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# **OCN London Qualifications Guidance for Centres on Assessment, Moderation and Awarding in 2020-21**

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## Context

In May 2020, Ofqual published the 'Extraordinary Regulatory Framework: Vocational and Technical Qualifications, COVID-19 Conditions and Requirements' ('the ERF'). The ERF put in place a framework to facilitate the issue of results in summer 2020 to learners taking vocational and technical qualifications in circumstances where normal assessments were disrupted by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Then in October 2020, Ofqual introduced an Extended Extraordinary Regulatory Framework (EERF). This framework follows on from the ERF by allowing awarding organisations to adapt their qualifications in 2020 and 2021 in recognition of the fact that, although assessments may take place after summer 2020, learners may have experienced disruption to teaching, learning and assessment because of the pandemic.

## About this document

This document is intended for teachers / tutors, internal moderators, quality managers and other staff within OCN London approved centres. It provides guidance on the approach to assessment, moderation and awarding of our qualifications during 2020-21.

Please note that the information provided within this guidance document is correct as of 23 October 2020. Any subsequent changes will be notified to approved centres by email, displayed prominently on our website and included in later versions of this document.

## Awarding OCN London qualifications

OCN London offers a wide range of vocational and vocationally related qualifications that support progression to further learning and employment, personal and social development and competence in occupational areas. Our qualifications are delivered in different learning environments including FE colleges, adult education institutions, schools, training providers, community organisations, prisons and workplaces, and in all cases our priority is to support learners to complete their courses so that they are fully prepared for the next stage of their learning journey.

We have worked with centres since March 2020 to enable the delivery and assessment of our qualifications to continue online and remotely and have appreciated the efforts of centre staff to make this possible. We have discussed and supported centres in the implementation of a broad range of adjustments to delivery and assessment, resulting in learners being able to successfully complete their courses and achieve their intended qualifications.

These adjustments have all been possible within the broad parameters of our qualification specifications. The assessment strategy for most OCN London qualifications provides sufficient flexibility to support learner achievement as units may be assessed using a range of methods, or combination of methods, as appropriate to demonstrate that learning outcomes and assessment criteria have been met. As long as adjustments to assessments continue to meet the prescribed or optional methods and deliver the required outcomes contained in the qualification specification, these can generally be implemented without securing prior permission from OCN London.

## Adaptations to qualifications

There are a number of ways in which changes can be made to a qualification in order to mitigate any disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic to teaching, learning and assessment for learners taking the qualification in 2020 and/or 2021. In the context of the EERF, Ofqual refers to adaptations as changes made by an awarding organisation including to the design, setting, delivery or marking of an assessment.

The flexibility of the assessment requirements is likely to result in there being only a relatively small number of adaptations required to the design or content of OCN London qualifications. Reviews are currently taking place and where a need for any specific adaptation(s) is identified this will be brought to the attention of any centres delivering or likely to deliver that qualification.

Our qualifications are internally assessed and externally moderated, so there are no national examinations or other external assessments to be considered. The date for completion of the delivery of any OCN London qualification remains flexible and can be set by any centre to reflect the needs of its learners for progression to further study or employment. There is no provision within the EERF for the use of calculated results, and it is not anticipated that the process implemented in summer 2020 will be repeated.

There will be no change to the requirement for learners to successfully meet all assessment criteria for each unit in order to achieve a qualification. The flexibility in assessment processes and timescales, and where necessary any adaptation to the content of a qualification, mean that this should remain possible in almost all cases. Where a centre believes that a further adaptation, beyond the scope of the qualification specification and any adaptation already agreed by OCN London, is required to ensure that its learners are not disadvantaged it should contact the Quality Team for advice.

In cases where the need relates to individual learners a request for a reasonable adjustment or special consideration may need to be made. Such requests should be discussed initially with the centre's OCN London External Moderator, who will evaluate whether there is sufficient justification for either of these arrangements. Further information relating to reasonable adjustments and special considerations is provided later in this document.

## Examples of adaptation in practice

Within the normal flexibilities in assessment the following are potential adjustments that may be made in accordance with particular circumstances or learner needs.

- Using different assessment methods, for example conducting telephone/online professional or general discussions, where the learners are able to demonstrate their knowledge. Such discussions should not be a prescribed list of questions but a structured discussion, recorded by video, audio or written means.
- Offering alternative evidence to demonstrate practical skills, for example the learner explaining, orally or in written form, how they would approach and carry out a practical task. Other options could include observation via video of the task, or photographs of the stages of the task being completed, together with a third-party testimony from a reliable witness (or the learner's own), followed up with a phone call.
- Varying the units assessed within a qualification's rules of combination to better reflect learners' situations and the evidence likely to be available.
- Adapting the way in which assessments are carried out, for example by using an online or digital vehicle for the assessment tasks rather than face-to-face. Where centres are continuing to deliver and assess face-to-face on site, contingency planning should be in place so that assessment can be moved online at short notice if the public health situation should result in physical attendance being paused.
- Finding alternative ways of gathering evidence in cases where an assessor or internal moderator has identified gaps in learner work which it is not possible to address through the assessment as originally planned. This might include having a conversation with the learner to capture the missing evidence, recording the conversation with the learner's permission using a mobile phone or an online meeting facility. This should be supported by a tutor witness statement. If the learner does not agree to the recording the tutor should complete and sign a tutor observation form. Templates for these documents can be found on the OCN London website.

## Ensuring authenticity

All digital submissions must include a learner declaration that the work submitted:

- is fully their own and has not been developed or written by anyone else
- has not been copied from the work of any other learner(s)
- has not been copied from the internet, and textbook(s) or any other source(s)

In all cases the declaration must confirm the learner's understanding that if they are found to have made a false declaration no credit will be awarded for the work submitted and that other sanctions could apply.

Where applicable, normally for higher level work, the declaration must also confirm that:

- any reference to the work of others is for the purpose of discussion, comment or argument in relation to their ideas
- the use of quotation and paraphrasing has been kept to a minimum and used only to support points made by the learner

It is also good practice for there to be some telephone or online discussion with a sample of learners when all material is submitted digitally. This provides an opportunity for centre staff to identify any discrepancy between a learner's perceived knowledge and understanding as demonstrated in such a discussion and that suggested by the work submitted. The proportion of learners to whom this should apply will vary according to the perceived level of risk applied to the course or qualification in question. Where OCN London has identified the level of risk for a particular centre, qualification or cohort to be high, discussion with learners may form part of the external quality assurance process.

## Reasonable adjustments and special considerations

Ofqual's introduction of the ERF recognised that the cessation of classroom teaching on 20 March 2020 owing to the COVID-19 outbreak represented a generic extenuating circumstance for all learners intending to complete a qualification in summer 2020. The extension of special arrangements through the EERF acknowledges that the public health situation remains precarious and that the educational experience continues to be disrupted.

In addition, special considerations may also apply to individual learners whose ability to engage with learning and assessment during this academic year is impeded. Such circumstances might include, for example:

- personal health issues resulting from contracting COVID-19 or other serious illness
- caring responsibilities for others suffering from COVID-19
- additional work demands within the NHS or in another key worker role
- limited access to the technology required to engage with online learning
- domestic circumstances not conducive to sustained engagement with learning

Requests for special considerations will be for additional adjustments or adaptations beyond those already agreed by OCN London in relation to the qualification and / or the centre. Such special considerations can only be agreed on the basis that these are seen to be fair and equitable, so that no one learner is unduly advantaged or disadvantaged.

A request for special consideration must be made initially by an individual learner to the centre concerned, which will consider this through its normal processes or any special processes that have been put in place in the current circumstances. If the request is supported by the centre, the centre will need to submit a request for special consideration to OCN London on behalf of the learner(s).

Centres will need to advise OCN London of any reasonable adjustments implemented over and above the general provision of the EERF at the earliest opportunity, and certainly before external moderation takes place. If any reasonable adjustment requires an additional adaptation to the delivery and / or assessment of the qualification beyond that which has already been agreed by OCN London and is available to all registered learners, the centre will need to submit a request for confirmation of the adaptation.

## External quality assurance

### Remote moderation

OCN London already has mechanisms in place for external moderation to be carried out remotely. It is our expectation that all moderation 'visits' will be online at least until April 2021 and perhaps through to the summer, depending on the public health situation at that time.

Learners' assessed work and related records, including of internal moderation, will need to be made available for our moderators to review before and / or on the agreed external moderation date. We are setting up centre files on Google Drive so that centres can upload material rather than sending it by email. Alternatively, external moderators may be provided with access to a centre's internal systems for this purpose. In either case files must be arranged in such a way as to enable moderators to find a particular learner's work easily.

We will not be accepting material for external moderation by post or courier other than in exceptional circumstances. Please do not send anything to OCN London's Angel Gate address. If an external moderator agrees to receive work by post they will provide an address to which it should be sent.

### In-year moderation

For centres that deliver year-long courses, or a number of shorter courses starting and finishing at points through the year, we will aim to carry out external moderation in-year so that qualifications can be awarded promptly following completion and credits achieved can be 'banked' in order to avoid difficulties that may arise from any further disruption later in the academic year. Where possible our external moderators will seek to agree moderation dates early in the year so that centres can prepare for these dates and submit completed ERACs in good time.

If at any time centres do need to close on account of local or national restrictions, please try to ensure that any learner work that only exists in hard copy and has not been externally moderated is not left in a building from which it will not be able to be retrieved if required for subsequent moderation.

### Direct claims status

Centres that currently hold direct claims status (DCS) can still submit claims for certification provided that all learner assessments have been completed and confirmed by the centre's Approved Internal Moderator.

All requirements regarding the agreement and implementation of adapted assessment, ensuring authenticity and the use of reasonable adjustments or special considerations apply equally to centres holding DCS.

During the course of the year we will update you on the changes to practice that will be introduced as a result of developing our Centre Assessment Standards Scrutiny (CASS) Strategy, and in particular the implications for centres that currently hold DCS for some or all of the OCN London qualifications that they deliver.

## Submitting results

Please complete and submit ERACs as soon as assessment and internal moderation has been completed. Each ERAC submitted is brought to the attention of the relevant external moderator as an indication that the course has been completed and is ready for external moderation. Samples will then be requested in the usual way.

Once external moderation has been carried out the learners will be signed off for certification, unless there are any issues that need to be addressed before this can happen. We will aim to make e-certificates available through QuartzWeb as soon as possible after successful external moderation.

Our external moderators will always aim to complete the moderation process as promptly as possible, but if certification is required by a particular date please do allow sufficient time between submission of the ERAC and the required certification date, bearing in mind that external moderators may not be available immediately – especially during the summer months.

## Why work with us?

- We are agile and responsive. This means you will get a personal service with direct access to a named contact and a quick turnaround.
- We pride ourselves on our close relationships with centres. The people we work with see us as a trusted partner, not just a supplier.
- We want to help you get the very best from your learners and employees.
- We have a reputation for high quality. The OCN London brand carries national recognition and kudos.
- We are flexible and recognise the importance of accommodating the needs of different learners and different learning styles.
- We offer exceptional value for money.
- We are committed to the belief that learning can change lives.

## Our impact

- We have helped tens of thousands to fulfil their dreams of a university education through our Access to HE qualifications.
- We have enabled many people from disadvantaged education backgrounds to develop and progress.
- We have helped to empower people in communities to take control of their lives.
- We are opening up new opportunities in health and social care for people to progress in their careers.
- We have supported small businesses to get started, expand and thrive.
- We have helped to give people a new start in life...and a new career.

## Where to find more information

Visit the website [www.ocnlondon.org.uk](http://www.ocnlondon.org.uk) for information about

- funding and Advanced Learner Loans
- unit development and approval
- how to get replacement certificates
- training and development courses.

Alternatively contact us on **020 7278 5511** or [enquiries@ocnlondon.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@ocnlondon.org.uk)



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