

Annex to NCFE Regulations for the Conduct of External Assessments (Covid-19)

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Updates new to this version are highlighted.

Annex to NCFE Regulations for the Conduct of External Assessments (Covid-19)

Considering recent Government announcements around the maintenance of social distancing, NCFE would like to offer guidance to centres on the implementation and delivery of our external assessments and adherence to our Regulations for the Conduct of External Assessment, for as long as these restrictions apply.

This document should be read in conjunction with our [Regulations for the Conduct of External Assessment](#).

1. Varying Assessment Start Times

Within our Regulations for the Conduct of External Assessment, NCFE permits assessments to begin within a window of 30 minutes from the published start time. Therefore, for assessments of 1 hour or less, assuming learners can be supervised appropriately, we would encourage centres to conduct the assessment in 2 sittings, beginning 30 minutes either side of the published start time.

For assessments of more than 1 hour, centres are requested to complete an [Assessment Variation Request](#) should it prove too difficult to undertake the assessment in one sitting.

Centres should now be aware that this option is available for Reformed Functional Skills paper based assessment windows, and, if requested and approved, supersedes any specific instructions given in Appendix 7 of the Regulations for the Conduct of External Assessments.

Therefore, for Reformed Functional Skills qualifications, all learners undertaking the same assessment paper may no longer be required to sit the paper at the same date and time if a Centre submits, and is approved for, an Assessment Variation Request.

2. Learner Entry and Exit from the Assessment Location

NCFE guidance is in accordance with published Government advice.

- learners arriving before the scheduled start time of an assessment will need to be kept separate from other learners arriving at the centre
- centres should identify a location where learners will wait before the assessment that can support social distancing between group 'bubbles', also ensuring that learners who arrive late for the assessment follow social distancing measures

- centres must ensure that there is a plan to manage candidates leaving the assessment room. As part of this, centres need to account for learners finishing at different times

3. Learners with Access Arrangements

Centres should advise invigilators to stand alongside candidates when interacting with them, rather than face to face.

For encounters of over 15 minutes, for example when scribes, readers or other individuals are supporting candidates, staff should maintain a 2-metre distance where possible.

NCFE strongly advises that centres use a separate room for these types of Access Arrangement.

If staff cannot maintain a 2-metre distance, they should avoid close face to face contact and minimise time spent within 1 metre of learners, e.g. solely when checking scribe responses or when candidates identify text to be re-read.

Please note that NCFE will now permit, temporarily and for the sole purpose of staff working on a 1-1 basis with learners at close contact, centres to produce an additional photocopy of the assessment paper to facilitate this scenario. This additional copy must be returned to NCFE, or securely destroyed, immediately following the external assessment.

It is up to the discretion of the staff member or centre as to whether they choose to wear a face-covering or not in these occasions.

In line with current JCQ guidance, we continue to require learners to be assessed appropriately before any Access Arrangements or Reasonable Adjustments can be applied. Assessments should take place in the physical presence of the learners where possible, considering current social distancing measures, although remote assessment may be appropriate in some instances.

4. Assessment Room Layout – Bubbles and Mixed Groups

Desks should not be set up face to face. The minimum distance in all directions from centre to centre of learners' chairs must be 1.25 metres, this distance is the minimum that must be maintained for students within a group bubble.

All learners not in a group bubble should be seated 2 metres apart from each other, and it is at the discretion of the centre if they can be seated in the same room as those in a group bubble.

There is no regulatory limit on the number of learners who can be accommodated in an assessment room, any upper limit depends on the desk spacing requirements and room size available.

5. Invigilation Arrangements

NCFE are very mindful of those centres, particularly FE Colleges and Private Training Providers, who deliver our qualifications and associated assessments in workplaces or similar. With this in mind, for those centres who are unable to send invigilators into workplaces because of remote locations and/or Covid-19 restrictions, we have now produced a training resource [available on our website](#) to enable employees within workplaces to be upskilled so that invigilation can be maintained safely and securely in these areas.

Please contact us if you require further clarity or explanation to assist you in the delivery of this resource.

6. Special Considerations

A [Special Consideration](#) should be submitted immediately before, on the day of, or up to 5 days after an external assessment if a learner may have been disadvantaged due to an adverse circumstance during the assessment. This includes instances of a learner missing an external assessment following a requirement to isolate for Covid-19 related reasons.

7. Further Support

For further details on the Government advice to centres, [please see here](#).

If you require further detail or information on any of the above, or on anything else relating to NCFE's Regulations for the Conduct of External Assessments, please visit our website, or contact our Assessment Delivery Team at assessmentdelivery@ncfe.org.uk