HCT Learning

Quality Assurance Manual

2020

Assessment of Learners

Contents

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1 Assessment of Learners

HCT Learning has developed a number of policies and procedures in accordance with QQI's Assessment and Standards Revised 2013. These developed policies and procedures are in place to ensure any procedures on planning, managing and submission of assignments are carried out effectively and in a professional manner. All our assessment policies are clearly detailed to our trainers, learners and all HCT Learning staff. We thrive to ensure that our assessment procedures meet the national standard and are fair and consistent to all our learners.

1.1 Assessment Plan

HCT Learning's assessment planning happens around QQI's certification key dates which are sent out every year by QQI. HCT Learning will ensure that all validated component awards will be brought forward to an External Authenticator to be authenticated. Each newly validated programme will be brought forward to an External Authenticator based on submission dates with QQI. All programmes will then be monitored over a 2-year period and put forward to an EA before the 2 years have lapsed, this is monitored from our internal web application (MyHCT) - External Assessor Report. The sample of assessment planning takes place after each submission with QQI for our centre, planning is based on all 6 submissions set by QQI. During our RAP (Results Approval Panel) meeting, the QQI Assessment Verifier will have prepared for the meeting, using External Assessor Reports a list of programmes that are due for viewing by an External Authenticator - this report is updated after each submission and any planning of assessments is based on this. If there are any minor adjustments made to an assessment plan this will be looked at during our RAP also. Throughout the submission there is ongoing monitoring of our estimated number of programmes, and learners that will be going through that submission. This is looked at from estimated programmes to be run as part of programme planning to actual programmes running and programmes that have finished. All information to our learners clearly outlines our policies and procedures on assessment deadlines for submission of evidence and will be implemented once all programme related planning has been completed, this will normally be a minimum of 2 weeks before the programme is due to commence. Trainers, staff and clients are notified of assessment deadline dates to insure that information is transparent and clearly understood even before a programme has commenced. Once programme dates have been set the component programmes will be moved to a progression report, this is available on MyHCT which allows us to track each programme for a submission period.

Quality & Monitoring Committee

Following a bi-monthly meeting with HCT Learnings Quality & Monitoring Committee the QA team will present their assessment plan for the coming submission. There will be a review on previous corrective action plans that have been put in place, any red flag issues that have been identified. There will be a discussion on key dates around that submission period and assessment key dates to be adhered to for trainers. The QA team will present the suite of programmes that are due to be externally authenticated during that submission period with QQI.

Certification Key Dates

QQI will issue each year a set of certification key dates. HCT Learning will plan its assessment for that year based on those dates. QQI will issue 6 sets of dates every second month with the 12th date of Feb, April, June, August, Oct and Dec being the date for final submission dates for that particular certification period. QQI will give a date for Final Statement's of results available for downloading and a date for issue of certificates for that certification period also. This allows us to plan our year based on assessment and notify our trainers and learners of the coming year assessment plan and key dates.

1.1.1 Programme Deadline Dates

HCT Learning have set out specific deadline dates based on all our programmes we run - these have been chosen based on the type of assessment for each programme delivered. These dates will be given to trainers and learners before commencement of the programme in writing.

Level 3: Learners will have up to 1 week to complete their assessments and submit to our office.

Level 4:(Excluding Handling Food Hygienically QQI L4) will have up to 1 week to complete and submit their assessments to our office.

Level 5: Agriculture Mechanics, Boom Sprayer, Chainsaw Operations, Handheld Pesticide Application, Landscape Construction and Maintenance – Learners will have up to 1 week to complete their assessments and submit to our office.

Level 5: All other assignment related work; learners will have up to 4 weeks to complete their assessments and submit to our office.

Level 6: learners will have up to 6 weeks to complete their assessments and submit to our office.

1.2 Planning of Assessment Types

All our validated programmes are delivered part time, scheduled to suit the needs of our learners. Programmes are typically delivered at offsite venues nationwide, chosen for their locations and ease of access. Site visits will be conducted on manual based training programmes to discuss in detail the specific programme requirements where required. The programmes centre based learning will be made up of programme forecasting, planning and maintaining our well established and integrated academic management systems provided by our well manned admissions faculty, indicative consultation, pre-programme paperwork, learners enrolment, one to ones, trainer tutorials, practical/interactive exercises and classroom contact. HCT Learning will provide learners with programme packs and assessment booklets.

HCT Learning pride themselves on facilitating learners needs by using a range of various learning techniques in order to provide equality of access and opportunity for all, thus ensuring all learning achievements are appropriate, fair, consistent and in line with all statutory guidelines and legislative requirements.

1.2.1 Assessment Types

QQI have set out different assessment techniques - these are all based on the level of the programme being completed by the learner. All our learners are fully informed of the type of assessment, supports available and will be given the opportunity to provide feedback at any point before, during or after the assessment has taken place. Please see below the types of assessments set out by QQI:

- Assignment
- Portfolio/Collection of Work
- Project
- Skills Demonstration
- Learner Record
- Examination - this can be broken into Oral Interview Style Exam, Written Exam - Theory Based and Practical Exam

1. Assignment

An assignment is an exercise carried out in response to a brief with specific guidelines as to what should be included. An assignment is usually of short duration and may be carried out over a

specified period of time. Learners will be given assignment briefs covering various learning outcomes set out by QQI. These assignments must be completed independently by each learner and can be completed during the duration of the programme or learners will be allocated a set amount of time set by our centre head office. This set date is based on the final date of the programme. Learners are to submit their assignments following our Submission of Assignments Policy to our head office.

2. Portfolio/Collection of Work

A portfolio or collection of work is a collection and/or selection of pieces of work produced by the learner over a period of time that demonstrates achievement of a range of learning outcomes. The collection may be self-generated or may be generated in response to a particular brief or tasks/activities devised by the assessor. Learners will be provided with a work booklet that they will be required to complete that will meet all the learning outcomes specified in the component specification. Learners will be required to complete a number of tasks throughout the programme and in some cases the trainer will need to verify that they completed the exercises. In all cases learners can work as a group however they will need to each complete a booklet with all their own work. A standard template will be used for all learners on the programme.

3. Project

A project is a response to a brief devised by the assessor. A project is usually carried out over an extended period of time. Projects may involve research, require investigation of a topic, issue or problem or may involve process such as a design task, a performance or practical activity or production of an artefact or event. During each stage of the project the trainer will supervise/assess throughout the activity against the criteria for each project stage. Learners will be required to demonstrate, document and record evidence. The trainer will verify and in some cases photographic/video record evidence of learning.

4. Skills Demonstration

A skills demonstration is used to assess a wide range of practical based learning outcomes including practical skills and knowledge. A skills demonstration will require the learner to complete a task or series of tasks that demonstrate a range of skills.
Learners will be required to complete a specified amount of skills demonstrations set out in our assessment criteria. During each skills demonstration the trainer will supervise/assess throughout the activity against the criteria for each skills demonstration. Learners will be required to demonstrate,

document and record evidence, demonstrating a broad understanding. The trainer will verify, grade and photographic/video record evidence which may be required.

5. Learner Record

A learner record is the learner's self-reported and self-reflective record in which he/she describes specific learning experiences, activities, responses and skills acquired.

6. Examination

An examination provides a means of assessing a learner's ability to recall and apply knowledge, skills and understanding within a set period of time and under clearly specified conditions.

   a. ***Theory-based examination*** *assesses the ability to recall, apply and understand specific theory and knowledge.*
   b. ***Interview style*** *assesses learning through verbal questioning, one-to-one or in a group.*

Depending on the type of exam set out from the validated programme - HCT Learning has devised a time allocation structure guide; this guide is based on the weighting of the percentage assessment set by QQI.

Percentage weighting of assessment type	Time allocations	Number of questions
20% - 30%	1 hour	10/12 short answer questions or multiple choice
40% - 50%	1 hour 30 mins	10/12 short answer questions or multiple choice
60% - 70%	2 hours	10/12 short answer questions and 2/3 structured questions or ½ structured
80% - 90%	2 Hours 30 mins	10/12 short answer questions and 2/3 structured questions or ½ structured
100%	3 hours	20/23 short answer questions and 4/5 structured questions

Written Examination

Learners will be required to complete a written examination as part of the assessment criteria with their chosen programme. The examination can be broken into a number of different parts. Examples are:

- The 1st part can be presented as short questions or multiple choice questions. Learners are then required to answer a set amount of questions. Learners will be instructed on the set amount set out in an assessment brief.

- The 2nd part of the assessment criteria can be presented as structured/essay style questions that will require the learner to provide detailed information. Learners will be instructed on the set amount set out in an assessment brief.

The examination will require learners to recall and apply knowledge, skills and understanding within a set time period. Appropriate examination booklets and briefs will be provided to the learner.

Interview Style Examination - Dictaphone

Trainers will be required to read aloud both short and long questions to each learner while recording the exam via Dictaphone. There will be a marking grid scale allocated for long questions based on the level of information provided by the learner.

Learners will be required to compose an answer that is no more than a few sentences long. These questions will require learners to remember and reproduce knowledge that they have gained as part of the programme, in some cases learners will be required to provide definitions or terms for definitions, answer specific problems or will require learners to provide answers in their own words.

Exam Guidelines

- Learners must show up on time for their examination as instructed by the trainer.

- Learners will be required to sign in for the exam, if they arrive 30 minutes late they may not be allowed to sit the exam.

- Late learners may not be given extra time to complete the exam.

- Learners must ensure they have all materials needed for examinations. For practical skills they must have the appropriate PPE required. For written exams they must ensure they have pens etc. and that their equipment is in good working order.

- Learners must leave all coats, bags etc. in the designated area as instructed by the supervisor.

- Learners shall not bring into the examination, nor have in their possession while in the exam, any computing equipment, including electronic organisers and programmable calculators,

mobile phone, recording equipment, radio, books, dictionaries, notes or paper whatsoever except answer books and other materials as shall be authorised and/or provided by the trainer. The only equipment allowed is that which has been authorised by both HCT Learning and the trainer.

- Retention of any unauthorised material shall be taken as constituting evidence of infringement of the regulations and shall be reported by the trainer to HCT Learning and where appropriate disciplinary action shall be taken.

- A learner whose behaviour is disruptive and who persists in such behaviour following a warning shall be expelled by the trainer from the examination. In such circumstances all materials issued to the learner shall be retained by the trainer. It will be reported to their supervisor and a report shall be given to HCT Learning.

- No learner shall aid or attempt to aid another learner or obtain or attempt to obtain assistance from another or communicate in any way with any other learner during the examination.

- A learner shall not pass materials to, or receive materials from, another learner while in the examination.

- A learner who leaves the examination without the permission of the trainer shall not be re-admitted during that examination. The trainer shall record any such event and reported to the supervisor and HCT Learning.

1.2.2   Supplying Evidence of Assessment

Presenting Photo/Video Evidence for Assessment

All practical programmes being submitted for assessment must be accompanied by photographic or video evidence of works or demonstrations carried out by learners. These will be recorded by our trainers while the programme is running. To ensure the quality and relevance of the digital evidence being recorded, it is HCT learning's policy to ensure that each learner's digital evidence is presented. Below are the guidelines for recording videos, capturing audio or taking photographs as part of skill demonstrations or assessment on a programme. These guidelines should be adhered to in all cases in order to remain compliant with Data Regulation laws. Learners will be required to give their consent as part of the registration process on day one to having a video, audio recording or photograph taken throughout the course. Under HCT Learnings Data Protection/GDPR policy all documentation relevant to a learners data must only be used for the purpose it was recorded. Under no circumstance are videos, audio or photographs to be uploaded to a website or social media site

without consulting with HCT Learning. In adherence with Data Protection/GDPR laws these recordings are to be kept in a secure location and deleted when no longer necessary. HCT Learning will retain these recordings and photographs for six months after certification and they will then be deleted. Videos submitted to the office on a USB stick or camcorder shall be deleted from these devices once they have been uploaded to our shared files and MyHCT. Trainers must not distribute or disclose the video/audio recordings, photographs or any information or data related to a learner. Each learner has to apply to HCT Learning for a copy of these. For these they will need to provide a copy of their ID and pay the appropriate fee.

Videos: Videos are required as part of skills demonstrations on some courses. The guidelines for recording are listed below:

- Please ensure only the required learners are visible in the video.
- In the case of an individual presentation, please ensure only the learner delivering the presentation is visible in the video.
- The trainer needs to introduce the video by stating the name and location of the programme (this needs to be done for each learner individually).
- The learner should introduce themselves before commencing the presentation using their full name and stating which presentation they are making e.g. 15 minute presentation or 25 minute presentation.
- These videos must be renamed by the trainer with the learners name before being sent into the office, if multiple learners in the video, all names must be listed.

Audio: Audio recordings are required for certain assessments, for example the Chainsaw exam. Please see below the guidelines for recording these:

- The trainer must introduce the programme name and location for each learner.
- The learner must confirm their full name before commencing with the recording.

Photographs: Photographs are required of learners partaking in skills demonstrations. Below are the guidelines for taking these:

- When possible just have the learner completing the skills demonstration in the photograph.
- All photographs are uploaded by the trainer to MyHCT.
- Photographs need to be renamed by the trainer with the learners name before being uploaded or submitted to the office.

1.2.3 Lost Data Policy

For some programmes run by HCT Learning, backup evidence such as photographs or video recordings are required as proof that skills demonstrations took place. This evidence can be used by the assessor, Internal Verification team, or External Authenticator when the group is being assessed and put forward for certification. This evidence is kept for no longer than 6 months after the certification period of the group. In the event that this evidence has been lost due to a technical error or human error, the trainer will need to complete a lost data form in order for the learner's assessment to be accepted and put through the correction process.

The lost data form acts as supporting documentation where the evidence is not there to confirm that the learner has completed their skills demonstration. The trainer will need to provide the learners name, what skills demonstration they completed, and what date they completed their skills demonstration. The trainer will also need to include what happened and why the evidence is not available for the learner's skills demonstration. The lost data form will also allow the trainer to sign off that the learner has completed their skills demonstration to a good standard, and that they are happy for the learner to pass. The learner's assessment is then brought forward to the Results Approval Panel (RAP) meeting, where the panel will discuss their thoughts on the learner's assessment and if it will be put forward for certification or if further action will be required.

1.3 Supporting Assessment & Programme Documentation

HCT Learning has developed a number of procedures and policies to ensure that the credibility of learner's assessments is fully in place. All programmes delivered have standardised briefs, packs, lesson plans and marking schemes to ensure this credibility. Trainers are inducted and briefed fully on programme content learning outcomes, marking schemes and the standardisation of all our programme material. Any further development of any supporting assessment material and programme documentation will be brought to the attention of our Academic Council. This will happen:

- Following a shortfall on our Red Flag system on MyHCT
- When identified during our programme monitoring review for each submission cycle on programmes
- Selected for our annual programme review completed yearly

Through continuous monitoring and programme review from HCT Learning's review committee will continue to identify any areas for development or review.

Reference Monitoring in Education & Training and Self-Evaluation and Monitoring.

All our trainers will have access to our trainer's portal on MyHCT which gives the trainer full access to all our standardised information relating to the delivery of that programme. This standardised information is in place in order to ensure fair and consistency of assessment of learners.

This Information includes:

- Lesson plans that have been devised as part of our programme validation process
- Component Specifications (developed by QQI)
- Programme Verification Booklet
- Assessment Specification Booklet
- Sample answers solution guidelines
- Assessment booklets
- Programme packs
- Briefs

The above information is available to our trainers right from initial programme planning to ensure assessment requirements are clearly understood in relation to learning outcomes, assessment techniques, assessment timing, marking requirements and all assessment criteria.

Review of Assessments

Any feedback received from clients and learners is valued with HCT Learning as it allows us to generate information onto our Red Flag system. This feedback is inputted onto MyHCT. If the system falls below 70% following monitoring from our Centre Director a Corrective Action Plan will take effect.

Assessment Brief

The information will be available to the learner on their assessment booklets. It will be made available to them on the first morning of the programme or before an examination is to take place. It will outline a set of tasks to be completed as part of the assessment criteria. It will detail the type of assessment and what the learner is required to complete and adhere to. It will give a detailed account of the marking structure. It can include examination guidelines and procedures that are to be taken into account when following the assessment brief.

Assessment Specification Booklet

HCT Learning will not engage in delivery of any programmes until the entire validation process has been completed as per our QA. We have designed Assessment Specification Booklets for each programme that we offer. Each trainer will be sent this booklet prior to commencement of a programme. This booklet will give complete and concise information on the assessment criteria and marking scheme for that programme. This is to ensure trainers fully understand the assessment and can therefore provide learners with accurate information relating to their chosen programme. Trainers will also have full online access to all programme documentation through their trainers portal on MyHCT. This portal allows them full access to all of the below assessment types applicable to their programme that they are delivering. HCT Learning has developed robust lesson plans, this again is to ensure uniformity when delivering programmes to our learners.

Each validated programme will have its own set of lesson plans; these pre-validation documents are very detailed in the planning process for each programme thus making sure that all learning outcomes are being met as part of QQI's requirements.

Programme Verification Booklet

All our trainers are equipped with a Programme Verification Booklet – this is sent to our trainers along with the programme packs before a programme commences. From MyHCT when a programme is moved into actual - or booked in from our sales department, the trainer will receive a notification email with an update of learner's names, sign in sheets and Programme Verification Booklet. The trainer will gain access to further information relating to their programme through their trainers portal. This information includes:

- Trainers delivery contract and invoice details
- Pre-programme client appointment forms
- Trainers pre-programme feedback - checklist
- Lesson plan requirements

The Programme Verification Booklet allows the trainer to document important verification aspects of the programme:

- It will give dates, details, location and important contact information of the client
- It will give learners names, whether any requests of accommodation have been requested from that learner at time of booking
- It outlines the name of activity (skill demonstration) expected for that programme and its number of expectancy (grade mark)

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- The trainer will have a check list to go through; this allows him/her to make sure that the information being presented with the group when sending back to the office is correct and accurate.

1.3.1 Assessment Receipt

Learners are given an assessment receipt to complete and attach to their assessment material when submitting assessments back to our office or trainer. It provides learners with information in relation to submitting their assessment to us, also our Assessment Holding Policy allows for tracking of the programme they have completed for our centre staff on receipt. It also acts as a learner declaration of their work completed as learners will have to read a declaration and sign if in the event any cases of assessment malpractice or plagiarism are found.

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                        ┌────────────────────────┐
                        │       Programme        │
                        │  Verification Booklet  │
                        └────────────────────────┘
   ┌──────────────────┬───────────┴──────────┬─────────────────────┐
┌──────────────┐ ┌──────────────┐ ┌──────────────┐ ┌──────────────┐
│ List of      │ │ Client       │ │ Skills       │ │ Exam seating │
│ learners     │ │ information   │ │ Demonstration│ │ plan         │
│ names        │ │              │ │ marking      │ │              │
│ confirmed on │ │              │ │ sheets       │ │              │
│ booking      │ │              │ │              │ │              │
└──────────────┘ └──────────────┘ └──────────────┘ └──────────────┘
┌──────────────┐                   ┌──────────────┐ ┌──────────────┐
│ List of RRA  │                   │ Group work   │ │ Exam sign    │
│ requested    │                   │ verification/│ │ in/out sheet │
│ for learners │                   │ competency   │ │              │
└──────────────┘                   │ log          │ └──────────────┘
┌──────────────┐                   └──────────────┘ ┌──────────────┐
│ Tutor/learner│                                    │ Sign over of │
│ meetings     │                                    │ assessments  │
└──────────────┘                                    └──────────────┘
┌──────────────┐
│ Further RRA  │
│ requests     │
│ during the   │
│ programme    │
└──────────────┘
┌──────────────┐
│ Scribe/Reader│
│ declaration  │
└──────────────┘
┌──────────────┐
│ Class Rep    │
│ details      │
└──────────────┘
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1.4 Support Services to Learners

Below outlines the support services which HCT Learning offers to learners on our programmes.

1.4.1 Reasonable Accommodation

HCT Learning welcomes learners with special educational needs. A reasonable accommodation is a process that helps to support learners who may have a disadvantage due to a medical condition, impairment, learning difficulties, hidden disadvantages or other extenuating circumstance in order to provide equality of access and opportunity for all.

This accommodation has been designed to assist learners in demonstrating his or her achievements in their assessments. They have not been designed to compensate for a possible lack of achievement arising from a disability or other factors of disadvantage, however, should not give the learner an advantage over others. All reasonable accommodation granted will maintain the integrity/status and reputation of assessment.

There are various types of reasonable accommodation accessible to learners, these include:

- Modified presentation of assignments/examination papers e.g. enlargements
- Scribes/Readers/Dictaphone
- Spelling/grammar wavier
- Use of sign language
- Practical assistants
- Rest periods – resulting in extra time being allocated to qualifying learners
- Adaptive equipment/software
- Use of assistive technology
- Altered exam settings – Learners will be accommodated by our reasonable accommodation policy below, all requests will be dealt with case by case
- Extra time

Examples of circumstances where reasonable accommodations may be requested:

- A temporary, permanent or long-term disability or chronic or disabling condition such as epilepsy, glandular fever, or other incapacitating illness of the learner
- A physical injury or emotional trauma during a period four to six weeks previously
- Learning disabilities involving problems with reading, writing, math, reasoning, listening, and speaking

- Recent bereavement of close family member or friend

- Severe accident

- Domestic crisis

- Terminal illness of a close family member

- Other extenuating circumstances outside the control of the learner

The Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2008; The Education Act 1998, Qualification Act 2008, The Education of Persons with Specials Educational Needs 2004.

HCT Learning's procedure for granting Reasonable Accommodation

Based on all our programme levels we have set out timeframes in which learners will have sufficient time to submit their assessments to us.

Learners are required to notify the office and/or programme trainer of any special requirements needed to enable us to see how best to accommodate him/her during or after assessment.
They can do this in the following ways:

- On initial booking the programme coordinator will discuss the specific needs and requirement of the learner and if necessary will complete the special requirement section on the booking form

- During the completion of the registration form on the 1st day there will be an option to request reasonable accommodation

- Learners may meet and consult with their programme trainer

- Learners can apply for reasonable accommodation through our website

- By contacting our office staff

If learners require reasonable accommodation for completion of an assessment while the programme is running they are to fill out a 'Request for Reasonable Accommodation for Assessment Form'. The following details will be required:

- What are the circumstances most relevant to your situation?

- What are your reasonable accommodation request requirements?

- This form is to be submitted along with supporting documentation, for example, a doctor's certificate.

Granting Reasonable Accommodations

- HCT Learning will assess the accommodation request to ensure that the integrity/status and reputation of assessment is upheld, ensuring that the request made is reasonable and just

- HCT Learning will then proceed to identify the adaptation/accommodation needed and how best to implement this ensuring that they do not give the learner an advantage over others

- HCT Learning will note all requests for reasonable accommodations and the outcome

1.4.2   Scribe Assistant Policy

HCT Learning will provide all learners with the opportunity of equal access to assessments. Learners who may need support with their assessments will be offered the opportunity to avail of a Scribe to assist them with the completion of their written assessment i.e. Workbook or exam.

The following are guidelines in which a chosen Scribe must follow:

Process of selection of a Scribe:

- A Scribe should have proficient reading and writing skills.

- A Scribe should not have a personal interest in relation to the learner's assessment.

Where a Scribe is conducted:

- When a Scribe is sought for an individual learner for an examination or any written part of the assessment, it is to be held in an individual venue and in a discreet manner.

Duty of a Scribe:

- The Scribe must not advise the learner which questions to attempt, what order they are to attempt them in or when they should move onto the next question. It is also not the Scribes role to structure the learners answers, or to plan and punctuate them.

- The duty of a Scribe is to write only what is dictated by the learner word for word. You must not have any factual input into the learner's assessment.

- All information in relation to the exam/learner is confidential.

- A Scribe may ask a learner to repeat an answer if not heard clearly.

- A Scribe may ask a learner to slow down the speed in which they speak.

- A Scribe may allow a learner to write/draw where requested by the learner. A learner may choose to write some sections of the paper themselves. If the learner writes notes or illustrations, these should be included with the exam/workbook. For example, the learner

might draw rough diagrams; the Scribe will then draw a final version and include both copies with the exam or workbook.

- A Scribe must ensure the learner's details are recorded correctly on the assessment.

Guidelines for Learners:

- Learners must be present 15 minutes before an exam is due to take place
- Learners must ensure they understand the guidelines for the exam
- Learners are advised to speak slowly and clearly
- Learners may proofread their assessment when it is completed and make any necessary changes
- Learners may draw diagrams where desired

In cases where a Scribe has been assigned to assist a learner in demonstrating their work, they will be obliged to complete a declaration form which will be available from the programme trainer. This declaration is to state that the work produced is correct and accurate and that is hasn't been interfered with at any point.

1.4.3   Reading Assistant Policy

HCT Learning will provide all learners with the opportunity of equal access to assessments. Learners who may need support with their assessment will be offered the opportunity to avail of a Reader to assist them with the completion of their written assessment i.e. Workbook or exam.

The following are guidelines in which a chosen Reader must follow:

Process of selection of a Reader:

- A Reader should have proficient reading skills
- A Reader should not have a personal interest in relation to the learner's assessment

Where a Reading is conducted:

- When a Reader is sought for an individual learner to read text for an examination or any written part of the assessment, it is to be held in an individual venue and in a discreet manner.

Duty of a Reader:

- A Reader must read to the learner any assessment briefs that must be followed. The reader is only allowed to read the text provided on the brief.

- The Reader must not advise the learner which questions to attempt, what order they are to attempt them in or when they should move onto the next question.

- The duty of a Reader is to read only what is available to them on the assessment brief or an exam question. They must not have any factual input into the learner's assessment.

- All information in relation to the exam or assessment is confidential.

- A Reader may repeat a question if the learner has not heard clearly.

- A learner may ask a Reader to slow down the speed in which they speak.

- The duty of a Reader is to read only what is stated on assessment workbooks or briefs.

- A Reader may not put dialect into their own words.

- The Reader is required to read the questions or briefs at an appropriate speed, to allow the learner to write and record their answers.

Guidelines for Learners:

- Learners must be present 15 minutes before an exam is due to take place

- Learners must ensure they understand the guidelines for the exam

- Learners may proofread their assessment when it is completed and make any necessary changes

- Learners may ask the Reader to repeat a question

In cases where a Reader has been assigned to assist a learner in demonstrating their work, they will be obliged to complete a declaration form which will be available from the programme trainer. This declaration is to state that the work produced is correct and accurate and that is hasn't been interfered with at any point.

1.4.4   Extension Request Policy

HCT Learning provides adequate assessment deadlines to ensure that learners have sufficient time to complete their assessments, taking into account normal work/life responsibilities.

If a learner requires an extension for assessment, they are required to contact our head office to discuss the nature of their request. The QA team will ask the learner to complete an "Extension Request Form". This is completed online, and updated through MyHCT for tracking. It will be agreed

with the learner at first point of contact the type of extension category they fall into. A member of the QA team will set the extension deadline date for submission of their assessments. The learner will then have up to 1 week from first point of contact with head office to complete the extension request form and send back to us using the online system. This timeframe is subject to programme finish dates and assessment submission dates also.

The following details will be required to be submitted as evidence to back their case when requesting and extension request:

- What are the circumstances most relevant to your situation?
- What are your reasonable accommodation request requirements?
- The form is to be submitted along with any supporting documentation the learner may have to support their case for example, a doctor's certificate or medical cert.

HCT Learning have categorised all types of extension requests that comes under this policy:

- **Hand In Extension (3 working days)**

This 3 day extension will be granted to learners in situations where there are valid circumstances outside of the learner's control. The learner will be required to complete the HCT Learning online extension request form outlining their request. Where a learner misses there 3 day extension granted and submits their assessment after the agreed date without any valid reason, the extension will be denied and the learner will be asked to follow our Repeat of Assessment Policy.

- **Regular Extension (maximum 2 weeks)**

This is a 2 week extension which is given to a learner when they are unable to meet the programme assessment deadline date that has been set. This request is given in cases where a learner requires an extension over a longer period of time due to medical/learning or unexpected external factors. The learner will be required to complete the HCT Learning online extension request form outlining their request. Back up evidence will be required on application. If the extension request has not met HCT Learning's criteria under compassionate consideration or is submitted to our head office after the agreed timeframe the extension is not successful and the learner will be given the opportunity to apply for our Repeat of Assessment Policy.

- **Extreme Circumstance (at the discretion of HCT Learning)**

The timeframe for this request is between 2- 6 weeks outside of the assessment deadline. It is given to a learner when they fall outside of our 2 week extension request and in cases where a learner

requires an extension of a longer period of time due to medical/learning or unexpected external factors. The learner will be required to complete the HCT Learning online extension request form outlining reasoning for their request. Back up evidence is required on application of this request. If the extension request has not met HCT Learning's criteria under compassionate consideration or is submitted to our head office after the agreed timeframe the extension is not successful and the learner will be given the opportunity to apply for our Repeat of Assessment Policy.

- **Extensions falling outside 6 weeks programme deadline date**

Learners will only fall into this category if they have experienced a major extenuating circumstance and the request will depend on the nature of the assessment they are wishing to submit or the programme they have completed. The time frame for approval of this request will depend on the situation, the time that has lapsed since attending and HCT Learning may be required to seek approval from the Academic Council before granting approval. Although HCT Learning will consider all circumstances brought to their attention, there will be administration charges associated with facilitating the acceptance of the assessment. This will depend on the nature of the activity that they need to submit and the practical and/or operational issues involved. The cost associated with HCT Learning granting this extension request will range from €25 to €40. If the extension request has not met HCT Learnings criteria under compassionate consideration the extension is not successful and the learner will be given the opportunity to apply for our Repeat of Assessment Policy.

Learners are to note that extension requests are at the company's discretion and they are dealt with on a case by case basis depending on the nature, practical and/or any operational issues involved in the activity of the assessment. Extensions are not automatically granted however HCT Learning will endeavour to accommodate the learners request where essential.

The following would **NOT** normally be considered as valid extenuating circumstances:
- Computer or printer failure
- Bunching of deadlines
- Job interview
- Falling behind due to paid employment
- Illness such as coughs and colds
- Illness after the deadline has passed
- Attendance at weddings and other "rites of passage" ceremonies

- Religious festivals (unless they cover a significant portion of the assessment period or fall on the day of an examination, in which case the learner is expected to give reasonable advance warning)
- General feeling of anxiousness/depression unless backed up by medical evidence
- Holidays
- House moves
- Ignorance of rules and regulations

Granting Extension Requests

The QA Team will assess the accommodation request to ensure that the integrity/status and reputation of assessment is upheld, ensuring that the request made is reasonable and just. Following a meeting with the Centre Manager, a decision will be made and the learner will be notified of the outcome.

There will only be one of two outcomes:

1) Compassionate Consideration- will be granted where the learner has shown examples of circumstances where the extension request can be granted. Examples are as follows:

- A temporary, permanent or long term disability or chronic or disabling condition such as epilepsy, glandular fever, or other incapacitating illness of the learner
- A physical injury or emotional trauma during a period four to six weeks previously
- Learning disabilities involving problems with reading, writing, math, reasoning, listening, and speaking
- Recent bereavement of close family member or friend
- Severe accident
- Domestic crisis
- Terminal illness of a close family member
- Other extenuating circumstances outside the control of the learner

2) Repeat Assessment - Learners will be notified of this circumstance if, following a meeting with the QA Team and the Centre Manager:

- The learner has not supplied enough evidence to support their case
- The learner is unsuccessful in their assessment
- The learner has only submitted part of their assessment or only part completed the programme

Please note that repeat assessments are granted on a case by case basis and will depend on the nature of the assessment and any other practical/operational issues involved. HCT will confirm with learners if approval is granted to repeat an exam or resubmit an assessment. The learner must then follow our Repeat of Assessment Policy.

The QA Team will note all extension requests and the outcome. This information will be stored on MyHCT.

1.5 Submission of Assessment

Learners are asked to submit their assessments to us in the following way:

- Assessments are to be submitted by the approved deadline date for submission, it is not the responsibility of HCT Learning to contact learners if an assessment is not submitted or received on time.

- When submitting assessments to our head office - Our address is to be clearly posted on the front of the pack or envelope and a return address is printed on the rear side of the envelope or pack. We recommend learners posting in assessments must do so by registered post, allowing enough time before the allocated deadline date and it is the learners responsibility to make sure that the correct postage is applied.

- The first page of the assessment booklet must clearly state the learners full name and PPS number. Assignments will only be accepted in hard copy - Please note - HCT Learning will not accept assignments electronically incomplete, falling apart or illegible. It is a requirement that they are hard copies, stapled or bound using a treasury tag. Plastic folders or plastic sleeves are not to be used. Any additional evidence or paperwork handed in by learners must have their name and PPS number clearly printed and numbered in the correct order. We recommend the learner save and retain a copy of all work submitted. Assessments will only be accepted if they have an assessment receipt attached.

- It is the learners responsibility to check all information has been provided in full for their assignments before submitting.

- Assessment's submitted after the agreed programme submission deadline date will not be accepted by HCT Learning for correction, except where the learner has followed our Extension Request Policy.

- Where aa extension request has been sought from a learner, it is that learners responsibility to make sure that the appropriate forms are submitted with their extension request.

- It is the learners responsibility to make sure that all assessment material that has to be submitted must be submitted to either the trainer or head office by the allocated deadline dates.

1.5.1   Receiving Part Completed Assessments

Learners are expected to attend our programmes in full. We highly recommend that learners are assessed in all QQI learning outcomes in order to achieve the highest grades that they can achieve and to limit the possibility of failing the programme that they are attending. In cases where a learner has submitted part completed assessments to our head office by the approved deadline date it will be accepted accordingly and put forward for submission during that assessment period. The assessor will mark the assessments and if the learner achieves above 50% they will be put forward, only in situations where the programme is a level 3 and the learner is required to be successful in all areas or there is a critical fault on the marking criteria set will a learner fail based on what they have submitted. For any learner who is unhappy with the result based on what they have submitted for marking they can appeal their result following HCT Learnings Assessment Appeals Procedure Policy. For learners who wish to repeat the assessment they have missed, they will be given the opportunity to repeat the assessment they have missed and compassionate consideration may be taken into account given the circumstance of the learner. The learner must then follow our Repeat of Assessment Policy. Where a learner has submitted their assessment to our head office by the approved deadline date it will be accepted accordingly and put forward for submission for that assessment period.

1.5.2   Referencing

HCT Learning requires learners to reference any information that is not the work or ideas of their own. The referencing style adopted by HCT Learning is The Harvard Referencing System. It is important to acknowledge sources. Failure to reference a source results in plagiarism. This is a serious form of academic dishonesty which can result in a learners work not being marked. There are many different types of sources which can include books, journals, websites, newspapers and audio-visuals. Referencing work gives it credibility and provides evidence that the learner has researched the topic. Learners should prepare for referencing while researching by writing down the full bibliographic details of the work they are researching.

The Harvard Referencing System is based on two requirements, to reference in the main body of the text and to compile a reference list at the end.

1. In-text references:

These are used when directly quoting or paraphrasing a source. There are two main types of in-text referencing:

- **Direct Quotation**
    - Short quotations should be enclosed in quotation marks and included within the body of the text.
    - Longer quotations should be entered as a separate paragraph and indented from the main text.

- **Paraphrasing or Summarising**
    - Paraphrasing is using someone else's ideas but putting it into your own words.
    - Summarising is providing a brief statement of the main points within the piece of work.

Description of referencing:

- When you quote an authors work you should reference them in the paragraph at an appropriate stage in the text. This is done by writing the surname, the year of publication and the page number in brackets. **EXAMPLE:** Reiley (2010, p.263).

- If you are quoting their work in whole you don't need to add the page number just surname and year of publication. **EXAMPLE:** Reiley (2010).

- Where there are multiple authors being referenced you can list all surnames or can write first author followed by et al. **EXAMPLE:** Nagle et al. (2017, p.562) **EXAMPLE:** Nagle and Cooke (2017).

- If the quotation extends across two pages the abbreviation pp. for page range should be used. **EXAMPLE:** Reiley (2010, pp. 162-165).

- If an author has more than one publication in the same year which you are referencing, distinguish between them by using a, b, c etc after the year and within the brackets. **EXAMPLE:** Reiley (2010a, p.77) Reiley (2010b, p.26).

 Referencing Websites

When referencing websites the author of the information should be listed, where this is not possible the organisation can be. The date of ownership of the webpage should be noted (located at the

bottom of the webpage) and the date you accessed it. The full details including URL must be listed in the reference list at the end.

2. Reference list or Bibliography

A Reference list is a list of all material referenced within your work.

A Bibliography is a list of all the documentation you have consulted when completing your assessment but may not have been referenced in the body of the text. Both these lists will be at the end of the assessment and will appear in alphabetical order by the authors surname. Book titles are italicised.

EXAMPLE:

Author/Editor last name, initials. (year) *Title*. Edition. Place of publication: Publisher.

Reiley, E. (2010) *Introductory Horticulture*. 8th Edition. Clifton Park, USA: Cengage Learning Inc.

Website:

HCT Learning (2013) Our Courses. Available at: http://www.hctlearning.ie/courses.php (accessed 1 October 2018)

1.5.3   Procedure for Security of Assessments

(1) Prior to Assessment

> (1a) HCT Learnings Responsibility

- All examinations are set centrally and are released to the trainer only when the assessment dates are approaching.
- Programme material will either be collected by the trainer or shipped by courier from HCT Learning directly to the trainer only. The exams shall be in a separate sealed envelope when shipping.
- A log on MyHCT tracks when and how many of each assessment have been sent.

(1b) Trainer Responsibility

- The resources and materials will be required to be signed for on receipt of delivery and HCT Learning are able to access the log to confirm the time and date of receipt.
- The envelope containing the exams should not be opened until learners are seated and ready to start.
- It is the trainers responsibility to ensure all exams are correct and undamaged. If there are any problems they must contact HCT Learning immediately.

- Resources and materials are to be kept safe and secure to ensure the integrity of the programme delivered does not get compromised.

- Programme resources and equipment are to be opened only by the trainer delivering the programme.

- Learners induction is to include programme details and HCT Learning policies and procedures.

- The assessment criteria will need to be discussed with learners on the first morning of the programme to include assessment techniques that will be used, assessment deadlines and grade breakdown.

- The assessment plan will be given to the learners detailing the schedule for skills demonstrations, exams etc.

- On the day of a written examination the trainer will record the seating plan in the Programme Verification Booklet. This will help to identify any plagiarism which may occur. The trainer must ensure all learners sign in for the exam and late learners are recorded separately. The trainer must ensure that each candidate in the examination room can be observed at all times.

- Practical examinations must be conducted under conditions that will provide all candidates with the opportunity to complete their tasks and to display their true level of attainment in the module concerned.

(1c) Learner Responsibility

- Learners must show up on time for their examination as instructed by the trainer.

- Learners will be required to sign in for the exam, if they arrive 30 minutes late they may not be allowed to sit the exam.

- Late learners may not be given extra time to complete the exam.

- Learners must ensure they have all materials needed for examinations. For practical skills they must have the appropriate PPE required. For written exams they must ensure they have pens etc. and that their equipment is in good working order.

- Learners must leave all coats, bags etc. in the designated area as instructed by the supervisor.

- Learners shall not bring into the examination, nor have in their possession while in the exam, any computing equipment, including electronic organisers and programmable calculators, mobile phone, recording equipment, radio, books, dictionaries, notes or paper whatsoever

except answer books and other materials as shall be authorised and/or provided by the trainer. The only equipment allowed is that which has been authorised by both HCT Learning and the trainer.

- Retention of any unauthorised material shall be taken as constituting evidence of infringement of the regulations and shall be reported by the trainer to HCT Learning and where appropriate disciplinary action shall be taken.

- A learner whose behaviour is disruptive and who persists in such behaviour following a warning shall be expelled by the trainer from the examination. In such circumstances all materials issued to the learner shall be retained by the trainer. It will be reported to their supervisor and a report shall be given to HCT Learning.

- No learner shall aid or attempt to aid another learner or obtain or attempt to obtain assistance from another, or communicate in any way with any other learner during the examination.

- A learner shall not pass materials to, or receive materials from, another learner while in the examination.

- A learner who leaves the examination without the permission of the trainer shall not be re-admitted during that examination. The trainer shall record any such event and report to the supervisor and HCT Learning.

(2) Upon Completion of Assessment

(2a) Trainer Responsibility

- Once the exam has finished the trainer must instruct learners to stop writing and to ensure that all required information has been wrote on their exam papers.

- The trainer will be required to collect all assessment related documentation that has been collected as part of the delivery of the programme, this includes assessment booklets where skills demonstrations have been completed and are part of the overall trainers marks.

- The trainer should do a count to ensure they have all booklets and exams required.

- The trainer will be required to complete with the learners a sign over of assessment confirming that they have handed their assessment booklets and exams to them, this is in the Programme Verification Booklet.

- The trainer will then be required to submit all assessment related evidence and outstanding programme documentation to the centre in a secure manner immediately after the

programme has been completed either by courier, registered post or bringing directly into the office.

- Any equipment that is provided by HCT Learning will need to be returned to our office along with the outstanding paperwork.
- Where required trainers will be need to submit photo or video evidence through MyHCT trainer portal or through a memory stick following the Submission of Photos Policy.
- Under no circumstances should any programme related documentation be left unattended at any point of programme delivery or in an uncompromising position.

(2b) HCT Learnings Responsibility

- To receive the exams and workbooks, count them and check them in on MyHCT that they have been submitted.
- The exams shall be separated and bundled together with the learners other work submitted and a centre marking sheet shall be attached.
- These assessments are kept in a secure lockable location until the deadline has passed and they are being handed over to the assessor.
- Once corrected the exam scripts are held in secure storage at head office with restricted access until the assessment process is fully completed.

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1.6   HCT Learning Assessment Process

The below flow chart highlights the processes that take place in HCT Learnings head office regarding the assessment process.

Stages of Assessment and persons involved:

Quality & Monitoring Committee: Decide on programmes that will be going forward for External Authentication

Training Manager: Completes a Training Managers call when booking in a programme to discuss assessments and programme requirements with the client

Administrator: Will send out programme related documentation to the trainer before the commencement of the programme

IV Stage 1: Information is sent back to centre and the Administrator will check it in, send assessment receipts to learners and prepare group for the Pedagogical Reviewer

Trainer: Will assess and provide marks for skills demonstration and completed exams using guidelines provided by the centre

Trainer: Will induct learners on the assessment plan – e.g. Details of assessments and when they will take place

IV Stage 2: The Pedagogical Reviewer will review learners assessments and trainers marking to ensure all assessment criteria has been met in a fair and consistent manner. They will produce a Pedagogical Reviewer Report

IV Stage 3: The QQI Programme Evaluator will double check calculation of marks and upload results onto QBS. Will complete the Internal Verification Checklist report, examining the programme as a whole reporting on any changes etc.

IV Stage 4: The Training Manager will complete the Internal Verification Report ensuring all evidence requirements have been met. Sample mark 2 learners at random from each programme to ensure consistency of marking on the programme

RAP Meeting Held: Including: Pedagogical Reviewer, Training Manager, Administrator, QQI Programme Evaluator, QQI Assessment Verifier and Trainers

External Authenticator: Will authenticate the result, making recommendations for the RAP approval

IV Stage 5: The QQI Assessment Verifier will look at all programmes within the group to ensure consistent marking across all programmes. They will double check marks uploaded to QBS. Check total groups and red flags raised. Checks for all information identified in all stages of reporting has been dealt with

Results submitted: The QQI Assessment Verifier submits results to QQI. Trainers receive feedback on assessments delivered, the Training Manager will review feedback in order to discuss improvements with them

Quality & Monitoring Committee: Will review and report on submission and report back to the Academic Council

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The assessment process at HCT Learning is broken into the following stages:

- Preparation for Assessment

- Assessment of Learners

- Internal Verification Process (5 stages)

- External Authentication

- Results Approval Panel Meeting (RAP)

- Final Checks and Results Submitted to QQI

- Review of Submission by Quality and Monitoring Committee

- Filing Assessments

- Results Information Pack & Letter

- Assessment Appeals Procedure

- Receiving Certificates from QQI

1.6.1 Preparation for Assessment

❖ **Quality & Monitoring Committee:** Decide on programmes that will be going forward for External Authentication

❖ **Training Manager:** Completes a Training Manager Call when booking in a programme to discuss assessments and programme requirements with the client

❖ **Administrator:** Will send out programme related documentation to the trainer before the commencement of the programme

1.6.2 Assessment of Learners

The trainer will induct the learners on the assessment plan on the first day of the programme. This will inform the learner as to what assessment they will be doing and on what day of the programme these will be taking place. They will assess the learner and provide marks for skills demonstrations. They will conduct the exam with learners according to the guidelines provided by the centre to ensure consistency across the country. The timelines for assessing skills/exams along with programme packs, briefs, marking grids etc. will be established by the Programme Development and Review Committee during the programme development stage.

Assessment Schedule

On the first day of each programme the trainer will outline the assessment process to the learners and the assessment plan will be explained in full during induction. Learners will be communicated what assessments will be required on their programme and as to which day each of the assessments will be taking place. These are pre-set by HCT Learning to ensure consistency and fairness nationwide. Allowing the learner to fully understand the assessment process, what is expected of them and to prepare for assessment each day.

The trainer will discuss the assessment procedures and guidelines detailing:

- Supports available for learners, Reasonable Accommodations, Scribes etc.
- The Assessment plan
- Grade break down
- Deadline for assessments
- Certification key dates
- Assessment receipt
- Extension Request/Repeat Request policies
- Assessment Malpractice
- Appeals procedures
- Formative Feedback
- Health and safety
- GDPR
- Progression

1.6.3 Internal Verification

Internal Verification is the process by which HCT Learnings assessment - policies and procedures relating to the planning, managing and implementation of all aspects of assessment practices are internally verified i.e. monitored by the provider itself.

The process includes checking that all HCT Learnings assessment procedures have been applied across the range of assessment activities relating to a programme, from planning right through to finalising results. HCT Learning prides itself on the fact they will always adopt 100% sampling for all our groups that are being submitted for all certification periods with QQI. This is to establish best

practice across all ranges of assessment activities. HCT systematically checks that assessment procedures have been applied consistently across all assessments.

HCT Learning is committed to establishing an internal verification process for each assessment period set by QQI which will:

- Verify that all assessment procedures have been applied across the range of assessment activities.
- Confirm the completeness and accuracy of learner evidence, that the evidence exists and is marked and that grades are recorded accurately.
- Verify that learner details are correct and accurate.

The steps involved in the Internal verification process are:

- IV Stage 1 – Receiving Assessments (prepared for IV by Administrator)
- IV Stage 2 – Pedagogical Reviewers Report
- IV Stage 3 – Internal Verification Checklist (produced by the QQI Programme Evaluator)
- IV Stage 4 - Internal Verification Report (produced by the Training Manager)
- IV Stage 5 - Total Groups Report and Final Checks (produced by the QQI Assessment Verifier)

All verifiers' are briefed on all HCT Learnings quality practices, in particular:

- the fair and consistent assessment of learners
- the internal verification process
- the external authentication process
- the results approval process
- assessment requirements of the appropriate award standards
- agreed assessment arrangements of validated programme(s)

Verifying Adherence to Assessment Procedures

The Internal Verifiers will check adherence to HCT Learnings quality assured assessment procedures; this process will check/confirm:

- adherence to the HCT Learnings quality assured assessment procedures across all validated programmes
- learner evidence matches the assessment requirements of the award standard by confirming assessment techniques used are appropriate

- learner evidence is generated as per the technique identified in the component specification and using appropriate instruments as indicated in the validated programme

- information on assessment was provided to learners i.e. submission dates, guidelines/briefs, assessment criteria, reasonable accommodation, extension request policy, feedback etc.

- appropriate documentation was issued to learners

- appropriate documentation was used to record learner results

- maintain and update reports and learner information on HCT Learnings secure log in web application

The internal verifier's will:

- identify and correct/liaise with assessors on any errors/omissions

- note any irregularities and take the appropriate corrective action

- liaise with HCT Learnings management team on any issues or concerns arising

Check and Confirm the Completeness and Accuracy of Assessment Results

The internal verification process at HCT Learning will involve the verification of assessment results. This will involve checking that assessment evidence is available for all learners presented and that results are recorded and grades are assigned according to the validated programme requirements.

For **ALL** learners requesting certification the internal verifier will check/confirm that:

- evidence is available for all learners presented for an award (i.e. evidence for all minors is available for the major award)

- percentage marks and grades awarded are consistent with QQI grading bands

- provisional results report(s) for the learner group(s) are available

- results are recorded/available for all learners being entered on both HCT Learnings web application and QBS system reports

- evidence is available for all learner results recorded

1.6.4 IV Stage 1 - Receiving Assessments

At the first stage of the IV process, the Administrator will the prepare the assessments for the Pedagogical Reviewer. They will complete the following steps:

- Upon completion of a programme all assessments arrive into our head office within the relevant deadline dates

- Assessments are sorted into their relevant groups

- Each assessment is stamped with the date of receipt into our office

- The assessments are then logged and the AVL (assessment verification log) printed

- A centre marking sheet is attached to each assessment based on their validated programme of completion - these sheets have the learners name and PPS number written on them and are attached to the front of each assessment

- Assessments are arranged in order of surname

- An assessment receipt will be sent confirming work received

- The assessments will then be passed to the Pedagogical Reviewer

The Administrator will be required to:

- Maintain accurate and comprehensive records of learner's attendance, ensuring that attendance is kept up to date and that any changes to learners attendance such as non starters, drop outs are recorded and communicated to relevant departments

- Record learners feedback and notes onto MyHCT - which will be used to reflect and report on during RAP and programme enhancement

- Upload where required programme photos/videos and recordings

1.6.5 IV Stage 2 - Pedagogical Review Report

The Pedagogical Reviewer will review all assessments and trainers marking to ensure that fair and consistent marking for each submission is being achieved by ensuring that marks are being allocated in a fair and transparent way in line with the awards assessment requirements and QQI national standards. The trainers will mark any skills demonstrations completed by learners as part of the assessment criteria with QQI by using HCT Learning's standardised trainer marking sheets. The trainer will then submit all marked assessments along with back up evidence to our head office for review by our Pedagogical Reviewer. They will then produce the Pedagogical Reviewers Report.

This report will be completed for every group. To access this report – the Pedagogical Reviewer will be provided with log in details to our online secure web application - MYHCT. Once they have logged onto MyHCT, this will allow them access to the programme as a whole. They can view attendance, cross check feedback and other related information to the programme itself. They will document a detailed review of their findings on assessment criteria, evidence required to mark the group, RRA in group, any second marking, recommendation to RAP for changes to marks or grade hangers, issues,

errors or if the group is meeting the national standard. This report will then be printed from MyHCT and placed with each group marked.

They will also report on any minor changes that may be needed to assessment booklets or briefs - it is documented on their report and brought forward to the QQI team who will document and bring forward to RAP.

Once this review and report have been completed they are returned to the centre to be internally verified.

Pedagogical Reviewer Marking Guidelines

They will be provided with assessment guidelines for assessing the learners for certification, these guidelines must be followed at all times:

- Review assessment specification for the programme they are assessing and ensure the learners assessment is meeting the validated requirements
- Ensure that the validated programme is meeting the Component Specification learning outcomes, where inconsistencies are found it will be Red Flagged through the Pedagogical Reviewers report for the attention of the Academic Council or the Quality and Monitoring Committee
- Check that correct assessment has been allocated to correct learner
- Check skills demonstration marks from the trainer have been allocated to the correct learner
- Mark assessments where no marks are required from trainers based on sample answers and marking sheets
- Check the internal paperwork generated for the group being assessed and analyse any discrepancies or highlight areas that need to be addressed further
- View and analyse the Programme Verification Booklet.
- Ensure that no plagiarism is found within the group, where there is evidence a recommendation will be made to RAP
- Review trainers marking and make recommendations for change according to where information is limited or missing
- Review videos, photos and recordings of assessment
- Transfer or mark learners individual marking sheets in full adding total marks to marking sheet

- They will only round up final marks presented on centre marking sheet i.e. 64.5 - should be rounded up to 65

- Where a learner is found to be grade hanging by one mark i.e.: 49, 64, and 79. Their booklet will be second marked

- Marks must be documented clearly

- Second mark assessments where applicable

- Complete the Pedagogical Reviewers Report in detail tracking the programme development and review

- Liaise with QQI Programme Evaluator and QQI Assessment Verifier on errors/omissions and/or issues arising

In order to aid them in marking assessments they will be provided with the following information:

- Learner assessments

- Individual marking sheets - stating learners name and PPS number

- Pedagogical Reviewers Report Template or access to MyHCT, where a digital copy can be completed

- Assessors guidelines pack which includes:
    o Programme registration details
    o Programme statement of design
    o Statement of programme needs
    o Assessment specification
    o Component specification
    o Validation information
    o Blank centre marking sheet
    o Blank assessment booklets - skills demonstration booklet, exam, assignment brief, sample answers, pack validation report and programme pack

1.6.6   IV Stage 3 - Internal Verification Checklist

The QQI Programme Evaluator will complete the Internal Verification Checklist. They will examining the programme as a whole reporting on any changes etc. They will:

- Allocate programme codes, check QBS codes reports in order to appoint the correct sequence for QBS certification system

- Download and upload programmes to QBS

- Process invalid learners on QBS

- Once the Pedagogical Reviewers Report has been completed - check calculations and notes

- Carry out an evaluation on each programme completed - ensuring that all programme requirements are being met and reviewed

- Checking trainers have completed all necessary paperwork associated with the programme

- Ensuring all assessment evidence has been supplied by the trainer

- Review recommendations made by the Pedagogical Reviewer and make recommendations for the RAP

- Update summary results on MyHCT and QBS

- Produce the Internal Verification Checklist Report

Results Summary Sheet

The QQI Programme Evaluator will once they have completed their report, upload the results for each learner onto MyHCT and print a results summary sheet to be placed on top of each group. They will then upload the same results to QBS. The group is then ready for the Internal Verification Report.

Duplicate Groups

HCT Learning may have enrolled learners who have completed more than one programme within that submission cycle. Where this occurs learners or groups may share internal centre codes for ease of access. The QBS system will operate in a similar manner - where a learner has already been assigned to a group within that submission cycle they will be re-assigned by updating the second programme they have completed. Programmes for example Training Needs Identification and Design QQI Level 6 and Training Delivery and Evaluation QQI Level 6 the vast majority of learners registered will complete both and as a group share the same internal codes. For the purpose of certification and external authentication they will be reported and internally verified as individual groups. They will share the same internal group code - but will be presented as 2 groups. For information purposes to each department all paperwork will reflect this also both internally and externally to our clients and learners alike.

Invalid Learners with QQI - (QBS Online System)

Learners from time to time once they have been uploaded onto the QBS system, return as being invalid. The reason for this is that the information that QQI have on their system may be different from what has been registered with HCT Learning. The QQI Programme Evaluator will monitor this

daily by checking booking information, registration forms, and assessment booklets and cross reference all information that has been provided to us from the learners. This will also be monitored from MyHCT. It will be tracked by each submission period. In cases where a discrepancy still is occurring, we will contact that learner directly to obtain a digital copy of ID, in the form of a passport, social services card or any other form of ID that will help their case. This will then be uploaded onto the Q-Help system for processing with QQI. HCT Learning will endeavour to work on all invalid learners in due course following submission dates with QQI. The QQI Programme Evaluator will watch QQI's notice board on the QBS system allowing for deadline dates with working on invalids also. In cases where we do not get information through on time - the learners will be removed from the group and submission until the next set of certification dates with QQI.

1.6.7   IV Stage 4 – Internal Verification Report

The Training Manager will complete the Internal Verification Report ensuring all evidence requirements have been met. They will sample mark 2 learners at random from each programme to ensure consistency of marking throughout. The Internal Verification Report will confirm the outcome of the Internal Verification process for each individual assessment group being presented for submission.

The general findings from the Pedagogical Reviewers Report and Internal Verification Checklist are reviewed and any actions that may be required. The report then covers the general standard of the group, if the marking criteria have been applied consistently, if there are any plagiarism issues and the grading bands for assessments. They will:

- Internally verify all learners and groups in preparation for certification
- Ensure that all evidence requirements are met and supplied by trainer – such as competency, skills completed, RRA required, exam seating plans/times, sign over of assessments
- Sample mark 2 learners for each group to ensure fair and consistent marking is being achieved
- Give overall feedback on group – giving recommendations for change to marks as a results of plagiarism, inconsistent marking etc. for approval and final decision by the RAP
- Complete the Internal Verification Report in preparation for final submission to QQI
- Detail improvements needed by trainers when delivering the programme and provide this feedback to trainers after the submission

1.6.8   IV Stage 5 – Final checks & Submission of Results to QQI

The QQI Assessment Verifier will look at all programmes going forward for submission to ensure consistent marking across all programmes. They will check all information identified over previous stages of IV to ensure they have been actioned. They will:

- Complete Certification Report – Group Summary, investigate and record findings for submission
- Check all programme related material has been completed from the Pedagogical Review Report, Internal Verification Checklist and Internal Verification Report
- Ensure that all learners that have submitted work and a grade has been allocated
- Check QBS results, ensuring that correct results have been allocated to the correct person and that the HCT marking sheet and QBS marking sheet are in line
- Indicate on the QBS marking sheet the numbers in each grade category and average results achieved
- Once all groups are ready - check for assessment consistency in each assessment e.g. skills demonstration, exam
- Check and process Red Flags
- Check total numbers against QBS, physical groups and MyHCT
- Arrange for External Authenticators to visit our office
- Submit final results to QQI
- Complete Certification Report – Trainers Submission Feedback

Authentication Report by Learner Group by Minor

The QQI Assessment Verifier will second check all results on QBS - matching the results summary sheet that has been completed for each group. They will check the spelling of learners names and update any discrepancies that arise from final checks. They will then print the authentication report for each group from QBS and place with each group for that submission period.

Certification Report – Group Summary

Once all groups have been internally verified by all relevant departments, the QQI Assessment Verifier will arrange each group to be placed in a secure room for viewing by an External Authenticator. The groups will be arranged in order of trainer delivery if there is more than one group. The groups are then checked by our Certification Report – Group Summary which reports on the total amount of groups of that particular programme. It will have a number of different cross-referencing checks from learners booked to learners submitted. The amount of programmes that a

particular trainer delivered that submission period- result average by percentage for that trainer, summary feedback for the trainer, and feedback from learners and clients.

1.6.9   External Authentication

HCT Learning will engage with an External Authenticator for each assessment period to provide independent authoritative confirmation of fair and consistent assessment of learners in accordance with the national standards. Thus the credibility of HCT Learnings assessment processes will be established and assurance provided that HCT Learnings assessment results have been marked in a valid and reliable way and are compliant with the requirements for the award.

An External Authenticator will be assigned for each validated component award. The EA will be independent of HCT Learning. They will moderate assessment results for an award or across a number of awards within a related field or sub-field. The EA will have broad subject matter expertise in the appropriate field or subfield of learning. The outcome of the External Authentication process at HCT Learning will be an External Authentication Report which will comment on the effectiveness of the application of the assessment process and procedures and in particular comment on the extent to which the marks/grades conform to national standards. The centre will receive feedback on areas of improvement or areas of best practice. This information will be brought forward to the RAP Meeting and discussed on how best to implement.

Assigning External Authenticators

HCT Learning will:

- Establish the number of special purpose/supplemental awards on offer within its provision
- Select and assign one or more External Authenticators for each special purpose/supplemental award based on broad subject matter expertise

HCT Learning will ensure that all special purpose/supplemental award areas have an External Authenticator assigned per annum.

Frequency on our sample of assessment will be tracked and submitted for viewing to an EA over a two-year cycle.

Criteria for Selection of the External Authenticator

The Academic Council will set the criteria for selection of External Authenticators and where required will use a recruitment agency to recruit EAs. Based on HCT Learnings assessment planning for the coming submission period with QQI, all programmes that are due for sampling with an EA will be put forward to the relevant External Authenticator based on fields of learning and expertise. Following QQIs guidelines on selecting an External Authenticator, HCT Learning will appoint the subject matter expert against the following criteria:

- Technical/subject matter expertise within the appropriate award area/field of learning
- Experience of delivering programme assessment or work in the industry/field
- Have received training in the process
- Have the qualities necessary to interact with learners, assessors and senior staff members i.e. communication skills
- Have administrative and IT skills e.g. report writing, time-management skills
- Undertake to operate within the code of practice and guidelines issued by QQI https://qhelp.qqi.ie/providers/isced-fields-of-education-and-training
- Be available at per agreed schedule
- Be independent of the HCT Learning centre
- Use a Recruitment agency to recruit External Authenticators
- The same EA won't authenticate more than six times over a two-year period.
- The same EA won't authenticate the same programme more than three times over and two-year period and never consecutively.

Contingency Plan for EA Cover

Based on our Assessment Plan policy, HCT Learning will ensure that each newly validated programme will be viewed by an Authenticator. All programmes will then be monitored over a 2 year period and put forward to an EA before the 2 years have lapsed, this is monitored from MyHCT - External Assessor Report. HCT Learning will choose the relevant External Authenticator based on fields of learning and expertise during assessment planning. Contact will be made with the expert highlighting the components that are due for authentication during that submission period. Where is has been found that the External Authenticator is unable to make themselves available as per the agreed schedule, HCT Learning will endeavour to contact another Authenticator as soon as possible. If it is not possible to implement an Authenticator within the submission deadline date with QQI, the relevant groups will be pulled and put into secure storage until the next submission date with QQI.

Preparing for an EA Visit

Once all assessment groups are ready and an External Authenticator has been selected based on our EA Policy, HCT Learning will provide the following room set up for the EA; They will have full access to the below in both hard and soft form:

- QA Document
- EA Policies and Procedures Document
- Laptop with access to videos and MyHCT
- Groups will be arranged by components, then by trainer for ease of access for the EA
- All learners within each group will be in alphabetical order matching the QBS and HCT Learnings summary sheet
- Each group will have in order, QBS results summary sheet, IV Report, IV Checklist, Pedagogical Reviewers Report, HCT Learning results summary, AVL, Programme Verification Booklet and Learners Assessment booklets in alphabetical order

Placed on top of each group will be an assessment guidelines pack - each pack is relevant to each programme due to be authenticated with an EA - Included in this pack are the following:

- New Pack Validation Report
- Programme pack
- Assessment material - to include skills booklets, briefs, exams
- Trainer skills marking sheet- available in Programme Verification Booklet
- Sample answers
- Component specification
- Validation application forms
- Assessment specification

HCT Learning - External Assessment Online

HCT Learning provides our selected External Authenticators online access to MyHCT. It is by secure log in details that are made available to the EA on the morning of their visit to our centre. Once they have logged onto MyHCT, they will have an overview of the groups to be submitted. They will gain access to a report system which gives an overview of the programmes and number of learners. It also gives them digital access to photo evidence for skills-based programmes.

The QQI Assessment Verifier will brief the EA on the room layout, give a general run down on the groups and highlight any areas that need to be addressed with the EA. They will be on hand throughout the day to discuss the groups or obtain any further information or documentation that the EA would need to fulfil their role.

Role and Responsibilities of the External Authenticator

The role of the External Authenticator at HCT Learning is to provide independent confirmation of fair and consistent assessment of learners in line with the award requirements and to ensure consistency of assessment results with national standards.

The External Authenticators appointed by HCT Learning will:

- Confirm the fair and consistent assessment of learners consistent with the providers procedures and with QQIs policy on quality assuring assessment

- Review Internal Verification Report(s) and authenticate the findings/outcomes

- Apply a sampling strategy to moderate assessment results

- Moderate assessment results in accordance with standards outlined in the award specification

- Visit HCT Learnings head office and meet with appropriate staff and learners

- Participate in the results approval process, if requested

- Identify any issues/irregularities in relation to the assessment process

- Recommend results for approval

- Produce an External Authentication Report

EA Contract

All External Authenticators that have been assigned to authenticate for HCT Learning will be required to complete an EA contract. This contract will be emailed directly to them following a verbal agreement of services. Within this contract, they will have access to proposed subject groups and expected numbers of learners. They will be given an overview of the information available on the day of their visit, our terms of sampling as per our centre policy and any other terms and conditions that may apply to their role.

Moderation of Results

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The External Authenticator will moderate assessment results within an award or across a number of awards in a specific field or sub-field of learning in which they have relevant expertise. This is done by judging the marked evidence presented according to the standards outlined in the award specification.

In general, HCT Learning will expect any External Authenticator appointed to possess the expertise necessary to moderate results in general award areas e.g. Communications. The critical points at which judgment will be applied are the boundaries between bands/grades: Referred/Pass, Pass/Merit, Merit/Distinction. Consequently, the External Authenticator will review results and check the standard of evidence at each grade band:

- Successful (levels 1 - 3), Distinction, Merit, Pass at (levels 4 - 6) by examining samples of evidence within each grade band and at the borders of grades.

Frequency of External Authentication

The frequency of External Authentication at HCT Learning will depend on the frequency at which certification is being sought, the number of learners and the range and type of awards being offered within a field or sub-field and the sampling strategy defined by HCT Learning. New trainers will have at least one programme externally authenticated in the next submission.

It is noted that, a sample of all assessment results being submitted to QQI for awards in a specific field/sub-field through the results approval process will be externally authenticated to ensure the credibility of HCT Learnings assessment processes and the fair and consistent assessment of learners.

Sampling of Assessments for External Authentication

Sampling is the process of selecting a portion of learner results and learner evidence for the purposes of completing Internal Verification and External Authentication of assessment, within each special purpose/supplemental award area.

HCT Learning will devise an appropriate sampling strategy of programme groups for submission for each assessment period. The sample of groups delivered will be fair and consistent and enable the identification of any deviation from best practice. This strategy will assist HCT Learning establish whether quality procedures are being implemented appropriately. HCT Learning prides itself on the fact they will always adopt 100% sampling for all our groups that are being submitted for all certification periods with QQI. This is to establish best practice across all ranges of assessment

activities. An appropriate strategy will be defined for each assessment period and HCT Learning will ensure that all learner and all assessment techniques are as follows:

- is sufficient in size to enable sound judgments to be made about the fairness and consistency of assessment decisions
- covers the full range of attainment in terms of grades achieved
- includes a random selection of evidence for each grade/band
- identifies evidence which is borderline between grades e.g. learners who have not or learners who have only just achieved within the grading band
- ensures new assessor judgments/decisions are sampled at least once during the assessment cycle
- includes all named awards offered

Consideration will also be given to:

- the number of assessors
- the number of learners
- the number, range and diversity of awards being offered

In general, having considered the above criteria, a formula such as; $\sqrt{n} + 1$ where n is the total population of learners will guide the sampling strategy with a minimum sample size of 12 been taken, for n >= 12 and <= 144.

HCT Learnings Role and Responsibilities to External Authenticators

HCT Learning will ensure that groups are arranged in a secure, well lit room. It is the QQI Assessment Verifiers responsibility to sit with the EA to brief them on the days work ahead highlighting anything that they need to be aware of before looking at each group. Each group of programmes presented will be uniformed for ease of access. There will be an assessors guidelines pack available for each group and placed on top of each group for authentication. The pack gives an overview of the programme. The Assessment Verifier will go through the centre process for understanding of the internal forms and what they mean.

The External Authentication Report

Having completed the HCT Learning External Authentication process the EA will complete an External Authentication Report and HCT External Authentication Checklist, confirming the outcome of the External Authentication process. This report will be available to the Results Approval Panel(RAP) and will provide an auditable trail for QQI monitoring. It provides evidence that the

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External Authentication process has taken place. It will comment on the outcomes of results moderation against the national standard, acknowledge strengths, any gaps and areas for improvement.

The External Authenticator appointed by HCT Learning will use the centres QQI External Authenticator report template to prepare this report.

1.6.10   Results Approval Panel Meeting (RAP)

HCT Learning will establish a results approval process for each assessment period. This process will ensure that learner results are fully quality assured and signed off by the centre prior to a request to QQI for certification. The results approval process will also ensure that the appropriate decisions are made regarding the outcome of assessment and the authentication processes. Due consideration will be given to relevant Pedagogical, IV and EA reports. An action plan for corrective action will be initiated as circumstances require.

Membership of the panel will include senior staff from HCT Learning; the QQI Assessment Verifier, QQI Programme Evaluator, Training Manager, Administrator, Pedagogical Reviewer, Centre Manager and trainers etc. The specific role of the panel is to review and approve the provisional results, review reports from the Internal Verification process and External Authentication, agree to the submission of the final results to QQI and to request certification. In addition, any issues arising in relation to the assessment results, briefs, and assessment booklets are discussed and recommendations that have been made from the Pedagogical Reviewers Report, Internal Verification Reports are made for the Corrective Action Plan to be put in place. The RAP will make the final decision on changes to be made to learners marks due to inconsistency in marking or in cases of plagiarism.

A report of the meeting is prepared which is signed by each member of the panel. This report will be retained at the centre and will provide an auditable trail for QQI desk monitoring. It forms the evidence that the authentication process has taken place. It will acknowledge strengths, areas of best practice, any gaps and areas for improvement in the authentication process.

The Results Approval Panel Report will include:

- Panel membership
- Agenda for meeting
- Proposals to the meeting

- Minutes of meeting

Sample agenda for RAP meeting:
- Provisional results for consideration
- Internal Verification Report
- External Authentication Report
- Overview of each group going through that submission period
- Corrective actions
- Any other business
- Decide EA groups for next submission

There may be a number of formal proposals recorded in the minutes:
- To adapt the recommendation of the IV report
- To adapt the recommendations of the EA report
- To approve results before the meeting (provisional now approved)
- To request QQI for certification
- To issue results to learners flagging the opportunity to appeal

Moderation of Results

HCT Learning has a robust IV process in place. All learner results are recorded on MyHCT, this is password protected and only authorised staff will have access to this report system. Once results have been updated and if the overall total percentage grade of the groups is showing to be below 70% a red flag will be raised as part of our moderation of results. The group will be reviewed from programme planning, delivery and assessment as a result the QQI Programme Evaluator will be required to evaluate the trainers overall performance and provide feedback in a range of areas whilst completing the IV Checklist. A Moderation Report will then be completed for the groups. This report will be included for viewing by the EA and feedback will be made available for RAP, trainers and the Academic Council for review.

Assessment Malpractice

HCT Learning are fully committed to ensuring that any instances of malpractice relating to assessments are fully investigated and dealt with in an appropriate manner that is in line with the validity of an assessment. Examples of assessment malpractice activities include:

- Learner plagiarism i.e. passing off someone else's work as the learner's own with or without their permission. This may involve direct plagiarism of another learner's work or getting another individual to complete the assessment activity

- Impersonation of another learner

- Fabrication of evidence

- Alteration of results

- Wrongly obtaining secure assessment material e.g. examinations

- Behaving in any way such as to undermine the integrity of the assessment process

HCT Learning will ensure that any allegations will be fully investigated and appropriate actions will be taken under our Assessment Malpractice Procedures. Any outcomes of the investigation will be documented and reported to an External Authenticator during the respected submission period. All outcomes will also be updated on MyHCT and will be flagged on our Red Flag system and may be brought forward under our Corrective Action Plan.

Any alleged instances of plagiarism will be examined thoroughly by trainers, the Pedagogical Reviewer and during the IV process to establish the facts and relative context of the alleged offence taking into account the nature and extent of the plagiarism and penalties will apply where plagiarism is confirmed to have taken place.

All assessment booklets given to learners from HCT Learning will have a plagiarism declaration statement which is to be signed by the learner directly. This indicates that the work presented is that of the learners, these are found on the assignment brief and also on the assignment receipt form.

Where a trainer, Pedagogical Reviewer or IV detects a suspected instance of plagiarism in a learners' assignment or examination the following will apply:

- The alleged instance will be documented in all IV reports - informing and outlining the outcome and will be communicated to the External Authenticator

- If a learners final grades are altered due to an alleged instance by 20% or more for the initial final grade, the learner or learner representative is contacted directly and the learner is given an opportunity to dispute the allegation. Alleged Compromise of Integrity of Assessment Report Form

- All learners that have taken part in plagiarism will automatically be deducted marks

- A review and discussion of the situation will take place

- The following course of action may be followed:

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- o Discussion directly with the learner on the issue. The learner is then required to resubmit their assignment along with an administration fee of €50
- o The learner will not be submitting an assignment for the programme in discussion

1.6.11 Final Checks and Results Submitted to QQI

Following the RAP meeting, the QQI Assessment Verifier will double check all groups are ready and correct. Time is taken to second check learner groups that have been uploaded to the QBS system. Results will be submitted to QQI through the QBS system by the QQI Assessment Verifier. This is done in due time for the 12th date of each submission period. Once submitted, QQI will issue a receipt that is printed and filed away with all assessment documentation for ease of access. Trainers will then receive their submission feedback. The Training Manager will review this feedback in order to discuss improvements with them.

1.6.12 Review of Submission by Quality and Monitoring Committee

All reports created throughout the assessment process will be reviewed by the Quality & Monitoring Committee after each submission. They will then issue their own report to be submitted at the next Academic Council meeting for review.

1.6.13 Filing Assessments

After each certification period, HCT Learning will keep all assessments for a minimum period of 6 months, however all internal reporting paperwork generated will be kept for 5 years. Once the results have had their final check and where required externally authenticated, groups will be grouped and stored, in order to do this the assessments and the paperwork will need to be separated.

Each group should be presented with the HCT Internal Verification Report on top with the programme groups below.

Each programme should have the following information:
- QQI Provisional Results – generated from QBS, results entered by centre
- HCT Learning Internal Verification Report
- Internal Verification Checklist
- Pedagogical Reviewers Report

- Programme Verification Booklet

- HCT Learning Results Summary Sheet

- HCT Learning Assessment Verification Log – AVL

- Learner assessments with individual centre marking sheets attached

All the above paperwork generated will be filed away in folders for ease of access. HCT Learning has developed the appropriate procedures for filing, recording and storing of all learners assessment material. We have ensured that adequate provisions have been put in place to ensure learner confidentiality. All assessments will be filed away in locked drawers for the allocated time frame.

Assignment Holding Policy

HCT Learning will store all learners assessment booklets in a secure location on site for a period of up to 6 months. Learners may wish to request their assessments to be returned to them. HCT Learning is happy to oblige with this request. There is an administration and handling fee of €15 for this request. Details of this request will be available to the learner on their learner declaration form. All other assessments are securely destroyed 6 months after the certification date. In the case of plagiarism, assessments will not be returned to the learners.

Learner Records

HCT Learning store and have access to learner records for learners who have attended our programmes. This provides us with information regarding what programme they have attended, their results and award received. This is stored on a password protected web application under the Learner section. We retain this information in order to trace learner progression.

1.6.14   Results Information Pack & Letter

HCT Learning will issue results letters to individual learners and supervisors/learner representatives. Results for each submission cycle cannot be given out until external authentication has taken place. Emails will be sent out to each representative detailing the programme award information and links to QQI for further programme information. This email will be sent directly from MyHCT, it will record the date that it has been sent for future records. It will state the learners name as per their cert, programme name, result and grades. It will explain the breakdown of the final grade. Learners will be given information of our assignment holding policy and fees. Learners will be also provided with appeals procedures and our repeat of assessment activities and fees applying to that procedure. HCT Learning will also provide the representative a receipt of payment for their records. For supervisors

or learners that have not paid in full for their programme, results will not be issued, however HCT Learning will issue them with a notification informing them that results are available once payment has been made. Learners are also provided with information on major awards and credits which are linked to their chosen programme. There will be a list of progression opportunities and links to QQI website infographics for all HCT Learnings statistics and information.

Release of Results Letters

Results information packs and letters will not be released for any learners where payment has not been paid for in full. HCT Learning has a policy in place that payment is required 30 days after the programme has finished result/s or certificate/s will not be realised until all outstanding balances are cleared. Notification will be sent to the programme representative, notifying those whose results are ready and any payments that are outstanding. Results emails will be created from MyHCT after the 12th of each submission period with QQI. The accounts department will update payment reports on HCT Learning's web application and results will go out accordingly on that day. Accounts will again check all payments received 14 days later and results will be issued out to those that have made payment during that period. For results whose payments are received after the 14-day window, they will not be released until 2 days before the expected issue date of certificates from QQI following a further third check on payments received by our accounts department.

HCT Learning Assessment Appeals Procedure

HCT Learnings appeals procedure enables learners appeal their result when:

- The learner wishes to query their result.
- The learner requires assistance in understanding their result breakdown.

Only approved results can be formally appealed by the learner. Consequently, the HCT Learning appeals process is enabled when:

- All results have been approved through the results approval process.
- Learners have been issued with the approved results flagging the opportunity to appeal.
- A request for an appeal has been received within 14 days of the issue of approved/final results.

A learner requests an appeal of results by completing the HCT Learning appeals request form and paying the appropriate administration fee of €50 of which €25, is refunded if the appeal is successful. This form is obtainable directly from our head office. When an appeal request is received,

HCT Learning will review the assessment process for the specific learner concerned. This will include a review of the assessment result and a second marking of learner evidence where appropriate. The assessor who evaluates a learner appeal **will not** be the assessor who made the original assessment decision. It is noted that grades can drop because of an appeal.

The only evidence which may be presented by the learner at appeal is that which has already been presented for assessment. New evidence may not be added by the learner for the appeal.

HCT Learning is committed to notifying a learner of the outcome of an appeal within 5 working days.

Outcome of an Appeal

- If there is no change in grade then the learner is so informed. There is no need to contact QQI as there is no change of grade.

- If there is a change in grade to anything other than a distinction then the learner is so informed. QQI will be informed of the change in grade and a request is made for an amended certificate.

- If there is a change in grade to a distinction then the learner is informed of this outcome. QQI will be informed of the change in grade and a request is made for an amended certificate.

Learners are informed of the opportunity to appeal their approved/final results at learner induction and, as appropriate, throughout the delivery of the programme. Comprehensive details of the process are outlined in the learner information pack and on HCT Learnings website: http://www.hctlearning.ie/learners_info.php

Repeat of Assessment Activities

HCT learning has implemented a number of provisions to offer learners an opportunity to repeat an assessment activity to achieve certification, this would occur in situations where a learner has not achieved a pass grade, missed a deadline date and has no extenuating circumstance that is not valid under our terms. This will depend on the nature of the activity and the practical and/or operational issues involved. Reasons as to why this may be required:

- A learner has missed part of the assessment due to nonattendance.
- Failure of an exam paper.
- A misunderstanding of assessment criteria.
- Missed an extension deadline date with no valid reason.

- A learner has not submitted an assessment on first round and would like to add to their assessment grades.

The following instances have been put in place for learners:

Regular Repeat of Assessment (Maximum 2 weeks)

Where a learner has missed the deadline date communicated for the programme they have attended without any valid reason and wishes to submit the assessment up to 2 weeks after the deadline date agreed the learner will be asked to follow our repeat of assessment activities policy. The learner is required to contact head office to discuss their situation and the charges of €20 will be required in order to authorise the regular repeat of assessment activity.

Extreme Repeat of Assessment (At the discretion of HCT Learning)

Where a learner has missed the deadline date communicated for the programme they have attended without any valid reasons and wishes to submit the assessment up to 2 - 6 weeks after the deadline date agreed the learner will be asked to follow our repeat of assessment activities policy. The learner is required to contact our head office to discuss their situation and the charges of €40 will be required in order to authorise the extreme repeat of assessment activity.

Extensions Falling Outside 6 week Programme Deadline Date

Where a learner has missed the dateline date communicated for the programme they have attended without any valid reasons and wishes to submit the assessment 6 weeks after the deadline date agreed the learner will be asked to follow our Repeat of Assessment Policy. The costs associated will differ depending on the assessment they are wishing to submit and the nature of the programme they have attended associated cost for this activity will range between €50 and €150 to the learner. All information on the learner will be destroyed after a period of 6 Months as per our assessment holding policy.

Following a Programme Fail

If a learner needs to repeat an exam or resubmit an assessment due to not achieving a pass grade or the learner has not fully submitted assessment on first round and would like to add to their grades. They are required to contact our head office to discuss the nature of their request. The QA team will ask the learner to complete an extension request form and send to our head office. This is completed online and updated through MyHCT for tracking. The nature of this request will fall into our extenuating circumstance extension and will be dealt with on a case by case basis. The learners

will be required to give evidence to support their request HCT Learning may charge an administration fee of up to €150 for this request. This fee will depend on the nature of the assessment type missed and any operational issues that may arise. All information on the learner will be destroyed after a period of 6 Months as per our assessment holding policy.

Our policy is that Learners will be given the opportunity to avail of a repeat of assessment of activities a maximum of 3 times with HCT Learning. Firstly in the event of a non-submission for first repeat, second repeat following a fail and finally a third repeat - there will be costs occurring for each request as they will be treated as individual requests. Learners are to note that the opportunity to repeat will depend on the nature, practical and/or any operational issues involved in the activity.

Feedback to Learners on Assessment

HCT Learning has a policy in place to ensure that if a learner requires feedback on their assessment, it is done so in a timely manner. This will be constructive feedback on the marking received on their assessment. Feedback is initially carried out by the QQI Assessment Verifier. They will go through the learners marks from the centre marking sheet. If further feedback is sought, they will arrange for this to take place with the programme assessor and or trainer involved with the marking of the programme. They will inform the learner of the appeals process or Repeat of Assessment Policy. Learners can contact our head office directly to request to speak with the QQI Assessment Verifier regarding feedback.

HCT Learning provides learners with formative feedback at the midway point of their course. Formative feedback ensures the learner is completely aware of their strengths and weaknesses, and how they can work to improve them. Formative feedback will provide the learners with the opportunity to enhance their overall learning experience. If the learner feels they need to, the opportunity to discuss the feedback with their trainer in a more detailed manner will also be available.

1.6.15 Receiving Certificates from QQI

HCT Learning will follow key dates and Information provided from QQI on planning for receiving of certificates into our office. QQI will issue the date that certificates will be released for that certification period. Generally HCT Learning will receive certificates to our head office within 3 working days of the issue date of certificates from QQI. Once received, certificates will be sorted into

their relevant programme groups as per centre allocated codes and checked against details on MyHCT. QQI will issue a letter with updates, date for changes to certificates and any other business. They will also issue a list of learners from each group submitted; certificates are checked against this list.

Posting Certificates

The Administrator will sort certificates as per client, as clients may have more than 1 learner and more than 1 programme for each submission cycle with HCT Learning. Certificates will then be placed in preaddressed hard back A4 envelopes (please do not bend). They are not sealed at this point they will be second checked to make sure all certificates are going to the correct clients. Certificates will not be issued to clients/learners who have not made payment to us. The report on MyHCT will be updated as certs are sent out, this will in turn update the date that the cert has been sent for future records. Certificates that payment has not yet been received will be placed in a secure/locked cabinet for future checking. Accounts will check payments on the first working day of each month and release any certificates that have been in storage and update clients that have made payment to us. Certificates will then be rechecked again and updated on the paid for report and posted out.

Certificate Errors

From time to time there may be changes required in relation to certificates these occur in the form of name changes, spelling errors etc. Learners are requested to notify all cert errors to our head office within 5 working days. Changes that fall outside of this, will incur charges of up to €20 per certificate. Where it is has been found that a learner has noted an error they are required to send back the original cert to our head office along with a copy if their ID once received the HCT Learning will inform QQI of the changes through the Q-Help system. They will upload a copy of the cert, ID and any other relevant information for their case. Certificate reissues can only be completed at the next certification period.

Lost Certificates

Where a learner has lost or misplaced their cert, HCT Learning can offer a Record of Awards and a letter to state that they have completed such programme with us. QQI will offer the same record of awards. Learners are to note that HCT will only provide learners with information on programmes completed with us. Learners are required to contact our Head Office to request a Record of Awards, they will be asked to complete a form and send back to HCT. Only one application form is required

for application and this is regardless of the amount of awards achieved with us. Proof of Identity is a mandatory requirement with this request. The cost associated with this request is €7.00 which is to be paid on submission of the application. The learner will then receive a hard copy in the post and a soft copy to their supplied email address.

Appendix

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