



Laser
Learning Awards

Assessment Guidance

Learn | Progress | Succeed

May 2013

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Introduction

Assessment involves establishing how much an individual learner or group has learnt, and will involve both learners and tutors/assessors. In some cases the process begins before the course starts and continues until after it has finished.

Learning is a change in skill and/or attitude and/or knowledge and measuring these changes are the steps in the assessment process. Assessment is the judgement of evidence showing that learning has taken place (an act of measurement) and confirming that a learning outcome, or part of a learning outcome, has been achieved.

Why Assess?

Assessment can be a very positive experience for learners; they usually appreciate assessment because it:

- confirms that they are on the appropriate course;
- motivates and encourages further learning;
- helps learners recognise how they are changing;
- allows them to chart their progress;
- allows them to gain credits/qualifications and therefore have their achievement recognised;
- gives them a sense of achievement

It also gives employers assurance that staff have relevant knowledge, understanding and/or skills required to undertake tasks safely and effectively.

When to Assess?

Pre course/beginning of the course

In some courses diagnostic assessment takes place either before the course begins or at the first session. This can serve a number of purposes:

- To help the tutor plan/modify the course so it is appropriate for the learners;
- To help decide whether the course is suitable for the learners' needs and if necessary advise them of alternative routes;
- To encourage learners to identify their own needs and discover where they fit in relation to others on the course;
- To help tutors identify individual learning and thinking styles.
- To help tutors and learners identify where exceptions, equivalences or Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) may be claimed

During the course – formative assessment

Assessment can be used during learning to give feedback, and support learner progress towards outcomes and to inform both the learner and tutor of any action that needs to take place.

Formative assessment will allow:

- tutors to establish what knowledge / skills a learner has acquired;
- tutors to plan the next steps;
- tutors to give appropriate feedback to a learner;
- tutors to encourage and motivate a learner;
- a learner to identify what has been learnt and what they need to learn.

For example, a reflective portfolio / journal to record progress would be an example of a formative assessment.

Toward the end or at the end of a course – summative assessment

Summative assessment may take place towards the end of the learning programme or section of a learning programme. This type of assessment measures the extent of learning that has taken place at the end of the learning experience. It enables a judgement to be made about whether the

learner has achieved all of the learning outcomes within a unit e.g. a completed portfolio of all the learner’s work or a single assessment of selected assessment criteria.

Who can assess?

There are four categories of people who could be involved in assessing individuals learning: tutors; learners; learners’ peers; external assessors.

Laser Learning Awards require recognised centres to assure us that staff assessing learning have qualifications which comply with legislative requirements or the requirements of appropriate organisations which might fund, inspect the quality of provision or impose requirements linked to an award.

How to assess achievement of credit-based units

Tutors need to be very clear about what will be assessed within the course. All units are written in terms of Learning Outcomes – what the learner will be expected to know, or do, or understand. ALL Assessment Criteria in each Learning Outcome must be achieved, witnessed, assessed and recorded. Although ALL Learning Outcomes must be assessed ONE task may assess several different Assessment Criteria at once

For example, within a conversational languages unit a group of assessment criteria could be assessed by a role play exercise:

| Learning Outcome | Assessment Criteria | Assessment Activity | Assessment method | Evidence |
|--|--|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 5. Obtain simple information related to travel and accommodation | AC 5.1 Read simple timetables AC 5.2 Ask about ticket prices AC 5.3 Follow procedure for purchasing tickets AC 5.4 Ask about times of departure/arrival | Role play exercise | Observation | Witness statement |

Each learning outcome has a set of assessment criteria, which define the level, range and complexity of achievement, which the learner can demonstrate. So units at different levels may have the same or very similar learning outcomes but with assessment criteria that may be significantly different for each level.

(QCF Level Descriptors – web link to be inserted)

Both the learners and the tutors should be involved in the assessment process. It is important that learners are aware of the learning outcomes and assessment criteria. It is good practice to share these with learners verbally and visually (handouts, flipcharts etc.).

Forms of Assessment

Assessment should be:

- Open and transparent;
- Continuous and not a last minute end of course procedure;
- Reliable and rigorous;
- Relevant to the target group;
- Sufficient to produce enough evidence to meet the Assessment Criteria.

Assessment methods selected should be relevant and reflect the needs of the group. It is good practice to ensure that learners have copies of the Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria so they are aware of expectations: this may include explaining how learners can achieve at different levels.

An assessment strategy should include a variety of assessment methods **and activities** appropriate to the target group and subject, for example:

- Observations of naturally occurring activities e.g. role play, simulations, practical activities, performance, exhibition etc.
- Discussions, ranging from unstructured informal conversations to guided discussions.
- Production of artefacts, drawings etc.
- Structured tasks e.g. project, essay, case study, assignment, role plays and simulations.
- Examination/test.
- Reflective diary/journal/logbook.

The assessment strategy must operate within the principles of assessment and comply with any activities specified for the unit by Laser Learning Awards. Reference to the LASER Assessment Definitions document will be essential. (document web link to be added)

The starting point is always the unit, and the attached Assessment Information grid (please see sample unit at the end of this document), which sets out assessment methods that either must or may be used to assess the unit. These methods are described, with details of their parameters, for example word counts, appropriate types of evidence etc., in the Assessment Definitions document. This document is essential reading for any tutor planning assessment, however, it should be noted that it is not relevant to Languages.

Informal / Formal Assessment

Informal assessment is ongoing, integrated and flexible. It is varied, and can be carried out by either the tutor or the learner - it could include any of the following:

| | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Games | Self assessment checklist |
| Unstructured discussion | Learning journal |
| Conversation | Written Questions and Answers |
| Question and Answers | Worksheet/gapped handouts |
| Role play | Action plans |

Formal assessment is structured, usually takes place in clearly stated conditions, and is usually used for summative assessment. e.g. a set time to make a presentation or undertake a practical task

| | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Practical activity | Checklist |
| Structured discussion | Worksheets |
| Questions & Answers | Application forms |
| Exhibition | Essays |
| Oral test | Exam/test |

Performance
Tutorial
Assignments
Projects

Assignments
Projects
Diary

Assessment in LASER provision should involve:

- The rigorous application of assessment criteria at the appropriate levels e.g. Entry, Level One, Level Two, Level 3 and so on.
- A process of standardisation to ensure consistency across: learners; sites and units, to meet standards.

Assessment activities, i.e. the tasks set, assessment methods and forms of evidence should always be:

- Authentic
- Valid/sufficient
- Reliable and consistent
- Fit for purpose
- Inclusive

Because of the variety and flexibility within the assessment methods, and thus the range of tasks that could be designed, it is essential to plan assessment carefully in advance.

The recommended way to do this is to use a Tutor Assessment Planning sheet (see sample on the LASER website for this and other useful templates). This allows the tutor to record plans for a range of tasks, which between them will cover all the Assessment Criteria, taking account of any prescribed assessment methods. Tutors then record the different assessment methods which could be used to evidence the tasks: sometimes there will be more than one method for the same task, e.g. oral or written answers. Tutors can then use an Individual Learner Record to copy in the tasks for each learner, and the assessment method selected for individual tasks and individual learners. An example of a completed Tutor Assessment Planning Sheet and the relevant unit are attached at the end of this document.

Authenticity of Evidence

All assessment practice must have processes in place to ensure that the evidence for assessment is the learner's own work. (see Plagiarism Policy)

Tutors and Internal Verifiers should at all times be aware of the necessity of confirming the authenticity of learners' work. This has become more important with the advent, and increasing use, of Information Technology such as Word Processing, the Internet, Intranets, and CDs, all of which have contributed to the risk of plagiarism and copying.

While it is almost impossible to eliminate all opportunities for plagiarism and copying, it is possible to take steps to reduce the risks of it occurring:

- All centres should have a plagiarism statement. All learners should be made aware of this, and its meaning and consequences made clear
- A statement confirming authenticity of the work should be included with the learner's file or portfolio, particularly for Information Technology
- All printed Information Technology exercises should be signed by the learner. Where the tutor can confirm that it is the learner's work they should also sign.
- Whenever possible draft copies of work should be retained. Apart from giving an indication of authenticity, the practice should be encouraged as it provides evidence of development and planning of a larger piece of work or essay.

- A learner's work, or passages within a piece of work, that are substantially different in level, tone or vocabulary from previous samples of similar work should be queried. Where appropriate, learners should at an early stage be introduced to an acceptable system of referencing, so that external sources can be properly attributed
- In the case of oral assessment (e.g. conversational language courses) any audio tapes or discs should be retained by the tutor, who should confirm to the Internal Verifier the identity of the learner or learners whose work is involved.
- The tutor should confirm that an artefact has been produced by a particular learner.

Validity of Evidence

Assessment strategies should clearly correlate with the assessment criteria. There should be a close fit between the assessment methods and learning outcomes:

For example, if the assessment criteria is 'Demonstrate the safe use of ladders' then an essay describing the safe use of ladders is NOT a valid assessment method, but a practical assessment would be valid.

Sufficiency / Fitness for purpose

The assessment strategy must be appropriate and relevant to the target group of learners and the context in which the learning takes place. The assessment must be appropriate to the credit value i.e. a 2000 word essay would be excessive for a 3 credit Level 1 unit (see LASER Assessment Definitions document).

Where an assessment criterion indicates a specific number e.g. *Bake three cakes*, then there should be evidence to show that this has been achieved.

Using reasonable adjustments and special considerations within assessment

LASER promotes inclusiveness in learning and equality of opportunity. All assessment practice within LASER's units/courses should take an active account of equality of opportunity issues. (see Equality and Diversity Policy). Indeed, there is no requirement that all learners in a group should be assessed with the same assessment methods, although it may often be convenient to do so. As long as issues of fairness and impartiality and the attendant dangers are clearly thought through, a variety of methods within a group is not considered something that requires special arrangements (see ?

However, it may be necessary to make significant changes to the assessment to accommodate the needs of a single or small group of learners. This may be in response to a disability or difficulty that places the learner at a substantial disadvantage in the assessment situation. At all times, however, the integrity of the unit must be respected: this means that a tutor must not alter an Assessment Criterion because a learner cannot do what is required. The right procedure is first to check whether a change of assessment method will overcome the problem fairly. If this is not possible, it may be possible to make other reasonable adjustments to the assessment process.

However, adjustments – which should be approved by an Internal Verifier, and if doubt persists, a Quality Reviewer - must not affect the reliability and validity of the assessment outcomes and must be as rigorous as assessment methods used with other learners. These adjustments are usually approved or set in place before the assessment activity takes place. It is essential that a thorough assessment is made before learners begin a unit to judge whether they can achieve the outcomes, with adjustments if need be: sometimes it is simply not possible, and a different unit must be chosen.

In some instances, often because of something unexpected, it may be necessary to consider applying special arrangements/considerations for adjustments for a learner or group of learners as part of the assessment process. For example:

- If performance in an assessment is affected by circumstances beyond the control of the learner for example recent personal illness, accident, bereavement, or serious disturbance during the assessment, etc.
- Alternative assessment arrangements which were agreed in advance of the assessment prove inappropriate or inadequate
- Part of an assessment has been missed due to circumstances beyond the control of the learner
- There is a sufficient difference between the part of the assessment to which special consideration is applied and other parts of the qualifications that have been achieved to infer that the learner could have performed more successfully in the assessment.

Centres should note that, where an assessment requires the learner to demonstrate practical competence or where criteria have to be met fully, or in the case of qualifications that confer a Licence to Practice, it may not be possible to apply special consideration.

In some circumstances, for example for on-demand assessments, it may be more appropriate to offer the learner an opportunity to take the assessment at a later date.

Special consideration should not give the learner an unfair advantage neither should its use cause the user of the certificate to be misled regarding a learner's achievements. The learner's result must reflect his/her achievement in the assessment and not necessarily his/her potential ability.

Further guidance about the types of and process for applying reasonable adjustments and/or special considerations can be found in the Centre Guidance on Reasonable Adjustments based on an Equality and Diversity Policy.

LASER's forms for **reasonable adjustments** and/or **special consideration** can be found on the [LASER web site](#)

Documenting Assessment

Evidence of achievement must be mapped against specific learning outcomes/assessment criteria. Learners cannot be awarded credit on LASER's courses for partial achievement of a unit. This evidence will be made available to the centre's Internal Verifier and LASER's Quality Reviewer to confirm the Award of Credit for the learner/group of learners.

The following are acceptable forms of evidence that are straightforward to cross reference to assessment criteria within units:

| | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Artefacts | Poetry | Short Answer tests |
| Audio/visual tapes | Workbooks/logbooks | Written exercises |
| Exhibitions | Portfolios | Preparatory notes |
| Time constrained exercises | Checklists | Charts/collages |
| Experiments | Profile | Drawing/diagram/plans |
| Diary | Action Plans | Evaluations/feedback |
| Projects | Reflective journal | Notes/Sketchbooks |
| Witness statements | Identification tests | Assignments |
| | Labelled diagrams | Research |

Mentoring log

Case studies

The following are acceptable forms of evidence that will have to be accompanied by signed tutor checklists or witness statements to ensure that adequate evidence exists to allow the Verifier to confirm that individual learners took part in the activity and achieved the assessment criteria:

Observation of practical activities

Oral Tests

Games/quizzes

Role play/performance/mime

Simulations

Group work

Photographs (need accompanying annotation)

Discussions

Oral question and answer sessions

Talks/presentations

Interviews

Demonstrations

Conversations

Learners taking part in these types of activity as part of the assessment process should be encouraged to keep any preparatory notes, plans etc. which will make the assessment decisions more reliable and transparent. Evidence should ALWAYS be clearly cross referenced to relevant assessment criteria.

Taped or videoed evidence should have an introduction identifying the unit and learning outcome / assessment criterion for which it is providing evidence. Both the tutor and individual learners should be identified by name.

When dealing with oral evidence it is essential that tutors keep an ongoing record of achievement of all learners in the group. If individual assessment and achievement records are lost this will be the only proof of achievement. Internal verifiers should sample this form of evidencing by attending the assessment.

LASER has a variety of sample tracking forms available on its website for tutors and assessors to use or adapt as necessary.

The Internal Verifier's Role in Assessment

Internal Verifiers confirm the award of credit; they do **NOT** make the assessment decision.

Internal Verification confirms that the quality assurance of the programme preparation, delivery, assessment, documentation and certification complies with LASER's procedures.

LASER's Quality Reviewers ensures that:

- There is regional and national consistency in the way assessment criteria are applied
- The regulatory standards have been applied
- Tutors have the opportunity to discuss all the issues involved in running the programme
- Borderline achievement is resolved
- Evidence for achievement meets the assessment standard

E-assessment and distance learning

Where e-assessment and/or distance learning assessment is used, additional policies and procedures must be in place to ensure that the outcomes of assessment are valid and consistent with other assessment practices used within the centre. (see eAssessment Policy and Distance Learning Policy).

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

LASER seeks to enable learners to avoid the duplication of learning and assessment. This can be achieved by offering learners the opportunity to transfer credit i.e. recognise previously accredited

Assessment Practice

achievement from within or outside the Qualification and Credit Framework (QCF) to count towards another qualification (subject to any restrictions which form part of the qualification regulations). Alternatively learning or achievement that has not been certificated or accredited could be assessed and validated as part of the RPL process and then count towards the qualification.

Learners may claim RPL against a whole unit or several units. It is not possible to award part units, but where the RPL evidence does not fully meet the needs of a complete unit, the missing information may be provided via the same assessment processes that are undertaken by a taught group of learners.

Centres are required to develop processes to support learners, assessors and internal verifiers to use RPL effectively. Further information can be found on the LASER web site (see Recognition of Prior Learning Policy and Procedure) and QCF Guidance on the recognition of prior learning within the Qualification and Credit Framework. (web links to be inserted)

Please notify LASER of any successful claims for credit exemption or recognition of prior learning using the appropriate forms to be found on the LASER web site (web link to be inserted)

Introduction to using the Tutor Assessor Planning Sheet

There are several aspects to consider before starting to plan the unit. It is not as straightforward as some others, for these reasons:

- There are not many instantly identifiable 'tasks' – tutor needs to think up activities
- The phrase 'range of situations' means that you need to cover some Assessment Criteria more than once. Three times is a good rule for the word 'range'.
- The unit implies the need for a substantial amount of oral work, so you will need to think carefully about assessment methods and evidence gathering
- Where do you start in this unit? The beginning is not always the right place!

So:

- Learning Outcome 2 is a good starting point as it can be used as a topic for several assessment activities, thus helping to cover the requirement for 'a range of situations'
- A range of situations can be interpreted as discussion, role play, interview with peers, oral Q&A with tutor, etc.
- Posters and written Q&A may or may not be good activities, depending on the group.

Example of Tutor Assessment Planning sheet

Tutor Assessment Planning

Section 1

Level: 1 Unit title: Understanding Personal Relationships

Code: L/102/9964 Tutor's Name: Joe Bloggs Date: 25.12.06

Number of Assessment Criteria in this unit: Sheet 1 of

Section 2 (Prescribed assessment methods?)

| | | |
|----------|------------------|--|
| Oral Q&A | Group discussion | |
| | | |

Section 3

| Task Number | Task Title / Description | LO / AC met | Assessment Methods | Evidence |
|-------------|--|--|--|--|
| 1 | Group discussion: 'What is healthy food?' | 1.1 1.2 2.1 3.1 3.2 3.3 | Observation | Checklist Witness statement |
| 2 | Role play: parent and child, where parent attempts to persuade child not to smoke | 1.1 1.2 1.3 3.1 2.2 3.2 | Observation | Video and Recording record with cross reference to Assessment Criteria |
| 3 | Ditto, but regarding drugs N.B. learners do either Task 2 or Task 3 | 1.1 1.3 3.1 2.2 | Peer assessment | Video and Recording record with cross reference to Assessment Criteria |
| 4 | Pair work discussion followed by individual leaflet or poster to demonstrate the benefits of exercise in a healthy lifestyle | 1.1. 2.3 3.1 3.2 | Observation Feedback on poster or leaflet | Poster or leaflet plus written feedback |
| 5 | Pair work discussion followed by written questions N.B. learners do either Task 4 or Task 5 | 1.1. 2.3 3.2 | Observation Feedback on questions | Answers plus written feedback |

N.B. This is not complete – it demonstrates the process.

Example of a LASER Unit



Unit Title: Understanding Personal Relationships
Unit Level: 1
Unit Credit Value: 3
GLH: 27
LASER Unit Code: BZP024
Ofqual Unit Code: T/500/4789

This unit has 4 learning outcomes.

| LEARNING OUTCOMES | | ASSESSMENT CRITERIA | |
|-------------------|--|---------------------|--|
| The learner will: | | The learner can: | |
| 1. | Represent own needs and wishes in a range of different contexts. | 1.1 | Communicate own ideas and preferences in a range of different circumstances. |
| | | 1.2 | Contribute to decision-making discussions by expressing own opinions. |
| | | 1.3 | In a range of different situations, ensure own wishes are made known and understood by others. |
| 2. | Show an awareness of personal health issues. | 2.1 | Outline the most important foods to be eaten regularly and describe how they help to maintain a healthy diet. |
| | | 2.2 | Identify the effects to personal health of one of the following: alcohol, drugs, tobacco and substance abuse. |
| | | 2.3 | State the benefit of exercise in promoting a healthy life style. |
| 3. | Interact with others in an appropriate manner. | 3.1 | Communicate with others in one-to-one and group situations using appropriate eye contact, voice levels and/or body language. |
| | | 3.2 | Contribute to discussions respecting the views of others and appropriately indicating own wish to speak. |
| | | 3.3 | Introduce self and ask appropriate questions of others. |
| 4. | Understand personal relationships. | 4.1 | Outline the main differences between three different types of relationship. |
| | | 4.2 | Identify the main responsibility of people who live/work together. |

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Unit Title: Understanding Personal Relationships
Unit Level: 1
Unit Credit Value: 3
GLH: 27
LASER Unit Code: BZP024
Ofqual Unit Code: T/500/4789

ASSESSMENT INFORMATION

Guidance:

This grid gives details of the assessment activities to be used with the unit attached. Please refer to LASER Assessment Definitions document for definitions of each activity and the expectations for assessment practice and evidence for verification.

Assessment activities for this unit are indicated in the table below:

Any of these assessment methods considered appropriate may be used. However if a P for Prescribed appears against any assessment method, it must be used to assess some part/s of the unit.

| | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|-------------------------|---|
| Case study | | Project | |
| Written question & answer/test/exam | | Role play/simulation | |
| Essay | | Practical demonstration | |
| Report | | Group discussion | P |
| Oral question and answer | P | Performance/exhibition | |
| Written description | | Production of artefact | |
| Reflective log/diary | | Practice file | |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Assessment guidance mandatory if completed | N/A |
|--|-----|