

Assignment Assessment & Appeals Policy

Last reviewed	September 2021
Next review due	September 2022
Responsible division	Programmes Division
Responsible director	Director, Programme Operations
Applies to	<p>Internal staff and external contractors assessing on any Ambition programmes.</p> <p>Scope includes all offline summative assessment undertaken by Ambition, whether for the purposes of admitting participants onto our programmes or awarding formal qualifications.</p> <p>This policy applies to all NPQ programmes beginning in Autumn 2020 or earlier.</p>
Exceptions	<p>This policy does not cover live assessments (e.g. interviews).</p> <p>The Masters in Expert Teaching delivered in partnership with Plymouth Marjon University comes under the Plymouth Marjon assessment policies.</p> <p>This policy does not cover reformed NPQs beginning in Autumn 2021 or later.</p>
Audience	Internal staff, contractors, delivery partners, funders and regulatory and quality assurance bodies overseeing the award of qualifications by Ambition
Other relevant regulations	<p>DfE NPQ Quality Framework</p> <p>DfE NPQ Content and Assessment Framework</p> <p>Contractual terms with funders (for programme selection)</p>

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1. Objectives

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all summative assessment within Ambition is a reliable indicator that the intended standard has been met. We seek to achieve this by laying out a robust process that will lead to fair and consistent marking practices.

2. Background and Legal/Regulatory Framework

The consistency of our summative assessment practices is essential both to ensure that selection processes onto our programmes are meaningful and fair, and to guarantee the integrity of formal qualifications awarded by Ambition. In the case of selection processes for DfE funded programmes, a robust assessment process is a requirement in our contractual terms. In the case of formal qualifications awarded by Ambition, a robust assessment process is an essential element of our Malpractice and Maladministration Policy and is a regulatory requirement of external regulatory and quality assurance bodies overseeing the awarding of those qualifications.

3. Core Principles

- A. This process is designed around the principle of **specialism** - that assessors should specialise in what they are assessing in order to build expertise and thus to support continued improvements to assessment accuracy and to the quality of the supporting evidence and candidate feedback. To achieve this aim, Ambition Assessment Teams will be created for each distinct qualification and level (in the case of NPQs, for each NPQ level), and will be comprised of the following members:

Member	Detail
Programme Leader	The individual who is responsible for the overall leadership of those programmes which offer the qualification/level in question (e.g. NPQ level)
Design Lead	The individual who leads the curriculum/content design for those programmes which offer the qualification/level in question (e.g. NPQ level)
Lead Assessor	This is an experienced and 'strong' Assessor who will quality assure outcomes for the qualification/ level in question and work with Assessors to support and ensure accuracy and quality of outcomes
Assessors	These are experienced and 'strong' educators who have the relevant experience and expertise to assess at the specified level

- B. This process is designed to support **ongoing improvement**; it is therefore designed to be **cyclical** and repeated for each assessment window, allowing learning from previous cycles to be acted on and best practice embedded into future cycles. We will make reasonable efforts to achieve continuity in assessors from cycle to cycle, and where this is not possible we will aim at a minimum to include assessors from previous cycles in the standardisation step below.

4. Process

Step 1: standardisation

Prior to each assessment window beginning:

- > Assessment Teams meet (virtually) to:
 - > Build understanding of the requirements of their specialist qualification/level;
 - > Align on what different scores look like for each element being assessed (e.g. in the case of NPQs, what a 0-1-2 looks like for each competency);
 - > Build understanding of best practice in the provision of supporting evidence and candidate feedback.
 - > Discuss feedback given within the last window and Tribal report to act upon
 - > Share best practice amongst assessors

Step 2: assessment

- > Each Assessor will be assigned a set number of assignments to assess.
- > Where practical we aspire to anonymise assignments.
- > We will ensure all assessors are familiar with our Plagiarism Policy and aware of how to identify and raise concerns about potential plagiarism in accordance with that policy.
- > During the assessment window Assessors will be able (and encouraged) to contact their Lead Assessor and/or Assessment team with any queries to ensure that we are able to discuss and agree outcomes in an on-going and 'live' manner and in a way which supports the on-going development of the Assessor.
- > Feedback from Assessors and the Lead Assessor/ Programme Leader on queries will be used to inform planning for Step 1 for the next cycle.

Step 3: quality assurance

Following the window for assessment marking:

- > A sample of marked assignments will be identified by Ambition's Faculty Planning and Assessment team to be re-marked by the Lead Assessor to ensure accuracy of marking and as a quality assurance step (with a focus on the quality of supporting evidence and candidate feedback, and on administrative accuracy). This sample will include:
 - > At least one assignment per Assessor;
 - > All borderline Fails (in the case of NPQs, 1-2 marks above/below bar);
 - > A higher proportion of new assessors
 - > Any assessor whose overall outcomes are significantly above/below the average Pass rate for the group.
- > Once complete, the Lead Assessor will discuss any discrepancies with the original Assessor to align on final score(s) and/or outcome(s).
- > The Lead Assessor and Ambition's Faculty Planning and Assessment team will then identify any additional assignments for re-mark and/or review, including:
 - > At least two more per Assessor if inaccuracies in their assessment has been identified as inaccurate by the Lead Assessor (this can be focused on specific elements for which we are assessing and not always a full re-mark);
 - > All by any Assessor if the Lead Assessor has identified gaps in administrative requirements (these may be returned to the Assessor themselves for revision).

Step 4: external moderation

In the case of formal qualifications, the Accreditation team will submit assessment outcomes and samples of assignments to external regulatory and quality assurance bodies as required under the stipulations relating to the qualification in question.

Step 5: wash-up and feedback

Once external moderation is complete (if applicable) and outcomes confirmed:

- > The Participant Support team will conduct final checks on the appropriateness of feedback before sending out results to the participant (or school where required).
- > The Lead Assessor and Ambition's Faculty Planning and Assessment team will meet to discuss:
 - > The accuracy/quality of each individual Assessor in order to identify appropriate feedback and development areas; this feedback and any related required actions will be shared with the Assessor by Ambition's Faculty Planning and Assessment team, who will also be responsible ultimately for barring individual assessors where necessary due to continued errors, poor marking standards or misconduct.
 - > The accuracy/quality of the group as a whole and any areas for development which need addressing; this will inform the focus of Step 1 in the next cycle.
- > The Programme Leader and the Design Lead will meet to discuss any trends/themes in outcomes and to identify any next steps/actions relating to curriculum/content design, delivery partners and/or to participant communications.

5. Appeals

Please be aware that we have extensive standardisation processes and internal moderation protocols in place, as laid out in our Assignment Assessment Policy. For NPQs, in addition to this, 10% of our assignments are also subject to external moderation in each assessment window and all assessment outcomes are approved by the DfE's Quality Assurance Agent prior to release.

Unfortunately, even very knowledgeable and experienced participants sometimes fail their assignments on first submission, often because of technical requirements in assessment frameworks around how they need to evidence specific criteria. When this happens, we pass on feedback from qualified assessors to participants to support them to modify and re-submit their assignment successfully. We also have a continuous improvement process to understand frequent sources of confusion and to build these into our course design and the guidance we provide to participants.

However, it is important that there is recourse for participants to challenge their assessment outcome. If a participant or an alliance partner wants to appeal an assessment outcome, they are entitled to do so.

Appeals Procedure

Should a participant undertaking a course that leads to a formal qualification directly with Ambition Institute wish to appeal their outcome, our procedure is:

- > If the reason for appealing the outcome is either that a) the participant believes that the assessment was adversely affected by illness or other mitigating circumstances which they were unable to inform us of previously, or b) that there has been an administrative error, then this will be considered without necessarily requiring a re-mark. Otherwise, we would usually not be able to consider an appeal without a re-mark.
- > If no re-mark is required, the participant must lay out their full case for appealing their outcome in their appeal request form, and include all supporting evidence that will be needed to review their appeal.
- > Provided that no re-mark is required, this will be reviewed by a panel of three Ambition Institute employees including a Director, of which at least two must be unconnected from the assessment process. The outcome will be communicated to the participant within at most four weeks.

If a re-mark is required:

- > The participant, on receipt of their appeal request form being approved by Ambition Institute, must pay the full assessment fee outlined in the table below and provide a completed refund form available [here](#) in advance.
- > Once the fee and refund form have both been received, their assessment will be sent to an independent third-party assessor; this assessor will not have previously seen their assessment, and will not have seen their previous marks or be told that this is an appeal or a re-mark.
- > Ambition Institute will email the participant with the outcome of their re-mark within at most four weeks of us receiving their fee and refund form, unless there are extenuating circumstances (such as this coinciding with the Winter break).
- > If the re-mark results in a change of outcome, or a significant change to the participant's assessment score as shown in the table below, then their assessment fee will be refunded within 30 days of this outcome being confirmed using the details provided in their refund form.

Once an appeal has been concluded, there will be no further recourse to appeal with Ambition Institute.

Fees and significant changes

The assessment fees and what constitutes a significant change for each NPQ level are shown in the table below:

	Assessment fee	Pass rate*	What constitutes a significant change in score
NPQML	£121	22/32	Change in outcome or 3 or more points
NPQSL	£134	20/28	Change in outcome or 3 or more points
NPQH	£103 (Task 1) £103 (Task 2)	21/30 (task 1); 8/12 (task 2)	Change in outcome, 3 or more points in task 1, or 2 or more points in task 2
NPQEL	£136 (Task 1) £136 (Task 2)	20/28 (task 1); 17/24 (task 2)	Change in outcome or 3 or more points in either task 1 or task 2

* This is the minimum aggregate score to pass the assignment, provided that the participant scores at least one against every criterion.

6. August 2022 NPQ contract end - changes to appeal timelines

All appeals under the current NPQ contract must be investigated and closed before the contract end on 31st August 2022. This has a significant impact for the timeline of appeals for those who submit to the April 29th 2022 deadline. Appeals for participants who receive results in the April 2022 window will be 5 weeks in total and is broken down as follows:

- > Participants will have 1 week only to raise their appeal on the grounds above
- > Ambition will have 2.5 weeks to investigate the appeal and to come to a conclusion
- > Ambition will have 1 week to communicate outcomes and close the case.

7. Links to Other Policies

Other policies referenced here include:

- > Malpractice and Maladministration Policy
- > Plagiarism Policy