

The NOCN Quality Assurance Team have collated frequently asked questions regarding the current disruption being experienced by centres regarding COVID-19. If you have any concerns or questions regarding how you can continue to support your learners and deliver NOCN qualifications, please contact us on assurance@nocn.org.uk.

These FAQs will be amended and updated by NOCN as the COVID-19 disruption develops.

Registration and Certification

1. What assurances can NOCN provide to centres and learners concerned about completion of their NOCN qualification?

NOCN are working closely with Ofqual and the Regulatory bodies to provide advice and guidance for centres during this period and will communicate all updates to Centres via bulletins on the NOCN website.

NOCN is working with Ofqual to develop alternative arrangements for the awarding of Vocational and Technical Qualifications to enable learner progression in life and work within the current government guidance. For additional information please see [government news awarding vocational and technical qualifications this summer](#).

Government guidelines set out in a [Letter from Secretary of State for Education - VTQs](#) state that 'assessments cannot proceed as planned this Spring and Summer', and states the measures to be taken to reduce the impact of the pandemic. NOCN is implementing these measures and confirm that learners due to complete their qualifications between March and July 2020 will be progressed where fair and safe. Depending on the qualification, this may be a calculated result or, if this is not possible or appropriate to the qualification, adapted assessment measures will be used to allow them to progress. A calculated result will be based on a range of evidence and data capture. Assessments may be delayed as a last resort.

NOCN will contact centres shortly to inform them about the required approach for the qualifications and the evidence requirements for impacted learners.

Learners and centres can be reassured that, at present, EQA monitoring will continue via remote arrangements and that alternative arrangements have been put in place to support centres and learners. See section on external quality assurance for further details.

2. Are NOCN still accepting registrations and issuing certificates for its qualifications?

Yes. NOCN have contingency arrangements in place and will work with centres to mitigate the impact of COVID-19. We are expecting to run our normal operations as far as reasonably possible. NOCN are not currently expecting disruptions to its registration and certification processes at present and you can continue to contact NOCN through the normal channels.

3. Can we have certificates delivered directly to a learner's home address if our Centre closes due to COVID-19 disruption?

No, it is the centres responsibility to distribute Certificates as outlined in the Centre Agreement. We do not have learners home addresses so would not be able to do this and do not have available staff to take the number of calls and implement the mailing that this would generate.

4. Can we have certificates delivered to the home address of one of our Centre staff members if our Centre closes due to COVID-19 disruption?

All of our certificates are sent out via Tracked Royal Mail. Royal Mail have a very good website to accommodate the issues around Covid-19 and it is easy to rearrange and change the destination address using this facility. We are aware that some centres are blaming the Awarding Organisations for not getting Certificates delivered when it is due to no one being at the Centre to sign for the package. This is unacceptable. Paragraph 3.35 of the NOCN Quality Assurance Manual states; Centres must ensure that any issued certificates by NOCN are distributed to learners in a timely manner. We understand this is difficult at this time, but Centres must not blame NOCN for this failure as we have been printing and dispatching certificates as normal though out the lock down.

Removing Materials from Centre Premises

5. Can we allow our Tutors/Assessors to take home Entry Level Functional Skills and ESOL examination papers for marking and assessment purposes?

Yes, as long as security and confidentiality arrangements and requirements of NOCN are met at all times. Centres must ensure that where Tutors/Assessors will be taking live examination material home that they are aware of their responsibilities regarding maintaining the confidentiality of assessment materials. Centres must have confidentiality agreements signed by their staff members which confirms that they will act in accordance with your Centre and NOCN requirements.

NOCN has produced a separate guidance document and a template confidentiality agreement which centres may wish to utilise. This document outlines the requirements that must be adhered to by all Tutors/Assessors when removing live examination material from Centre premises. This can be found by accessing the following link: [COVID-19 Confidentiality Guidance: Removing Assessment Materials from Centre Premises](#)

6. Can we allow our Tutors/Assessors/IQAs to take home learner portfolios for assessing and IQA purposes?

Yes, as long as security and confidentiality arrangements and requirements of NOCN are met at all times. Please refer to the following document on the following link:

[COVID-19 Confidentiality Guidance: Removing Assessment Materials from Centre Premises](#)

Examination and Invigilation

7. Should we cancel or re-schedule any of our planned learner examinations?

NOCN is working with Ofqual to develop alternative arrangements for the awarding of Functional Skills Qualifications to enable learner progression in life and work within the current government guidance. For additional information please see [government news awarding vocational and technical qualifications this summer.](#)

NOCN is implementing these measures and confirm that learners due to complete their Functional Skills assessments between March and July 2020, will not be expected to take their assessments. Instead NOCN will issue a calculated result. This calculated result will be based on a range of evidence and data capture. NOCN will contact centres shortly to inform them about evidence requirements for impacted learners. Only the children of key workers and vulnerable children who are attending a school, college or training provider as permitted by government may still be able to undertake their assessments as usual.

The above information applies to both legacy Functional Skills and reform Functional Skills Qualifications.

8. Our Centre is closing and we will not be able to deliver future planned examinations, what should we advise NOCN?

NOCN would not permit face to face examinations to take place, in line with current Government advice and guidance. NOCN is currently developing remote invigilation facilities which may allow assessments to take place at home but we will communicate any developments to centres. NOCN appreciates Centres may not know when examinations can be rescheduled and so will waive the fee to move the examination to an alternative date free of charge.

9. Our Centre premises are closed, are we able to administer an examination at a learner's home address?

NOCN is currently exploring remote invigilation facilities which will allow this but these are not currently in place and so face to face examinations are not permitted in line with current Government advice. NOCN will communicate any developments to centres soon when we have provided this functionality.

10. We have a learner registered on a legacy Functional Skills qualification, and must certificate no later than 31 August 2020. What if we cannot complete the learner's qualification by this date due to the COVID-19 disruption?

The exams regulator has extended the certification date for legacy Functional Skills qualifications to 31 December 2020. Legacy Functional Skills qualifications can be estimated for individuals within a controlled process see 7 above. NOCN will release the extended dates for submission legacy Functional Skills on our website and bulletins shortly.

Qualification Delivery

11. What can we do if a learner is unable to attend the training elements of their qualification at our Centre?

NOCN appreciates that face to face delivery may be impacted by COVID-19. We encourage all delivery centres to adapt their resources to offer digitally where face to face is not possible, using creative assessment tools to ensure that learners are still able to complete their programmes of learning. Centres can consider remote delivery, deploying e-portfolios, Skype, Zoom and/or Microsoft Teams. Centres must liaise with learners to agree alternative arrangements are appropriate for their needs and ensure alternative arrangements do not place a barrier to entry.

For some qualifications distance learning may be appropriate. When utilising distance learning centres must detail within their centre quality management processes each of the following:

- Whether some, or all, of the permitted learning outcomes from the qualifications/program are to be delivered by distance learning.
- The reason for the special arrangements.
- The method of distance learning to be used.
- The training content to be covered with distance learning.
- The number of hours to be covered by the distance learning material.
- A robust and auditable method for determining that learners have undertaken distance learning.

Training materials must clearly show learners how many hours learning they are expected to undertake, and that they are given sufficient time and support to allow them to complete the distance learning. Centres must be able to check and evidence that the learner has completed the distance learning to ensure that appropriate learning has occurred. Records must be maintained for review by your external quality assurer and show how the qualification requirements are met included the guided learning hours (GLH).

12. What can we do if a learner cannot access a work placement due to COVID-19 disruption?

NOCN appreciates that this may be a challenging and worrying time for centres and learners and that placements may be disrupted. NOCN is working with Ofqual to develop alternative arrangements for the awarding of Vocational and Technical Qualifications to enable learner progression in life and work within the current government guidance. For additional information please see [government news awarding vocational and technical qualifications this summer](#).

Government guidelines set out in a [Letter from Secretary of State for Education - VTQs](#) state that 'assessments cannot proceed as planned this Spring and Summer', and states the measures to be taken to reduce the impact of the pandemic. NOCN is implementing these measures and confirm that learners due to complete their qualifications between March and July 2020 will be progressed where fair and safe. Depending on the qualification, this may be calculated result or, if this is not possible or appropriate to the qualification, adapted assessment measures will be used to allow them to progress. A calculated result will be based on a range of evidence and data capture.

NOCN will contact centres shortly to inform them about the required approach for the qualifications and the evidence requirements for impacted learners.

13. What can we do if a learner cannot access an assessor due to COVID-19 disruption?

We understand that learner observations may be impacted by Covid-19 where face to face contact is limited or not possible. The approach required will be dependent on the type of qualification and could include, amended assessment, remotely proctored examinations, estimated or calculated achievement or postponement. NOCN is working with Ofqual to develop alternative arrangements for the awarding of Vocational and Technical Qualifications to enable learner progression in life and work within the current government guidance. For additional information please see [government news awarding vocational and technical qualifications this summer](#).

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NOCN will contact centres shortly to inform them about the required approach for the qualifications and the evidence requirements for impacted learners.

External Quality Assurance

14. Are NOCN still carrying out external quality assurance visits?

External quality assurance activities are continuing however in light of Government advice these will be carried out remotely. NOCN is employing its contingency arrangements for external quality assurance which include remote external quality assurance sampling to a full remote visit model. This will be determined on a case to case basis to establish how this can be carried out in a safe manner whilst ensure fairness to your learners.

If you will require a visit in the next two to three months please contact the Quality Assurance team at assurance@nocn.org.uk who will discuss safe and fair external quality assurance arrangements for your centre and learners.

The attached [EQA COVID-19 Contingency – Remote EQA Visits and Remote Sampling](#) outlines our contingency plan for this period and provides guidance to centres on what remote EQA visits will involve.

15. We do not have Direct Claims Status, can we still request learner certificates upon achievement?

Yes, EQAs will continue to carry out external quality assurance activities via remote arrangements. Where monitoring is required, please contact assurance@nocn.org.uk to establish how this can be carried out in a safe manner whilst ensure fairness to your learners. EQAs will then arrange a remote EQA visit via Microsoft Teams or Skype, or a remote sample to sign off portfolios.

External Quality Assurers will make you aware before the visit what evidence will be required for the monitoring activity. NOCN would recommend recording live internal assessments or observations of learners to assist with this process. There should be no impact to DCS/certification claims.

The attached [EQA COVID-19 Contingency – Remote EQA Visits and Remote Sampling](#) outlines our contingency plan for this period and provides guidance to centres on what remote EQA visits will involve.

Enhanced monitoring will be conducted once the lock down is ended.