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Substantive changes since last review:	N/A	

This document is designed to ensure the correct administration of all external assessment components of NCFE Functional Skills qualifications at Acorn AP Centres.

NCFE Regulations

This policy should be read in conjunction with NCFE's Regulations for the Conduct of External Assessment, which can be found on Acorn Staff SharePoint and on NCFE's website. All those involved in the delivery, assessment and administration of Level 1 and 2 NCFE Functional Skills should read and refer to this document prior to planning undertaking external assessments for learners at Acorn AP. All Level 1 and 2 Functional Skills assessments at Acorn AP (with the exception of the English Speaking and Listening component) are 'On demand' assessments. When reading the NCFE regulations, staff should refer to particularly to instructions for this type of assessment.

Linked Policies and NCFE Guidance

Staff should also refer to Acorn AP's relevant linked policies, such as:

- Appeals Policy
- Controlled Assessments Policy (for Entry Level and internally assessed components)
- Internal Verification Policy (for Entry Level and internally assessed components)
- Learner Recruitment, Registration and Certification Policy
- Learner Support Protocol
- Malpractice and Plagiarism Policy
- Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy
- PRL and Credit Transfer Policy

- Withdrawn Qualification Procedure.

Also relevant are NCFE's Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments guidance, the QSID (qualification specific instructions for delivery) for Functional Skills and Regulations for the Conduct of Controlled Assessments (for Entry Level and internally assessed components).

All of these can be found on the Acorn Staff SharePoint.

Quality Assurance

The Acorn Director of Services and Director of Operations will undertake termly Centre Visits to Acorn Centres and observation will take place of the conduct of external and controlled assessments where these are taking place.

In addition, NCFE reserves the right to carry out unannounced audit visits to confirm their regulations are being adhered to and that centres have policies and procedures in place for the delivery of NCFE external assessments.

Maladministration / Malpractice

If malpractice or maladministration occurs during an assessment, the invigilator must deal with it in accordance with the guidance in NCFE's Regulations for External Assessment.

Please also refer to Acorn AP's Malpractice and Plagiarism Policy for more information on what constitutes malpractice or maladministration.

A report of what occurred must be provided to NCFE immediately. Acorn Centre staff should in the first instance report the malpractice to the Acorn Director of Operations, who will manage the process of reporting the incident to NCFE using their forms and processes.

Assessment Materials

Once learners are ready to sit an external assessment, this can be booked on the NCFE Portal. The date and time of the assessment must be specified at the time of booking. External assessment material will be sent by NCFE via courier to the address registered for the assessment 2 working days prior to the assessment date. Staff must follow Acorn's Secure Handling of Exam Materials Policy when receiving and securely storing assessment materials before, during and after external assessments take place. Following external assessments, assessment materials must be returned to NCFE for marking by Royal Mail, using their Tracked and Signed For service.

Planning and equipping the external assessment

Planning

Assessments must not take place until all teaching and learning of the qualification content has been delivered to learners.

Staff must inform learners of the date, time and location of the assessment; the conditions under which their Functional Skills assessment will be conducted; and any resources that they are required to bring to the assessment and what will be supplied by the centre.

Invigilation

An appropriately trained person, who is not the subject teacher must invigilate learners during their Functional Skills external assessment. The integrity of this person must be able to be relied on. Any external invigilators (e.g. volunteers) must be appointed, briefed and appropriately trained by centres on the requirements for the conduct of external assessments. In any case, all those invigilating must have read and follow the NCFE Regulations for External Assessment.

When only one invigilator is present, he or she must be able to get help easily, without leaving the assessment room and without disturbing the candidates. Under no circumstances must learners be left unsupervised or unattended. An invigilator is only allowed a mobile phone in the assessment room for this specific purpose. The mobile phone must be kept on silent mode.

When readers/writers are permitted and provided for learners with reasonable adjustment requirements, on a one-to-one basis, an invigilator may also act as the reader/writer. However, an additional 'roving' invigilator must also be in place who enter the room at regular intervals to check that rules are being adhered to and to support the invigilator with maintaining the integrity of the assessment.

Other access arrangements

Staff should refer to the NCFE Regulations for the Conduct of External Assessment for specific instructions for providing other access arrangements.

Accommodation

To ensure the assessment is administered correctly, the Head of Centre is responsible for ensuring:

- The allocated room is suitably quiet and undisturbed, with adequate space, heating, lighting and ventilation.
- A reliable clock (analogue and/or digital) must be visible to each candidate in the assessment room. The clock must show the actual time and not be a countdown or count-up clock.
- A board/flipchart/whiteboard should be visible to all candidates showing the: a) centre number, subject title and paper number; and b) the actual starting and finishing times, and date, of each assessment.
- The Warning to Candidates Poster and the Unauthorised Items Poster must be displayed in a prominent place outside each assessment room.
- Only learners due to sit their NCFE assessment and the invigilator responsible for co-ordinating the external assessment process are allowed in the room immediately before, during or after the external assessment.
- Learners are not allowed into the room until the invigilator is satisfied that the room is ready and can indicate where each learner should sit.
- Seating arrangements must prevent learners from seeing each other's work, intentionally or otherwise.
- Where the external assessment includes the use of equipment such as computers, then an assistant familiar with the equipment must be present in addition to the invigilator (assistants should be available in case of equipment malfunction only and should have no other involvement with the assessment).
- If a learner needs to leave the assessment room temporarily because they are unwell or need to go to the toilet, the invigilator must ensure the learner is accompanied by a member of staff and does not:
 - speak to anyone else;
 - consult any notes or have access to a mobile phone or any other electronic devices, for example iPods or smart watches, or make any calls;
 - breach the security of the assessment.

The remaining learners must not be left unattended at any point.

Use of computers/electronic devices

Centres can provide a word processor (e.g., computer, laptop, or tablet), with the spelling and grammar check/predictive text disabled, to a candidate where it is their normal way of working within the centre, unless the qualification's specification says otherwise. The Acorn Head of Centre needs to ensure:

- Suitably trained technical assistants are provided who are readily available in case of equipment malfunction only and have no other involvement with the assessment.
- The device is free from any material/additional facilities that would give the learner an unfair advantage.
- Where appropriate to the assessment, any:
 - aid in relation to spelling, punctuation and grammar is disabled
 - access to calculation devices/tools is restricted to the appropriate sections of the paper
 - access to other applications (including email, social media, spreadsheets) is disabled.

Staff should refer to the NCFE Regulations for the Conduct of External Assessment for specific instructions about saving, printing and submitting assessment work produced on an electronic device.

Please refer to the QSID document for qualification-specific details. This can be found on Acorn Staff SharePoint.

Use of calculators in assessment

Learners may use a calculator unless it is prohibited as part of the assessment. Assessment papers will clearly state if a calculator is not allowed.

Learners are expected to have a calculator for Functional Skills in mathematics question paper, section B at all levels. The minimum requirements for the calculator are:

- 4 operations
- entry level 1 and entry level 2: minimum of 2 decimal places on the display
- entry level 3: minimum of 3 decimal places on the display (some basic calculators only provide 2 decimal places).

Further details of the specifications of permitted calculators can be found in NCFE's Regulations for the Conduct of External Assessment.

Where calculators are only allowed for a section of a paper, it is acceptable for learners to put their calculator on the floor, under the desk, in full sight of the assessor for the prohibited section.

Administering the external assessment

- Learners must be identified prior to the assessment. If a learner is previously known to the invigilator, this will be accepted.
- The invigilator must collect assessment materials from their secure storage immediately prior to scheduled assessment time.
- The invigilator is required to play a key role in the quality control of the Functional Skills external assessment process and is required to:
 - arrive at the assessment location in good time
 - ensure that the room is set up in accordance with regulations
 - tell learners on entering the room they must now follow the regulations of the assessment, until they leave the room, including not talking to or attempting to communicate with or disturb other candidates
 - distribute the assessment material to learners

- ensure all the specific actions and information they are required to do/tell learners are completed in accordance with the NCFE Regulations for External Assessments
- announce to learners when they can begin their assessment
- be fully alert and observe learners at all times during the assessment, giving their attention only to this activity
- ensure that the assessment is supervised continuously in line with NCFE Regulations for External Assessment, logging any incidents or situations that may require support (e.g. learner unwell or needing a toilet break) or constitute malpractice.
- Ensure that any learners that need to leave the room temporarily are supervised in line with NCFE's Regulations for External Assessment.
- Ensure that they do not do any of the actions specified as things the invigilator must not do (as these would constitute malpractice). This includes indicating how much time has passed or is left except for a five-minute warning at the end, or where a prompter has been approved.
- Take an attendance register, using the form NCFE provides
- Ensure that learners stay under supervision for the published minimum time for that assessment and that when they do leave the room on finishing the assessment they hand in their assessment paperwork and do not re-enter the room.
- ensure that the length of time allowed for the assessment does not exceed the authorised time specified on the assessment materials
- take assessment materials and learner answers/evidence from any learners who leave the assessment location before the specified end of the assessment.
- At the end of the assessment, learners must be instructed to:
 - stop writing/working but remain under assessment conditions (i.e. do not talk/communicate with other candidates)
 - check their personal details are completed and correct on assessment paper and additional sheets
 - label their work (where applicable)
 - Put loose sheets inside answer booklets.
 - hand all evidence to the invigilator.
- Invigilators must then:
 - collect in all reading matter, assessment materials (used and unused) and learner answers/evidence at the end of the assessment, before the learners leave the room.
 - ensure that learners have entered their personal information onto the front cover of the assessment materials correctly
 - check that the number of completed assessments agrees with the names and number of learners attending the external assessment
 - complete the appropriate documents and assessment templates
 - return all assessment materials to secure storage for the remainder of the day, prior to securely posting back to NCFE. Papers must not be released back to learners or any other staff at any time for any reason.

Secure return of assessment materials to NCFE

The Head of Centre or Designated person must follow the steps outlined in NCFE's Regulations for External Assessment for packing and sending assessment materials back to NCFE for marking.

Emergency situations

In an emergency such as a fire alarm or a bomb alert, the invigilator must take the following action:

- a) stop the candidates from writing;
- b) collect the attendance register (in order to ensure all candidates are present) and evacuate the assessment room in line with the instructions given by the appropriate authority;
- c) advise candidates to leave all question papers and scripts in the assessment room. Candidates must be advised to close their answer booklet;
- d) ensure the candidates leave the room in silence;
- e) ensure candidates are supervised as closely as possible while they are out of the assessment room so that there is no discussion about the assessment;
- f) make a note of the time of the interruption and how long it lasted;
- g) allow the candidates the remainder of the working time set for the assessment once it resumes;
- h) if there are only a few candidates, consider the possibility of taking the candidates (with question papers and scripts) to another place to finish the assessment;
- i) make a full report of the incident and of the action taken and send to NCFE.

Where candidates are unable to return to the building to complete the assessment, NCFE must be contacted immediately for advice.