind', 'in a nutshell'
18. It is important that the AS allows for a learner to produce work that could be graded as Successful (Levels 1-3) and Distinction (Levels 4-6). QQI's Grading Criteria should be referred to here when you are evaluating your assessment instrument. Check each of the statements and ask:
 - Does the AS allow the achievement of the learning outcomes as outlined in the City of Dublin ETB programme module to an excellent standard?
 - Does the AS provide for the appropriate level of autonomy and independence?
 - Does the AS allow the learner to demonstrate fluent and confident use of vocational/specialised language?
 - Does the AS allow the learner to demonstrate in-depth understanding of the subject matter?
 - And so on for each of the rest of the statements
19. The guidelines provided to learners must directly correlate with the assessment criteria stated in the marking sheets ie you must ensure that you are not giving an instruction for which there are no marks, and/or, you must ensure that you are not including assessment criteria for which there are no guidelines or instructions

20. Consideration must be given to the allocation and distribution of total marks across each learning outcome. Generally, there should be a relatively equal distribution of marks across the learning outcomes. However, there will be some learning outcomes that are more or less important than others and the marks should reflect this.

Liaising with other City of Dublin ETB SMEs/Communities of Practice/Early Appointment of EA:

21. Writers can liaise with another City of Dublin ETB/external subject expert preferably independent of the centres in the interest of objectivity and to support the teacher/trainer/tutor in decision making in the interests of learners. Quality teams/teachers/trainers/tutors can contact [FETQA@City of Dublin ETB.ie](mailto:FETQA@CityofDublinETB.ie) for assistance with sourcing other subject matter experts.
22. Online communities of practice in programme areas will also be established through the CDU Moodle site for subject areas to enable teachers/trainers/tutors to connect with other staff teaching in the same programme areas as themselves – staff that wish to opt in to these communities of practice for their subject area should email [FETQA@City of Dublin ETB.ie](mailto:FETQA@CityofDublinETB.ie)
23. The centre can also appoint their external authenticator early and use them as the external evaluator
See QA Memo on Early Appointment of EAs for examining Assessment Instruments (February 2021).

Final Checks

24. Include relevant presentation requirements and ensure that they are accurate and valid eg referencing requirements, presentation requirements, word count expectations
25. Examination durations must be included on the examination papers
26. The outline solutions for examinations must be sufficiently detailed, appropriate and correct
27. The AS must be checked for spelling and grammar errors
28. The use of terms/language used must be consistent across all elements of the assessment eg learning outcomes, assessment instructions, assessment criteria and marking sheets/schemes

City of Dublin ETB'S QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURE FOR ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT

The following procedures apply regarding the development of assessment instruments that are used in training programmes.

Criteria for selection of writers and evaluators

1. Writers and evaluators of assessment instruments must be suitably qualified and meet the specified criteria in relation to subject matter expertise, qualifications and assessment experience.
2. Writers and evaluators will be asked to complete the 'Assessment Instruments Writer/Evaluator Application Form' and must be able to produce supporting evidence. These are securely retained either by the Contracted Training organisation or the City of Dublin ETB QA office
3. Writers and Evaluators can be staff from within the Training Centres, contracted night trainers, other City of Dublin ETB teaching/training staff, staff from second providers or be external to both. Those who develop must be separate to those that approve. The Quality Team will ensure this is maintained and that the independence of evaluators is protected³.

Training of writers and evaluators

4. All writers and evaluators must attend a briefing/training session that is co-ordinated by City of Dublin ETB's QA Office
5. Writers and evaluators will receive copies of all the assessment and QA related documentation they need to carry out this work
6. A database of trained writers and evaluators will be securely retained on Sharepoint by the QA office

QA documentation

7. All assessment instruments must be developed using the specified templates

³ Where contractors are used to devise/evaluate assessment instruments payment is permissible and should be in line with agreed City of Dublin ETB procedures and relevant payment rates.

Standards

8. Writer and reviewers must refer to relevant award standards/City of Dublin ETB programme and programme modules during their process

Evaluation

9. Following the review of the module, writers must return the draft work to the QA Office by the agreed deadline
10. QA Office staff will send the draft assessment instrument to another subject-matter expert (ie the evaluator) for review
11. The evaluator will review the assessment instrument based upon the criteria noted in the AS Evaluator Report and note any recommendations that they believe are needed to adhere to the standards required
12. If the evaluator identifies any issues with the assessment instrument or requires clarification, they must send a request for further information to the QA Office staff who will then forward to the writer and return the writer's response to the evaluator. If required, the writer and evaluator will be asked to liaise with each other directly to resolve any queries
13. Up to 3 requests for further information may be sent. Thereafter,
 - if the requests for clarification from the evaluator are not being addressed, a new writer may be engaged
 - if consensus cannot be reached between the writer and evaluator, a third subject-matter expert may be engaged to make the final decision
14. Once the evaluator is satisfied that the assessment instrument meets all the assessment criteria, they will send the following documentation to the QA Office:
 - a. The final draft Assessment Specification
 - b. The completed and signed 'AS Evaluator Report'
 - c. The completed and signed 'Recommendation for AS Approval Form' (Part One)

15. All relevant QA documentation will be reviewed and approved by the QA office and then brought to the relevant City of Dublin ETB governance group for approval. All approved documentation will remain the property of the City of Dublin ETB.
16. The final version of the Assessment Specification will be stored on relevant secure online platform and will replace the previous version
17. All QA documentation completed as part of the Assessment Specification development will be securely retained in the City of Dublin ETB QA Office

Appendix 1 – Instructional/Action Word Definitions

Instructional/action words are used City of Dublin ETB teachers/trainers/tutors to explain how they want a learner to respond to an assignment, skills demonstration or exam question.

The list below is for guidance purposes only and provides examples of some of the most commonly used instructional words and words associated with learning outcomes and explains their meaning. However, if there is a conflict between definitions listed below and programme material precedence should be given to the City of Dublin ETB programme/module descriptor or those provided by other awarding bodies which are accrediting the relevant programme.

Term	Definition
Analyse	<p>Present the outcome of methodical and detailed examination either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • breaking down a theme, topic or situation in order to interpret and study the interrelationships between the parts and/or • of information or data to interpret and study key trends and interrelationships. <p>Analysis can be through activity, practice, written or verbal presentation.</p>
Apply	<p>Put into operation or use.</p> <p>Use relevant skills/knowledge/understanding appropriate to context.</p>
Arrange	Organise or make plans.
Assess	Offer a reasoned judgement of the standard/quality of a situation or a skill informed by relevant facts.

Calculate	Generate a numerical answer with workings shown.
Communicate	<p>Convey ideas or information to others.</p> <p>Create/construct skills to make or do something, for example a display or set of accounts.</p>
	<p>Identify the main factors relating to two or more items/situations or aspects of a subject that is extended to explain the similarities, differences, advantages and disadvantages.</p> <p>This is used to show depth of knowledge through selection of characteristics.</p>

Compose	Create or make up or form.
Create/ Construct	Skills to make or do something, for example a display or set of accounts.
Critically analyse	Separate information into components and identify characteristics with depth to the justification.
Critically evaluate	Make a judgement taking into account different factors and using available knowledge/experience/evidence where the judgement is supported in depth.

Term	Definition
Define	State the nature, scope or meaning.
Demonstrate	Show knowledge and understanding.
Describe	Give an account, including all the relevant characteristics, qualities and events.
Design	Plan and present ideas to show the layout/function/workings/object/system/process.
Develop	Grow or progress a plan, ideas, skills and understanding.
Differentiate	Recognise or determine what makes something different.
Discuss	Give an account that addresses a range of ideas and arguments. Consider different aspects of a theme or topic, how they interrelate and the extent to which they are important.
Evaluate	Work draws on varied information, themes or concepts to consider aspects such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strengths or weaknesses • advantages or disadvantages • alternative actions • relevance or significance. Students' enquiries should lead to a supported judgement showing relationship to its context. This will often be in a conclusion.

	Evidence will often be written but could be through presentation or activity.
Explain	To give an account of the purposes or reasons.
Explore	Skills and/or knowledge involving practical research or testing.
Identify	Indicate the main features or purpose of something by recognising it and/or being able to discern and understand facts or qualities.
Illustrate	Make clear by using examples or providing diagrams.
Indicate	Point out, show.
Interpret	State the meaning, purpose or qualities of something through the use of images, words or other expression.
Investigate	Conduct an enquiry or study into something to discover and examine facts and information.
Justify	Students give reasons or evidence to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support an opinion • prove something is right or reasonable.
Plan	Consider, set out and communicate what is to be done.

Term	Definition
Produce	To bring into existence.
Reconstruct	To assemble again/reorganise/form an impression.
Report	Adhere to protocols, codes and conventions where findings or judgements are set down in an objective way.

Review	Make a formal assessment of work produced. The assessment allows students to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • appraise existing information or prior events • reconsider information with the intention of making changes, if necessary.
Show how	Demonstrate the application of certain methods/theories/concepts.
Stage and manage	Organisation and management skills, for example running an event or a social and community work pitch.
Suggest	Give possible alternatives, produce an idea, put forward, for example, an idea or plan for consideration.
Undertake/ carry out	Use a range of skills to perform a task, research or activity ⁴ .

The following are additional instructional words/and associated words:

Term	Definition
Account for-	give reasons for
Give an account of-	describe
To take into account	to consider, to think of
Argue	systematically support or reject a position by presenting reasons and evidence for acceptance or rejection
Assume-	first accept that the following is true
Classify-	arrange into groups or classes
Comment on -	explain why something is important
Compare-	describe the ways in which two things/characteristics are alike, but also mention differences
Concept-	an important idea
Concise -	short, brief
In the context of-	referring to, within the subject of
Contrast-	describe the ways in which two things, qualities or problems are different
Criteria	what standards you would expect; what questions you would expect to be answered

⁴ Pearson BTEC Higher National Certificate/Diplomas – Programme Guidance Material.

Criticise-	analyse and discuss faults and disadvantages, or merits and facts
Deduction-	the conclusion or generalisation you come to after looking carefully at all the facts
Distinguish between	describe the difference between two things
Elaborate	Answer fully with reasons and examples (Yes or No is not enough)
To what extent is (x) true? -	Discuss in what ways (x) is true and in what ways (x) is not true
Factor(s)-	the circumstances which bring about a result
Function-	what something does, its purpose or activities
Illustrate -	use examples or diagrams that prove the answer is correct and clarify meaning
Implications-	results which are not obvious; long term, suggested results
Limitations	explain where something is not useful or not relevant
List	provide an itemised series of points (often expressed in point form)
Outline	- give an organised description in which you state main points or features but omit detail
Prove	confirm or verify by stating and evaluating evidence or by logical reasoning
With/by reference to	make sure you write about the following subject
Relate	emphasise connections, relationships and associations
In relation to-	only a certain part of the first topic is needed
Review	re-examine, analyse and comment briefly on the major points
Role	what part something plays, how it works, especially in co-operation with others
State	formally set out a position
Summarise	give a concise account of main points of a subject, omitting details or examples
Validity, valid	is there evidence and are there facts to prove this statement? ⁵

⁵ [Federation University Australia available at https://federation.edu.au/current-students/learning-and-study/online-help-with/instructional-words](https://federation.edu.au/current-students/learning-and-study/online-help-with/instructional-words)