



**St Neots Learning  
Partnership**

# **Centre Handbook Vocational Qualifications**

## **2015-16**

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## Registration & Certification Policy

### Aim:

- To register individual learners to the correct programme within agreed timescales.
- To claim valid learner certificates within agreed timescales.
- To construct a secure, accurate and accessible audit trail to ensure that individual learner registration and certification claims can be tracked to the certificate which is issued for each learner.

In order to do this the St Neots Learning Partnership (SNLP) will:

- Register each learner within the awarding body requirements.
- Provide a mechanism for programme teams to check the accuracy of learner registrations.
- Make each learner aware of their registration status.
- Inform the awarding body of withdrawals, transfers or changes to learner details.
- Ensure that certificate claims are timely and based solely on internally verified assessment records.
- Audit certificate claims made to the awarding body.
- Audit the certificates received from the awarding body to ensure accuracy and completeness.
- Keep all records safely and securely for three years post certification.

## Assessment

### Purpose/Scope

- That assessment of BTEC and other vocational programmes is to the national standard.
- That there is equal and fair access to assessment for all learners.
- To ensure that learners are given realistic targets and informed of their progress.
- That achievement is accurately recorded and tracked.
- To ensure that assessment leads to accurate and valid certification claims.

### Definitions/Terminology

**Assessor:** The person responsible for making decisions about whether learners' work achieves the national standard required for certification.

**Formative assessment:** Used to review learner progress and inform improvement.

**Summative assessment:** The definitive assessment of the learner's achievement and must be to national standards. This assessment informs a unit grade.

**Standardisation:** A method of comparison to enable centre assessors to review the consistency and accuracy of their assessment.

**Learning outcomes:** What the learner should know, understand or be able to do as a result of completing the unit.

**Unit content:** The unit content gives centres the substance to devise and plan the programme of learning needed for the learning outcomes to be successfully achieved.

**Unit grading grid:** Each unit grading grid contains statements of the assessment criteria used to determine the standard of learner evidence. Merit and distinction grading criteria refer to a qualitative improvement in the learner's evidence, and not a quantitative one.

### Responsibilities

**Programme leader:** Responsible for managing programme delivery and assessment of the learners, to ensure coverage of all units and grading criteria.

**Assessor:** Responsible for carrying out assessment to national standards. The assessor provides feedback to learners; assures the authenticity of learner work; records and tracks achievement.

### **Procedures**

**Learner induction:** Should inform about all aspects of assessment and progress monitoring. Reference should be made to national standards, assessment deadlines, the need for authentic work, and learner appeals.

**Assignment design:** Should have a practical vocational focus and reference unit grading criteria. A variety of assessment methods is encouraged. A schedule of assignments and assessment dates needs to be planned and monitored during delivery of the programme.

**Assessment of learner work:** Should be to the published unit assessment and grading criteria only. The punitive 'capping' or limiting of grades is prohibited by the BTEC assessment methodology.

**Tracking assessment:** A secure audit trail must be maintained, comprising assessment decisions; internal verification documentation for assignments and learner work; and unit achievement for the programme. These records will be held securely for 3 years after certification.

**Certification claims:** Need to be based on accurate, audited records.

## **Assessment Policy**

### **Aim:**

- To ensure that assessment methodology is valid, reliable and does not disadvantage or advantage any group of learners or individuals.
- To ensure that the assessment procedure is open, fair and free from bias and to national standards.
- To ensure that there is accurate and detailed recording of assessment decisions.

### **In order to do this SNLP will:**

- Ensure that learners are provided with assignments that are fit for purpose, to enable them to produce appropriate evidence for assessment.
- Assess learner's evidence using only the published assessment and grading criteria.
- Ensure that assessment decisions are impartial, valid and reliable.
- Not limit or 'cap' learner achievement if work is submitted late.
- Develop assessment procedures that will minimise the opportunity for malpractice.
- Maintain accurate and detailed records of assessment decisions.
- Maintain a robust and rigorous internal verification procedure.
- Annually provide samples for National Standards Sampling as required by BTEC or other awarding bodies
- Monitor NSS reports and undertake any remedial action required.
- Share good assessment practice between all BTEC or other vocational programme teams.
- Ensure that assessment methodology and the role of the assessor are understood by all staff involved in the delivery of the programmes
- Provide resources to ensure that assessment can be performed accurately and appropriately.

## **Internal verification**

### **Purpose/Scope**

- That assessment is accurate, consistent, current, timely, valid, authentic and to BTEC or other vocational body standards.
- That the assessment instruments are fit for purpose.
- To assure the assessment of all BTEC programmes delivered by Longsands and Ernulf Academies

- To be part of an audit trail of learner achievement records.
- To provide feedback to inform centre quality improvement.

## Definitions/Terminology

**Internal verification:** A centre devised quality assurance process which assures the assessment against the BTEC or other awarding body unit grading criteria and that assignments are fit for purpose.

**National Standards Sampling (NSS):** An annual external verification process used to check centre assignments and assessment against national standards, and internal verification processes.

**Sample of learner work:** NSS is based upon the scrutiny of assessed learner work. The volumes of samples required is prescribed and varies according to numbers of learners and sector programmes a centre operates.

## Responsibilities

**Quality Nominee (QN):** The QN ensures that centre IV and standardisation processes operate, and acts as the centre coordinator for NSS between Edexcel and course teams. The QN ensures NSS reports are monitored and any remedial work carried out.

**Internal Verifier (IV):** A teacher able to verify assessor decisions, and validate assignments. The IV records findings, gives assessor feedback, and oversees remedial action.

**External Verifier (EV):** The EV verifies the quality of the centre's assessment and internal verification.

## Procedures

**Staff briefing:** All assessors and IVs require periodic briefing on BTEC processes.

**Verification schedules:** Annually agreed to cover all assessors. Assessment schedules should be drawn up and monitored through the year.

**Internal verification of assignments:** Carried out before use to ensure that they are fit for purpose, and that any recommendations are actioned.

**Internal verification of learner work:** Should verify sufficient samples to ensure the security of the standard.

- Assessors do not internally verify their own work.
- Assessor feedback and support should be given.
- The process does not involve the learner.

**Internal verification records:** Are correctly maintained in a secure place for 3 years after certification. Centres should use standard forms for the process: see Edexcel web site.

**Links:** IV processes need to articulate with appeals processes, and authenticity of learner work requirements.

**National Standards Sampling (NSS):** Longsands and Ernulf Academies will have in place monitoring and review procedures for NSS outcomes. There are procedures in place deal with failed NSS samples.

## Internal Verification Policy

### Aim:

- To ensure that IV is valid, reliable and covers all assessors and programme activity.
- To ensure that the IV procedure is open, fair and free from bias.
- To ensure that there is accurate and detailed recording of IV decisions.

### In order to do this Longsands and Ernulf Academies will:

- Ensure that all centre assessment instruments are verified as fit for purpose.
- Verify an appropriately structured sample of assessor work from all programmes, sites and teams, to ensure centre programmes conform to national standards and NSS requirements.
- Plan an annual internal verification schedule, linked to assignment plans.
- Define, maintain, and support effective internal verification roles.
- Ensure that identified staff will maintain secure records of all internal verification activity.

- Brief and train staff of the requirements for current internal verification procedures.
- Promote internal verification as a developmental process between staff.
- Provide standardised IV documentation
- Use the outcome of internal verification to enhance future assessment practice.

## Appeals

### Purpose/Scope

- That there are clear procedures for learners to enable them to enquire, question or appeal against an assessment decision.
- That any appeal is recorded and documentation is retained for 18 months following the resolution of the appeal.
- That the SNLP leadership facilitates the learner's ultimate right of appeal to the awarding bodies, once the centre's appeal procedure is exhausted.

### Definitions/Terminology

**Appeal:** A request from a learner to revisit an assessment decision which s/he considers to disadvantage him/her.

**Appeals procedure:** A standard, time limited, sequenced and documented process for the centre and learner to follow when an appeal is made. (see Internal Appeals policy)

### Responsibilities

**Learner:** Responsible for initiating the appeals procedure, in the required format, within a defined time frame, when s/he has reason to question an assessment decision.

**Assessor:** Responsible for providing clear achievement feedback to learners. If assessment decisions are questioned, the assessor is responsible for processing the learner's appeal within the agreed time.

**Internal verifier/Senior management:** Responsible for judging whether assessment decisions are valid, fair and unbiased.

**Partnership Examinations Manager:** Responsible for submitting an appeal in writing to the appropriate awarding body, if the learner remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the centre's internal appeals procedures.

### Procedures

**Learner induction:** Should inform the learner of the appeals procedure.

**Learner appeals procedures:** A staged procedure to determine whether the assessor:

- Used procedures that are consistent with awarding body requirements.
- Applied the procedures properly and fairly when arriving at judgements.
- Made a correct judgement about the learner's work.

### Appeals procedure stages:

- **Stage 1 – INFORMAL:** Learner consults with assessor within a defined period of time following the assessment decision, to discuss an assessment decision. If unresolved, then the issues are documented before moving to stage 2.
- **Stage 2 – REVIEW:** Review of assessment decisions by programme manager and/or Quality nominee. Learner notified of findings and agrees or disagrees, in writing, with outcome. If unresolved, move to stage 3.
- **Stage 3 – APPEAL HEARING:** Partnership examinations Manager in consultation with Headteacher to hear the appeal: last stage by the centre. If unresolved, move to stage 4.
- **Stage 4 – EXTERNAL APPEAL:** The grounds for appeal and any supporting documentation must be submitted by the centre to the awarding body within 14 days of the completion of Stage 3: a fee is levied.

**Recording appeals:** Each stage should be recorded, dated and show either agreement or disagreement with decisions. Documents must be kept for a minimum of 18 months.

**Monitoring of appeals:** this process will be undertaken by SLT/Quality nominee. The outcome will be used to help inform course development and the quality framework.

## Appeals Policy

### Aim:

- To enable the learner to enquire, question or appeal against an assessment decision.
- To try to reach agreement between the learner and the assessor at the earliest opportunity.
- To standardise and record any appeal to ensure openness and fairness.
- To facilitate a learner's ultimate right of appeal to the awarding body, where appropriate.
- To protect the interests of all learners and the integrity of the qualification.

### In order to do this, the Academy will:

- Inform the learner at induction, of the Appeals Policy and procedure.
- Record, track and validate any appeal.
- Forward the appeal to the awarding body when a learner considers that a decision continues to disadvantage her/him after the internal appeals process has been exhausted.
- Keep appeals records for inspection by awarding bodies for a minimum of 18 months.
- Have a staged appeals procedure.
- Will take appropriate action to protect the interests of other learners and the integrity of the qualification, when the outcome of an appeal questions the validity of other results.
- Monitor appeals to inform quality improvement.

## Plagiarism and assessment malpractice

### Purpose/Scope

- That SNLP has policies and procedures in place to deal with malpractice.
- To ensure that issues are dealt with in an open, fair and effective manner.
- That SNLP provides appropriate deterrents and sanctions to minimise the risk of malpractice.

### Definitions/Terminology

**Learner malpractice:** Any action by the learner which has the potential to undermine the integrity and validity of the assessment of the learner's work (Plagiarism, collusion, cheating, etc.).

**Assessor malpractice:** Any deliberate action by an assessor which has the potential to undermine the integrity of awarding body qualifications.

**Plagiarism:** Taking and using another's thoughts, writings, inventions, etc. as one's own.

**Minor acts of learner malpractice:** Handled by the assessor by, for example, refusal to accept for marking and learner being made aware of malpractice policy. Learner resubmits work in question.

**Major acts of learner malpractice:** Extensive copying/plagiarism, 2nd or subsequent offence, inappropriate for assessor to deal with.

### Responsibilities

**SNLP:** Should seek proactive ways to promote a positive culture that encourages learners to take individual responsibility for their learning and respect the work of others.

**Assessor:** Responsible for designing assessment opportunities which limit the opportunity for malpractice and for checking the validity of the learner's work.

**Internal verifier:** Responsible for malpractice checks when internally verifying work.

**Quality nominee and Partnership Examinations Manager:** Required to inform awarding body of any acts of malpractice.

**Partnership Examinations Manager:** Responsible for any investigation into allegations of malpractice.

## **Procedures**

### **Addressing learner malpractice:**

- Promote positive and honest study practices.
- Learners should declare that work is their own: check the validity of their work.
- Use learner induction and handbook to inform about malpractice and outcomes.
- Ensure learners use appropriate citations and referencing for research sources.
- Assessment procedures should help reduce and identify malpractice.

### **Addressing staff malpractice:**

- Staff induction and updating should include awarding body requirements.
- Use robust internal verification and audited record keeping.
- Audit learner records, assessment tracking records and certification claims.

### **Dealing with malpractice:**

- Inform the individual of the issues and of the possible consequences.
- Inform the individual of the process and appeals rights.
- Give the individual the opportunity to respond.
- Investigate in a fair and equitable manner.
- Inform the awarding body of any malpractice or attempted acts of malpractice, which have compromised assessment.
- Penalties should be appropriate to the nature of the malpractice under review.
- Gross misconduct should refer to learner and staff disciplinary procedures.

## **Assessment Malpractice Policy**

### **Aim:**

- To identify and minimise the risk of malpractice by staff or learners.
- To respond to any incident of alleged malpractice promptly and objectively.
- To standardise and record any investigation of malpractice to ensure openness and fairness.
- To impose appropriate penalties and/or sanctions on learners or staff where incidents (or attempted incidents) of malpractice are proven.
- To protect the integrity of the Partnership and the vocational qualifications.

### **In order to do this Longsands and Ernulf Academies will:**

- Seek to avoid potential malpractice by using the induction period and the student handbook to inform learners of the centre's policy on malpractice and the penalties for attempted and actual incidents of malpractice.
- Show learners the appropriate formats to record cited texts and other materials or information sources.
- Ask learners to declare that their work is their own.
- Ask learners to provide evidence that they have interpreted and synthesised appropriate information and acknowledged any sources used.
- Conduct an investigation in a form commensurate with the nature of the malpractice allegation. Such an investigation will be supported by the Partnership Examinations Manager and all personnel linked to the allegation. It will proceed through the following stages:
  - The learner will be informed of the allegation.
  - The work will be examined by the learner/Quality nominee and Partnership Examinations Manager.
  - The parents/guardians of the learner will be informed of the allegation.
- Make the individual fully aware at the earliest opportunity of the nature of the alleged malpractice and of the possible consequences should malpractice be proven.
- Give the individual the opportunity to respond to the allegations made.

- Inform the individual of the avenues for appealing against any judgment made.
- Document all stages of any investigation.

### **Definition of malpractice by learners**

This list is not exhaustive and other instances of malpractice may be considered by the partnership at its discretion:

- Plagiarism of any nature.
- Collusion by working collaboratively with other learners to produce work that is submitted as individual learner work.
- Copying (including the use of ICT to aid copying).
- Deliberate destruction of another's work.
- Fabrication of results or evidence.
- False declaration of authenticity in relation to the contents of a portfolio or coursework.
- Impersonation by pretending to be someone else in order to produce the work for another or arranging for another to take one's place in an assessment/examination/test.

### **Definition of malpractice by centre staff**

This list is not exhaustive and other instances of malpractice may be considered by Longsands Academy at its discretion:

- Improper assistance to candidates.
- Inventing or changing marks for internally assessed work (coursework or portfolio evidence) where there is insufficient evidence of the candidates' achievement to justify the marks given or assessment decisions made.
- Failure to keep candidate coursework/portfolios of evidence secure.
- Fraudulent claims for certificates.
- Inappropriate retention of certificates.
- Assisting learners in the production of work for assessment, where the support has the potential to influence the outcomes of assessment, for example where the assistance involves centre staff producing work for the learner.
- Producing falsified witness statements, for example for evidence the learner has not generated.
- Allowing evidence, which is known by the staff member not to be the learner's own, to be included in a learner's assignment/task/portfolio/coursework?
- Facilitating and allowing impersonation.
- Misusing the conditions for special learner requirements, for example where learners are permitted support, such as an amanuensis, this is permissible up to the point where the support has the potential to influence the outcome of the assessment.
- Falsifying records/certificates, for example by alteration, substitution, or by fraud.
- Fraudulent certificate claims, that is claiming for a certificate prior to the learner completing all the requirements of assessment.

### **Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy**

**Reasonable adjustments**, including, but not limited to, extra time in written examinations, rest breaks, provision of a Reader or other provision as appropriate, will be provided for all students who are eligible for these adjustments under the terms of the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) regulations and who have been appropriately assessed (currently by Mrs Annette Brodie). The Partnership Examinations Manager and the SENDCO will be responsible for keeping up to date records of these students and evidence of need which may be produced for inspection at any time by JCQ inspectors.

Special Consideration will be applied as appropriate to the regulations, on an individual basis.