Achieving your Assessor and Quality Assurance Units (TAQA)
Second edition
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Introduction

In this chapter you will learn about:

- the role of assessment
- key concepts and principles of assessment
- minimising risks
- types of assessment
- methods of assessment.

Within the chapter there are activities and examples which will help you to reflect on the above and to develop and enhance your understanding of the principles and practices of assessment. Completing the activities will help you to gather evidence towards the Principles and practices of assessment unit. At the end of each section is an extension activity to stretch and challenge your knowledge and understanding.

At the end of the chapter is a list of possible evidence which could be used towards the Principles and practices of assessment unit.

A cross-referencing grid shows how the content of this chapter contributes towards the relevant TAQA units’ criteria and the National Occupational Standards. There is also a theory focus with relevant references, further information and websites to which you might like to refer.

The role of assessment

What is assessment?

Assessment is a way of finding out if learning has taken place. It enables you, as the assessor, to ascertain if your learner has gained the required skills, knowledge, understanding and/or attitudes needed at a given point in time. It also provides your learners with an opportunity to demonstrate what progress they have made and what they have learnt so far. If you don’t plan for and carry out any assessment with your learners, you will not know how well or what they have learnt.
Assessment should not be in isolation from the teaching and learning process. You can assess that learning is taking place each time you are with your learners. This can simply be by watching what they are doing and/or asking questions. If you don’t formally teach, you might at some point be carrying out short coaching or training sessions with your learners. However, there are some assessors who don’t teach or train, but will just assess, make decisions and give feedback. This might be where competent staff are demonstrating their skills, knowledge and understanding towards their job role, or an aspect of a qualification in the workplace.

If your learners are taking a qualification, you will need to use formal methods of assessment such as an assignment or a workplace observation. However, you can devise informal methods to use with your learners to check their progress at any time, such as asking a few questions. Assessment should focus on improving and reinforcing learning as well as measuring achievements. It should help your learners realise how they are progressing and what they need to do to improve and/or develop further.

Example

Hardeep has devised a quiz based on a popular television programme which he uses with his group of learners at the end of sessions. This is to assess their ongoing progress and knowledge of the subject of Geography. He then uses the formal activities provided by the awarding organisation (AO) to assess their achievement.

Assessment should be a regular and continual process; it might not always be formalised, but you will be watching what your learners are doing, asking them questions and reviewing their progress whenever you are in contact with them. If you also teach or train, your learners will be demonstrating their skills, knowledge and understanding regularly, for example through tasks, discussions and ongoing activities. It is good practice to give your learners feedback when assessing them informally to help them realise what progress they are making. If they have not reached a certain standard, you should still give feedback on what they have done well so far, and how they can improve and develop further.

You are therefore constantly making judgements and should be aware of the impact that your comments can have on your learners’ confidence when you give feedback. Imagine how you feel when you receive feedback, perhaps elated because the comments are good, but demoralised if not. Comments which specifically focus on the activity or work produced, rather than the individual, will be more helpful and motivating to your learners. Assessment should not become a personal or subjective judgement, but should be objective and relate to the activity or criteria being assessed.

Assessment should not be confused with evaluation; assessment is of the learner, evaluation is of the programme that the learner is taking, for example a qualification. Assessment is specific towards a learner’s progress and achievements, as well as how they can improve.
Evaluation is a quality assurance monitoring tool. It includes obtaining feedback from your learners and others, for example employers, line managers and quality assurers, to help you improve the overall learner experience as well as your own practice.

There is a difference between assessment for learning, and assessment of learning. Assessment for learning is usually a formative process. It will ascertain progress so far in order to plan further learning and development. Assessment of learning is usually summative and confirms that learning and achievement have taken place.

The starting point for assessment

If you are going to assess accredited qualifications, the starting point should be the programme syllabus, often known as a qualification handbook. This should state how your subject should be assessed and quality assured and will be available from the AO which accredits the qualification and issues the certificates. It will give information and guidance in the form of an assessment strategy. The assessment strategy should state the experience, professional development and qualifications that assessors and internal quality assurers (IQAs) should have. It will also state how the subject should be assessed, and whether assessment activities are provided for you or you need to create your own. Alternatively, you might be assessing non-accredited qualifications, which are programmes of learning which don’t lead to a formal qualification issued by an AO. However, a company certificate of achievement might be issued as proof of success.

Activity

If you are assessing learners who are working towards a qualification, find out who the AO is for your particular subject and access their website. Locate the qualification handbook and review the assessment strategy to ensure you can meet the requirements. If you are going to assess accredited or non-accredited programmes of learning, familiarise yourself with what you will assess and what activities you can use.

The purpose of the assessment strategy is to ensure the subject is assessed in accordance with relevant guidance and regulations, to give a quality service to your learners and to maintain the reputation of your organisation, the qualification and the AO (if applicable).

If you are going to assess competence and performance in the work environment, the starting point should be the company standards or job specifications. This will help you plan effective activities to assess skills, knowledge and understanding based on what the learners know already. If the standards or job specifications have not been written in a way that clearly states what someone has to know and what someone has to do then they could easily be misinterpreted. You will need to discuss them with your learner and their supervisor to ensure you all interpret the requirements in the same way. They might also change; therefore you would need to ensure you are working with the latest version.
The assessment process

The assessment process is a systematic procedure which should be followed to give your learner a positive experience. Depending upon the subject you are assessing and whether it is academic (theory or knowledge based) or vocational (practical or performance based), you will usually follow the assessment cycle (see Figure 1.1). The cycle will continue until all aspects of the programme or qualification have been achieved by your learner.

Throughout the cycle, standardisation of assessment practice between assessors should take place; this will help ensure the consistency and fairness of decisions, and that all assessors interpret the requirements in the same way. Internal quality assurance (IQA) will also take place throughout as part of the quality assurance process (see Chapters 3 and 4 for further information).

Figure 1.1 Assessment cycle

- **Initial assessment** – ascertaining if your learner has any previous knowledge and/or experience of the subject, topic or unit to be assessed. This information can be obtained through application forms, interviews and discussions. The results of initial assessment activities will give you information regarding your learners, for example any specific assessment requirements they may have or any further training and support they may need. This process might not always be carried out by you, but the information obtained must be passed onto you. Initial assessment is known as assessment for learning, as it helps prepare learners for assessment and identifies their potential.

- **Assessment planning** – agreeing suitable types and methods of assessment with learners, setting appropriate target dates, involving others as necessary (such as colleagues or supervisors) and following relevant organisational guidelines.

- **Assessment activity** – using relevant methods, approaches and activities, for example observation, questioning, assignments, or gathering appropriate evidence of competence. Assessment can be formative (usually ongoing and informal to check progress, for example a discussion) and/or summative (usually at the end and formal, for example a test). Summative assessment is often known as assessment of learning as it counts towards the achievement of something.

- **Assessment decision and feedback** – making a judgement of success or otherwise, giving constructive feedback and agreeing any further action that may be necessary. Records of what was assessed and the decisions made should always be maintained.
• **Review of progress** – reviewing progress and achievement, discussing any other issues that may be relevant to the learning and assessment process.

Records should be maintained throughout all aspects of the assessment cycle and quality assurance activities should take place on an ongoing basis. The cycle will then begin again with an initial assessment regarding the next subject, topic or unit of the qualification the learner is working towards.

**The need for assessment**
Assessment can be separated into the needs of the learner, yourself as the assessor, your organisation and the AO (if applicable).

### Table 1.1 Examples of the need for assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learner – to:</th>
<th>Assessor – to:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• clarify what is expected of them</td>
<td>• adapt teaching, learning and assessment activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• enable discussions with assessors</td>
<td>• ascertain learners’ progress and achievement so far</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• evaluate their own progress</td>
<td>• carry out all aspects of the assessment cycle and keep records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• have something to show for their achievements, for example a certificate</td>
<td>• develop learners’ self-assessment skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• plan and achieve their aim</td>
<td>• diagnose any learner needs or particular learning requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• know how well they are progressing</td>
<td>• empower learners to take control of their learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• know they are achieving the correct standard or level</td>
<td>• follow the requirements of the AO or programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• know what they have to do to improve and progress further</td>
<td>• improve motivation and self-esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• learn from their mistakes</td>
<td>• make decisions and give feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• plan and achieve their aim</td>
<td>• prepare learners for further assessments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• know how well they are progressing</td>
<td>• prove they can assess effectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• know they are achieving the correct standard or level</td>
<td>• standardise judgements and practice with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• plan and achieve their aim</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation – to:</th>
<th>Awarding organisation – to:</th>
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<tr>
<td>• achieve funding (if applicable)</td>
<td>• accredit achievements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• analyse enrolment, retention, success and achievement rates</td>
<td>• ensure compliance with regulations and qualification requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ensure adequate resources are available</td>
<td>• ensure staff follow the assessment strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ensure consistency of assessors’ practice</td>
<td>• sample assessment and IQA activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ensure there is an effective IQA system</td>
<td>• give guidance to assessors and IQAs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• give references for learners if requested</td>
<td>• issue certificates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• identify gaps in learning</td>
<td>• formulate qualifications from recognised National Occupational Standards (NOS)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• justify delivery of programmes</td>
<td>• provide written reports regarding quality and compliance</td>
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<tr>
<td>• maintain records</td>
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<tr>
<td>• promote a learner-centred approach</td>
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<tr>
<td>• satisfy external requirements</td>
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Roles and responsibilities of an assessor

Your main role will be to plan and carry out assessments according to the requirements of the qualification, or of a programme or job specification. You might also need to teach or train your learners if required. You should choose appropriate assessment methods, make decisions and give feedback to your learners.

You should have a job description; however, if you don’t have one, following the requirements of the assessor units will ensure you are performing your role adequately (see Appendices 1, 2 and 3). Your roles and responsibilities might include far more than those stated in the assessment cycle.

For example, your role may involve:

- attending meetings, exhibitions, award ceremonies and presentation events
- checking the authenticity of any witness statements
- completing and maintaining safe and secure records
- countersigning other assessors’ judgements (if they are not yet qualified and you are)
- following organisational and regulatory authorities’ procedures
- giving constructive, supportive and developmental feedback to your learners regarding progress and achievement
- identifying and dealing with any barriers to fair assessment
- implementing internal and external quality assurance action points
- liaising with others involved in the assessment process
- making judgements based on the assessment requirements
- maintaining your own occupational competence and professional development
- negotiating and agreeing assessment plans with learners
- making best use of different assessment types and methods
- providing statistics to managers and others
- reflecting upon your practice to ensure you are meeting all relevant requirements
- responding to any appeals made against your assessment decisions
- reviewing learner progress
- standardising practice with other assessors
- supporting learners with special assessment requirements and dealing with sensitive issues in a supportive manner
teaching or training learners
working towards relevant assessment qualifications.

If you are unsure of any aspect of your assessor role, make sure you ask a colleague or your manager. You may be the only assessor for your particular subject within your organisation; therefore it is important that you liaise with your manager or IQA to ensure you are interpreting the requirements correctly. If you are a member of a team of assessors, you will need to ensure you all work together to give your learners equal and fair access to assessment opportunities. If there are several assessors for the same subject, there will be a co-ordinating or lead assessor who will manage the team and give support and advice regarding the assessment process.

Your role will require you to use various assessment activities, which can take place in different environments depending upon what is being assessed and why.

Example

- **Classroom or training room** – practical and theoretical tasks, tests, discussions, role plays, projects, presentations.
- **Lecture theatre or hall** – exams, multiple-choice and written questions and answers.
- **Library or home** – assignments, research and reading.
- **Outside environment** – practical activities.
- **Work environment** – observations, questions and reviewing products and evidence produced by learners.
- **Workshop** – practical tests and simulations.

Wherever you are assessing you will need to ensure both you and your learners are suitably prepared, and that you follow the assessment requirements and relevant organisational and regulatory guidelines. If you have not been told what these are, you will need to ask someone you work with.

Your role as an assessor will also be to inspire and motivate your learners. If you are enthusiastic and passionate about your subject, this will help to encourage, motivate and further challenge your learners. Your learners may already be motivated for personal reasons and be enthusiastic and want to perform well. This is known as *intrinsic* motivation. They may be motivated by a need to learn, for example to gain a qualification, promotion or pay rise at work. This is known as *extrinsic* motivation. If you can recognise the difference between a learner’s wants and needs, you can appreciate why they are motivated and ensure you make their experience meaningful and relevant. Whatever type of motivation your learners have will be transformed, for better or worse, by what happens during their assessment experience with you.
There will be certain records and documents that you will need to maintain. These will include assessment plans, feedback records, reviews of progress and overall tracking sheets. Records must be maintained to satisfy organisational and regulatory requirements. You should also safely store confidential documents and audio/digital/video recordings that include images of learners. Record keeping will be explained in detail in Chapter 2.

**Activity**

*What do you consider your roles and responsibilities to be as an assessor? Make a list and place them in order of importance.*

**Boundaries**

There are two aspects to boundaries: those between your assessing role and other professional roles, and other factors you are bound by which might hinder or challenge your role.

- Professional boundaries are those within which you need to work and it is important not to overstep these, for example by becoming too personal or friendly with your learners. Boundaries are about knowing where your role as an assessor stops. You should be able to work within the limits of that role, but know that it is okay to ask for help. Don’t try to take on too much, or carry out something which is part of someone else’s role.

- Other boundaries include the things you are bound by, for example policies and procedures, the amount of administrative work you are expected to complete, or a lack of funding or resources. These boundaries can often be interpreted as the negative aspects of your roles and responsibilities.

You might have other professional roles besides assessing, for example you might interview learners and have to decide whether they can attend a programme or not. You might have difficult decisions to make; however, you should always be able to get the support of other staff at your organisation. If you make a decision not to accept a learner, you will need to justify your reasons. Never feel you are on your own; find out who can give help and advice when you need support. You should find out and follow your organisation’s policies and procedures. If you are a new assessor, you might have been allocated a mentor and/or someone to countersign your decisions. They should support you as necessary and you will find it helpful to keep in touch with them and ask for advice.

When you are with learners, you need to remain in control, be fair and ethical with your practice, and not demonstrate any favouritism towards particular learners, for example by giving one more support than another. You might feel it sensible to make a telephone call to a learner who has been absent but making regular calls would be inappropriate. Giving your personal telephone number to learners could be seen as encouraging informal contact, and you may get calls or texts which are not suitable or relevant. You might not want to take your break with your learners or join their social networking sites as you could become more of a friend than an assessor. It is unprofessional to use bad language, to
touch learners in an inappropriate way and to let your personal problems affect your work. Always remain professional and objective.

Policies and procedures
You will need to follow your organisation’s policies and procedures, which should include:

- access and fair assessment
- appeals and complaints
- confidentiality of information
- copyright and data protection
- equality and diversity
- health, safety and welfare (including safeguarding)
- plagiarism and authenticity
- quality assurance.

There may be other requirements such as a dress code, acceptable use of computer equipment, a behaviour code and regulations such as the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) that you will need to follow.

Activity

Identify and list the policies, procedures and regulations which will relate to your role as an assessor for your particular subject. Which are the most important and why?

Equality and diversity

All learners should have equality of opportunity throughout the assessment process, providing they are taking a programme they are capable of achieving. There is no point setting learners up to fail, just because you need a certain number of learners for your programme to go ahead, perhaps due to targets or funding. When designing and using assessment activities, you need to ensure you meet the needs of all your learners and reflect the diverse nature of your group. Never let your own attitudes, values and beliefs interfere with the assessment process. You could design activities which will challenge more able learners and/or promote the motivation of learners who are not progressing so well. You need to differentiate your activities to ensure you are meeting the needs of all your learners, for example using less challenging activities for those who are struggling. However, you will need to check what you can adapt to ensure you are not changing the assessment criteria.

The National Occupational Standards for Learning and Development (2010) give the following definitions of equality and diversity:

Equality – A state of fair treatment that is the right of all people regardless of difference in, for example, culture, ability, gender, race, religion, wealth, sexual orientation, or any other group characteristic.
Diversity – Acknowledging that each individual is unique, and recognising our individual differences in, for example, culture, ability, gender, race, religion, wealth, sexual orientation, or any other group characteristic.

(LLUK, 2010, p35)

Your organisation should have an equality and diversity or equal opportunities policy with which you should become familiar. You might have a learner who achieves tasks quickly; having more in-depth and challenging activities available would be beneficial to them. If you have learners who are not achieving the required assessment tasks, you could design an activity that you know they will achieve to raise their motivation and encourage them to progress further. However, don’t oversimplify activities as this will leave learners thinking they were too easy. You could always give your learners a choice of, for instance, a straightforward, a challenging or a very challenging activity. Their choice may depend upon their confidence level and you will have to devise such activities beforehand if they are not provided for you. If you have different levels of learners within the same group, this can work quite well as they will usually want to attempt something they know they can achieve. However, it can also have the opposite effect in that learners feel they are more capable than they actually are. These types of activities are more suited for formative assessment which checks progress. You might need to arrange assessments in other languages, for example Welsh, or use a bilingual approach.

Assessment activities should always reflect the diverse nature of your learner group, for example culture, language and ethnicity. They should not be biased according to the person producing them, as this could mean aspects such as terminology or jargon might not be those of the learners but those of the producer, placing the learner at a disadvantage. You also need to be careful not to discriminate against a learner in any way.

The Equality Act (2010) replaced all previous anti-discrimination legislation and consolidated it into one Act (for England, Scotland and Wales). It provides rights for people not to be discriminated against or harassed, for example because they have an association with a disabled person or are wrongly perceived as disabled. In this example, reasonable adjustments must take place during assessment activities to lessen or remove the effects of a disadvantage to a learner with a disability.

The Act contains nine protected characteristics:

- age
- disability
- gender
- gender identity
- race
- religion and belief
- sexual orientation
- marriage and civil partnership
- maternity and pregnancy.
There are seven different types of discrimination:

1. associative discrimination: direct discrimination against someone because they are associated with another person with a protected characteristic
2. direct discrimination: discrimination because of a protected characteristic
3. indirect discrimination: when a rule or policy which applies to everyone can disadvantage a person with a protected characteristic
4. discrimination by perception: direct discrimination against someone because others think they have a protected characteristic
5. harassment: behaviour deemed offensive by the recipient
6. harassment by a third party: the harassment of staff or others by people not directly employed by an organisation, such as an external consultant or visitor
7. victimisation: discrimination against someone because they made or supported a complaint under equality legislation.

It is important to take the protected characteristics into account when planning and carrying out assessment activities, and to ensure discrimination does not take place by anyone involved in the assessment process. Try to focus on the positive and always ask what your learner can do, not what they cannot do.

Further details regarding equality and diversity can be found in the companion book *Equality and Diversity in the Lifelong Learning Sector* (Gravells and Simpson, 2012).

**Safeguarding**

Safeguarding is a term used to refer to the duties and responsibilities that those providing a health, social or education service have to perform to protect individuals and vulnerable people from harm. Following the publication of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act in 2006, a vetting and barring scheme was established in autumn 2008. This Act created an Independent Barring Board to take all discretionary decisions on whether individuals should be barred from working with children and/or vulnerable adults. As an assessor, you will be bound by this Act if you work with children (those under the age of 18 years in training) and/or vulnerable adults. You might need to attend safeguarding training every three years (every two years for some staff depending upon their safeguarding involvement). You might be required to have a criminal record check via the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) before you can work as an assessor.

A vulnerable adult is defined as *a person aged 18 years or over, who is in receipt of or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation* (Bonnerjea, 2009, p9).

This could be anyone needing formal help to live in society, for example a young mother, someone with a learning disability or a recently released prisoner. If your organisation is inspected by Ofsted, your learners will be asked how safe they feel and whether they are able to give you feedback regarding any concerns they may have.
You have a duty of care and a personal responsibility towards all your learners and should apply six key elements of appropriate service provision:

- respect
- dignity
- independence
- individuality
- choice
- confidentiality.

There are four key processes that should be followed to ensure your learners are safe:

1. an assessment of their needs;
2. planning services to meet these needs;
3. intervention if necessary when you have a concern;
4. reviewing the services offered.

If you have any concerns regarding a learner, for example if you feel they are being bullied or may be at risk of harm or abuse, you must refer to your Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) immediately. It would be useful to find out who this person is if you don't already know. Never be tempted to get personally involved with your learner's situation.

Activity

How will aspects of equality and diversity, and safeguarding impact upon your role as an assessor?

Health and safety

Your role as an assessor will require you to follow various regulations, for example the Health and Safety at Work etc Act (1974). This places a legal responsibility upon you, as well as upon your organisation and your learners. If you see a potential hazard, it is your responsibility to do something about it before an accident occurs, even if this is just reporting it to the relevant person within your organisation. The health and safety of your self, your colleagues and your learners is of paramount importance.

You might have to carry out a risk assessment to ensure the area and assessment activities are safe for all concerned. It can normally be achieved by a walk-through of the area and a discussion with those involved. However, a formal record must be kept in case of any incidents. You probably unconsciously carry out a risk assessment whenever you do anything, for example when crossing the road, you would automatically check the traffic flow before stepping out.
Extension Activity

Have a look at the units in Appendices 1, 2 and 3. Look at the learning outcomes and assessment criteria to see what an assessor should know and do. Compare these to your job description or contract of employment. Appendix 1 relates to knowledge, Appendices 2 and 3 to performance. If you are working towards one or more of these units, use the assessment criteria as a checklist and note down what you currently know or can do to meet them.

Key concepts and principles of assessment

Key concepts of assessment relate to ideas, whereas principles are how the ideas are put into practice. For the purpose of this chapter, they have been separated for clarity; however, some concepts could also be classed as principles depending upon your interpretation.

Key concepts

Think of concepts as the aspects involved throughout the assessment process. They include the following (which are then explained in detail):

- accountability
- achievement
- assessment strategies
- benchmarking
- evaluation
- internally or externally devised assessment methods (formal and informal)
- progression
- transparency
- types of assessment, for example initial (at the beginning), formative (ongoing) or summative (at the end).

Accountability

You need to be accountable to your learners and your organisation to ensure you are carrying out your role as an assessor correctly. Your learners should know why they are being assessed and what they have to do to meet the assessment criteria. You should not be assessing your learners unless they are ready to be assessed. You will also be accountable to the AO if you assess their accredited qualifications. You might be accountable to employers if you are assessing their staff in the work environment.
Achievement
You may be required to analyse achievement data and compare this to national or organisational targets. The funding your organisation receives might also be related to your learners’ achievements. It is always a useful evaluation method to keep a record of how many learners you start with, how many successfully achieve and in what timescale.

Assessment strategies
Following the assessment strategy for your subject will ensure you are carrying out your role correctly and hold, or are working towards, the required assessor qualifications if applicable.

Benchmarking
Benchmarking involves comparing what is the accepted standard for a particular subject area against the current position of your own learners’ performance. Using benchmarking data can help inform target setting for individuals or groups. If learners don’t achieve the benchmark, an evaluation will need to take place and improvements will need to be implemented. Benchmarking can also be used to compare organisations that provide a similar service, or to compare performance in different locations within the same organisation.

Evaluation
Evaluation of the assessment process should always take place to inform current and future practice. All aspects of the assessment cycle should be evaluated on an ongoing basis and feedback obtained from all involved.

Internally or externally devised assessment methods
Internally devised assessments might be produced by you or other staff at your organisation, such as assignments, projects or questions which will also be marked internally. These should always be appropriate, relevant and at the right level for your learners. Externally devised assessments are usually produced by an AO, for example an examination. Formal assessments usually count towards achievement of a qualification, whereas informal assessments are used to monitor ongoing progress and development.

Progression
Progression should be taken into account when assessing learners, i.e. what they are going to do next. It could be another unit of the current qualification or a different aspect of a job description, either at your organisation, in the work environment or elsewhere. Progression opportunities should always be discussed with your learner to ensure they are on the right route and that they are capable of achieving.

Transparency
To assist transparency, you need to ensure that everyone who is involved in the assessment process clearly understands what is expected and can see there is nothing untoward taking place. That includes your own interpretation and understanding of the assessment requirements as well as each learner’s understanding. You should be honest with your learners and not let them feel they have achieved more than they have. Transparency is also about having nothing to hide and being open to scrutiny, i.e. keeping auditable records which must be maintained throughout the assessment process.
Types of assessment

Types of assessment include initial, formative and summative as well as diagnostic tests which ascertain a learner’s current skills, knowledge, understanding and experience. Some types of diagnostic tests can also identify learners with dyslexia, dyspraxia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia and other needs. Initial assessment is carried out prior to, or at the beginning of, a programme to identify your learner’s starting point, potential and level. Formative assessment is ongoing, and summative assessment is at the end. Types of assessment will be explained in more detail later in this chapter.

Key principles

Think of principles as how the concepts are put into practice.

One important principle is known by the acronym VACSR; you will need to ensure all assessed work is:

- Valid – the work is relevant to what is being assessed and is at the right level
- Authentic – the work has been produced solely by the learner
- Current – the work is still relevant at the time of assessment
- Sufficient – the work covers all the requirements at the time
- Reliable – the work is consistent across all learners, over time.

If the above are not ensured, you might make an incorrect judgement and a learner might appeal against your decision. Conversely, you might not notice a learner has plagiarised someone else’s work or done something incorrectly.

Other key principles of assessment include:

- communication – communicating regularly with learners, other assessors, IQAs, employers and others who are involved
- continuing professional development (CPD) – maintaining the currency of skills, knowledge and understanding to ensure your assessment practice and subject knowledge are up to date
- equality and diversity – ensuring all assessment activities embrace equality, inclusivity and diversity and represent all aspects of society
- ethics – ensuring the assessment process is honest and moral, and takes into account confidentiality and integrity
- fairness – ensuring assessment activities are fit for purpose, and planning, decisions and feedback are justifiable; all learners should have an equal chance of an accurate assessment decision
- health and safety – ensuring these are taken into account throughout the full assessment process, carrying out risk assessments as necessary
motivation – encouraging and supporting your learners to reach their maximum potential at an appropriate level

quality assurance – ensuring assessment activities and decisions meet the required standards

record keeping – ensuring accurate records are maintained throughout the teaching, learning and assessment process

responsibility – making objective decisions, following all organisational guidelines, keeping records and producing reports as required

SMART – ensuring all assessment activities are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time bound (see Chapter 2 for further details)

standardisation – ensuring the assessment requirements are interpreted accurately and that all assessors are making comparable and consistent decisions.

Quality assurance should be carried out throughout the assessment process. The purpose is to ensure assessors are performing accurately and fairly. IQA is carried out by a member of staff in the same subject area as the assessors. However, an IQA cannot quality assure their own assessment decisions. External quality assurance (EQA) is carried out by a member of staff from the AO with whom the learners are registered (see Chapters 4 and 5 for details of the IQA process and Chapters 6 and 7 for details of the EQA process).

Following the key concepts and principles of assessment will ensure you are performing your role as an assessor according to all relevant regulations and requirements.

**Extension Activity**

Look at the bulleted lists of key concepts and key principles of assessment on pages 24 and 26 and describe how each will impact upon your role as an assessor. You may need to research some aspects further or speak to relevant staff at your organisation.

**Minimising risks**

When planning to assess your learners you need to be aware of potential risks. This applies not only to those regarding the health, safety and welfare of all concerned, but also to the types of risks that may be involved in your own area of responsibility for your particular subject. Just ask yourself what could possibly go wrong, and if you think of something, then there is a risk to the assessment process.

You need to minimise risks such as putting unnecessary stress upon learners, over-assessing, under-assessing or being unfair and expecting too much too soon. Some learners might not be ready to be observed for a practical skill, or feel so pressured by target dates for a theory task that they resort to colluding or plagiarising work from others or the
internet. If learners are under pressure, or have any issues or concerns that have not been addressed, they might decide to leave.

Being aware of any risks to the assessment process, and taking opportunities to discuss any issues your learners might have should help alleviate any concerns. Other risks could include giving a learner more of an advantage over another learner, or using inappropriate assessment activities.

There are also risks on your part as an assessor, for example pressure to pass learners quickly due to funding and targets, or favouritism and bias towards some learners over others. Another risk could be if you carry out assessments in the work environment and visit places with which you are not familiar. You might need to travel early or late in the dark, find locations on foot, take public transport or drive to areas you are not familiar with. If you are visiting places on your own, you will be classed as a lone worker and your organisation should have a policy for your protection. If you feel uncomfortable or unsafe at any time, you should get in touch with your supervisor. Having a mobile phone is helpful in such situations. If you don’t have one, note where the nearest public phone is should you need it. You may find it useful to search the internet for the postcode you are visiting. This will give you a street map and pictures of the local area to enable you to visualise where you are going beforehand.

If you are assessing in the work environment, you might come across employers who are not supportive of their staff and may put barriers in their way. For example, someone might make it difficult for you to visit at a certain time to carry out a formal assessment. Careful planning and communication with everyone concerned will be necessary.

It could be that if you have close friends or relatives whom you are required to assess, you might not be allowed to, or if you do, your decisions would need to be countersigned by another impartial assessor and go through the IQA process. If the qualification is accredited, the AO will give you guidance on this.

If you have any concerns regarding risks to yourself, your learners or your assessment decisions, you must discuss these with your supervisor or manager.

**Extension Activity**

WHAT RISKS DO YOU FEEL YOU WILL ENCOUNTER AS AN ASSORER AND HOW WILL YOU OVERCOME THEM? HAVE YOU EVER BEEN PLACED IN A RISKY SITUATION? IF SO, WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENTLY NEXT TIME?

**Types of assessment**

Different subjects will require different types of assessment, which can be carried out formally or informally depending upon the requirements. Assessment types are different from assessment methods. A method is how the assessment type will be used and can be formal or informal. Formal assessments are to confirm achievement and are usually planned and carried out according to the assessment requirements or criteria. Informal assessments can occur at any time to check ongoing progress.
You may be familiar with some types of assessment such as initial (at the beginning), formative (ongoing) and summative (at the end). Initial assessment helps you ascertain information before your learner commences the programme. Formative assessment can happen at any time during the programme and is usually informal as you can devise your own activities to check progress. Summative assessment is to confirm achievement and is usually formal. You must follow the requirements of the AO if the programme is accredited by them.

You will probably use different methods depending upon whether you are assessing knowledge or performance. Knowledge is usually assessed by assignments, essays and tests. Performance is usually assessed by observation, questions and discussions. However, these will vary depending upon the subject you are assessing and where you are assessing. Formal assessment activities are usually provided by the AO (if you are assessing an accredited qualification). You will be able to devise your own informal methods to check ongoing progress.

All assessment types and methods should be suitable to the level of your learners. A level 1 learner might struggle to maintain a journal of their progress and a level 2 learner may not be mature enough to accept peer feedback. A level 3 learner may feel a puzzle is too easy and so on (see Introduction for details of levels). Some learners may respond better to informal than formal assessment. You need to consider the assessment requirements for your subject and how you can best implement these without changing the assessment criteria.

### Example

*Maria sees her group of learners once a week for an Art and Design programme. Each week, she commences the session by asking some questions regarding the topics covered in the previous week. This is formative assessment to ensure her learners have understood the topics taught. Towards the end of term, she will issue a summative assessment in the form of an assignment, which will formally test their skills, knowledge and understanding.*
You might have all the details of assessment types and methods provided for you. If not, you will need to carefully select these to suit your subject, the situation and your learners. You might decide to assess your learners on a formative basis throughout their time with you to check progress and use a summative test at the end to confirm achievement. This would enable you to see how they are progressing and whether or not they will be ready for the formal test. You might be provided with tests or assignments for your learners to complete at set times during the programme. To be sure your learners are ready you could use activities, quizzes and smaller tasks for them to carry out beforehand. This would make the assessment process more interesting and highlight any areas that need further development. If you are assessing a programme whereby the activities are provided for you, for example tests or exams, there is often the tendency to teach purely what is required to achieve a pass. Learners may therefore not gain valuable additional skills and knowledge. Teaching to pass tests does not maximise your learners’ ability and potential.

Table 1.3 briefly explains assessment types and the terminology of assessment. The types you use will be based on whether you assess occupational competence in the work environment or vocational skills, knowledge and understanding.

**Extension Activity**

Refer to Table 1.3 and choose four types of assessment that you might use with your learners. How will you use them for your particular subject?

---

### Table 1.3 Assessment types and terminology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment type/terminology</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>Assessment of theory or knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptive</td>
<td>Questions are selected during the test on the basis of their difficulty, in response to an estimate of the learner’s ability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytic scoring</td>
<td>A method of scoring grades for tests such as speaking and writing, for example a writing test would have an analytic score based on grammar and vocabulary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aptitude</td>
<td>A diagnostic test to assess a learner’s ability for a particular job or vocation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessor led</td>
<td>Assessment is planned and carried out by the assessor, for example an observation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benchmarking</td>
<td>A way of evaluating learner performance against an accepted standard. Once a standard is set, it can be used as a basis for the expectation of achievements with other groups/learners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blended</td>
<td>Using more than one assessment method in different locations, for example observation in the work environment backed up with online assessments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence based</td>
<td>Criteria that learners need to perform in the work environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criterion referencing</td>
<td>Assessing prescribed aspects a learner must achieve to meet a certain standard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment type/ terminology</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagnostic</td>
<td>A specific assessment relating to a particular topic or subject and level, which builds on initial assessment. Sometimes called a skills test. The results determine what needs to be learnt or assessed in order to progress further. Some types of diagnostic assessments can also identify learners with dyslexia, dyspraxia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differentiation</td>
<td>Organising teaching, learning and assessment to suit learners’ abilities and needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>Evidence provided by a learner towards their qualification, for example products from their work environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence</td>
<td>Assessment based upon items a learner provides to prove their knowledge and competence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External</td>
<td>Assessments set and marked externally by an AO.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>Assessment that involves the recognition and recording of achievement, often leading to certification of an accredited qualification.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formative</td>
<td>Ongoing, interim or continuous assessment. Can be used to assess skills and/ or knowledge in a progressive way, to build on topics learnt and plan future learning and assessments. Often referred to as assessment for learning, allowing additional learning to take place prior to further assessments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holistic</td>
<td>Assessing several aspects of a qualification, programme or job specification at the same time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>An aspect of the qualification is assessed by someone who has not been involved with the learner for any other part of their learning or assessment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect</td>
<td>Evidence provided by others regarding a learner’s progress, for example a witness statement from their supervisor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>Assessment that is in addition to formal assessment, for example questioning during a review of progress with a learner or an observation during a group activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial</td>
<td>Assessment at the beginning of a programme or unit, relating to the subject being learnt and assessed, to identify a learner’s starting point and level. Initial assessment can also include learning preferences tests as well as English, maths, and information and communication technology (ICT) tests. The latter can be used as a basis to help and support learners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated</td>
<td>Information acquired in a learning context is put into practice and assessed in the learner’s work environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>Assessments carried out within an organisation that are either internally set and marked or externally set by the relevant AO and internally marked.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ipsative</td>
<td>A process of self-assessment to recognise development. Learners match their own achievements against a set of standards or their own previous achievements. This is useful for learners to consider their progress and development. However, they do need to work autonomously and be honest with themselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learner led</td>
<td>Learners produce evidence and let their assessor know when they are ready to be assessed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norm referencing</td>
<td>Comparing the results of learner achievements to one another, for example setting a pass mark to enable a certain percentage of a group to achieve or not.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Continued)
### Table 1.3 (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment type/ terminology</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Objective</td>
<td>An assessment decision that is based around the criteria being assessed, not a personal opinion or decision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predictive</td>
<td>An indication of how well a test predicts future performance in a relevant skill.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process</td>
<td>The assessment of routine skills or techniques, for example to ensure a learner is following a set process or procedure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process (as in teaching)</td>
<td>Teaching more than is required for the learner to achieve, for example teaching keyboard skills to a learner who is taking a word-processing qualification (i.e. it is not in the syllabus but it is helpful).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product</td>
<td>The outcome is assessed, not the process of making it, for example a painting or a working model.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product (as in teaching)</td>
<td>Only teaching the minimum amount required to pass an assessment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficiency</td>
<td>An assessment to test ability or skills without reference to any specific programme of learning, for example riding a bicycle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profiling</td>
<td>A way of recording learner achievements for each individual aspect of an assessment. Checklists can be a useful way to evidence these. More than one assessor can be involved in the process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychometric</td>
<td>A test of psychological qualities, for example intelligence and personality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>Assessment based upon individual responses to open questions given to learners. Clear criteria must be stated for the assessor to make a decision as questions can be vague or misinterpreted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>Assessment based upon yes/no or true/false responses, agree/disagree statements or multiple-choice tests, giving a clear right or wrong answer. Totals can be added to give results, for example 8 out of 10. Learners could pass purely by guessing the correct answers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Screening</td>
<td>A process to determine if a learner has a particular need, for example in English or maths.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective</td>
<td>A personal decision by the assessor, where the assessment criteria might not be clearly stated. This can be unfair to a learner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summative</td>
<td>Assessment at the end of a programme or unit, for example an exam. If a learner does not pass, they will usually have the opportunity to retake. Often known as assessment of learning, as it shows what has been achieved from the learning process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triangulation</td>
<td>Using more than one assessment method, for example observation, oral questioning and a test. This helps ensure the reliability and authenticity of a learner’s work and makes the assessment process more interesting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational</td>
<td>Job-related practical assessment, usually in a learner’s work environment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Methods of assessment

Assessment can only take place once learning has occurred, but how do you know that learning has occurred? You might be able to answer this by saying, ‘I’ll ask questions’, or ‘I’ll
see my learner performing a task’. That is fine, if you know what questions to ask and how your learner should respond, or what you expect to see when your learner performs. If you don’t know this, you will need to plan and use suitable methods to assess your learners when you know they are ready.

To effectively plan how you will assess your learners, besides adhering to the principle of VACSR, you will need to use methods which are ethical, fair and safe.

- Ethical: the methods used take into account confidentiality, integrity, safety, security and learner welfare.
- Fair: the methods used are appropriate to all learners at the required level, taking into account any particular needs. All learners should have an equal chance of an accurate assessment decision.
- Safe: there is little chance of plagiarism, the work can be confirmed as valid and authentic, confidentiality is taken into account, learning and assessment are not compromised in any way, nor the learner’s experience or potential to achieve. (Safe in this context does not relate to health and safety but to whether the assessment methods are sufficiently robust to make a reliable decision.)

**Example**

*If you give learners the information to answer questions, this is unethical. If you allow your learners to copy text from the internet to answer questions without quoting their source, it will be deemed unsafe. If you give some learners more help than others, this is unfair. If you set a test which does not accurately reflect the assessment criteria, it is invalid. If you devise a set of questions and use them with different groups of learners, they may discuss them among themselves, therefore rendering their responses unreliable.*

There are several different assessment methods you could use, for example observations, questioning, tests and exams. If assessment activities are not provided for you, you will need to devise your own. Always take into account a learner’s needs, the level of achievement they are aiming for and the subject requirements before planning to use any assessment activities. The methods you choose will depend upon what you will assess, where and how. If you are assessing units that are on the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) these are known as knowledge units (to assess understanding) and performance units (to assess skills) (see Introduction for details regarding the QCF).

Assessment should never be just for the sake of assessing. There should always be a reason for any assessment activity you carry out, the main one being to find out if learning has taken place and whether the learner is ready to progress further.

Never be afraid to try something different, particularly with formative assessments that you can design yourself. You could use puzzles, quizzes or crosswords as a fun and active way of informally assessing progress. Try searching the internet for free software to help you create these; a few sites are listed at the end of the chapter.
Table 1.4 starting on page 37 lists the assessment methods, approaches and activities you could use, along with a brief description, and their strengths and limitations. When using any activity, you need to ensure it is inclusive, and to differentiate for individual needs, learner difficulties and/or disabilities. Always follow health and safety guidelines and carry out any relevant risk assessments where applicable. Make sure your learners are aware of the reason why they are being assessed, and don’t overcomplicate your activities.

**Extension Activity**

Think about the learners you have at present or those whom you will be assessing in the future. How do you know that learning has taken place? Look at Table 1.4 starting on page 37, decide which methods you could use for formative and summative purposes, and state the strengths and limitations of their use for your subject.

**Summary**

In this chapter you have learnt about:

- the role of assessment
- key concepts and principles of assessment
- minimising risks
- types of assessment
- methods of assessment.

**Evidence**

Evidence from the completed activities within this chapter, plus the following, could be used towards the *Principles and practices of assessment* unit, for example:

- written statements cross-referenced to the unit’s assessment criteria
- answers to questions/assignments issued by your assessor
- records of discussions with your assessor.

**Cross-referencing grid**

This chapter contributes towards the following assessment criteria, along with aspects of the National Occupational Standards for Learning and Development. Full details of the learning outcomes and assessment criteria for each unit can be found in the Appendices.
### Theory focus

**References and further information**


PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES OF ASSESSMENT

Websites

Chartered Institute for Educational Assessors: www.ciea.org.uk
COSHH: www.hse.gov.uk/coshh
Disability and the Equality Act: http://tinyurl.com/2vzd5j
Disclosure and Barring Service: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service/about
Equality and Human Rights Commission: www.equalityhumanrights.com
Health and Safety Executive: www.hse.gov.uk
Health and Safety resources: www.hse.gov.uk/services/education/information.htm
Initial assessment tools: www.excellencegateway.org.uk/toolslibrary
Office safety and risk assessments: www.officesafety.co.uk
Ofsted: www.ofsted.gov.uk
Puzzle software: www.about.com
www.crossword-compiler.com
www.educational-software-directory.net/game/puzzle
http://hotpot.uvic.ca
www.mathsnet.net