

e-Assessment Policy

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Awards' Quality & Standards
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1 Purpose

The use of technology for the administration, delivery, and assessment of learners (diagnostic, formative and summative) is increasing in popularity. Technology can add value to assessment practice in a variety of ways.

SFJ Awards is committed to ensuring that innovative, accessible and secure assessment practices are used to allow learners to demonstrate their achievement effectively.

SFJ Awards is committed to working with centres to develop good practice in the introduction and integration of e-assessment techniques.

This policy sets out SFJ Awards' approach to e-assessment.

2 Definitions

For the purpose of this policy:

e-assessment - is defined as:

'The end to end electronic assessment processes where ICT is used for the presentation of assessment activity and the recording of responses. This includes the end to end assessment process from the perspective of learners, tutors, learning establishments, awarding bodies and regulators and the general public'

E-assessment – Guide to effective practice – QCA 2007

3 Roles and Responsibilities

This section sets out the roles and responsibilities of all individuals involved in the use of e-assessment:

Learners:

- Understand how to use the e-assessment technology effectively and appropriately
- Be familiar with undertaking e-assessments, and understand the differences between traditional paper-based assessment and e-assessment
- Work with centre staff to identify any specific needs related to e-assessment that they may have, so that appropriate reasonable adjustments are made available

Centre Staff:

- Have a general understanding of the principles of fair e-assessment
- Be familiar with the e-assessment systems in use at their centre
- Have an awareness of possible malpractice in the use of e-assessment and the precautions needed to mitigate and detect

e-Assessment Invigilators:

- Prepare learners for e-assessment, to ensure they are not disadvantaged (or given unfair advantage over those who are using more traditional paper based methods) by taking e-assessments (rather than traditional paper-based testing methods)
- Set up the e-assessment location to minimise distractions that may occur (for example when it is also being used for e-learning or other purposes)
- Verify that the environmental conditions of the e-assessment location are suitable prior to e-assessment taking place
- Check that learners have been 'authenticated' prior to sitting the e-assessment
- Ensure that learners are familiar with the centre procedures and SFJ Awards regulations for the e-assessment, and that they are logged on correctly
- Ensure that learners are registered with SFJ Awards for their respective qualification before the e-assessment takes place
- Invigilate the e-assessment session according to stated SFJ Awards requirements
- Promptly report any emergencies, technical failures or irregularities to the Head of Centre, and ensure that these are resolved appropriately for the learner
- Document any such event, and notify SFJ Awards of the details, as necessary
- Supervise the conclusion of the e-assessment session, ensuring that the learner's responses and associated information have been submitted to SFJ Awards
- Supplement automated feedback and learner results with additional feedback and guidance on next steps

Internal Quality Assurers (IQAs):

- Ensure that consistent robust delivery, assessment and internal quality assurance systems and procedures are maintained
- Carry out internal quality assurance checks specified by SFJ Awards in relation to e-assessment

Heads of Centre:

- Provide appropriate facilities, equipment and resources for e-assessment to be adopted, managed and conducted effectively
- Ensure availability of appropriately trained staff during the e-assessment process
- Provide or arrange appropriate staff development (including their own) to ensure the centre's continuing capability to support e-assessment consistently, reliably and effectively.
- Ensure that agreed processes are followed and any issues are resolved promptly in conjunction with SFJ Awards, technical suppliers and other staff as required
- Comply with the SFJ Awards malpractice policy and be alert to the risks that e-assessment arrangements and e-portfolios could present and mitigate risks

SFJ Awards External Quality Assurers (EQAs):

- Confirm the centre has appropriate facilities and procedures for e-assessment, as part of their ongoing compliance monitoring activities
- Conduct electronic external quality assurance sampling activities on behalf of SFJ Awards to ensure assessment arrangements are monitored
- Support centres in the consistent delivery of qualifications and the provision of a rigorous process of internal quality assurance when using e-assessment
- Alert the Quality Assurance Officer or Quality and Assessment Manager to concerns with centre assessment activity

SFJ Awards' Quality and Assessment Manager:

- Ensure that SFJ Awards e-assessments are fit for purpose and do not compromise the assessment methodology and the integrity of what is being assessed

SFJ Awards' Qualifications and Product Development Manager:

- Ensure that e-assessment systems provided or endorsed by SFJ Awards are fit for purpose and sufficiently robust
- Ensure that any services provided by network suppliers meet the regulatory authorities' principles for security and data integrity, relevant industry standards and best practice
- Ensure e-assessment systems include functionality to generate key information, for example statistics on results and system error reports and data that will meet qualifications regulatory compliance
- Provide centres with clear guidance on the minimum IT requirements required for operation

External e-assessment and e-portfolio system providers:

SFJ Awards e-assessment systems are provided by a Third Party organisation.

Up to date contracts must be in place between SFJ Awards and the relevant IT providers covering:

- Industry Standards for the presentation, content and clarity of on-line systems
- Industry Standards for the security and retention of data relating to all individuals and organisations involved in the e-assessment/e-portfolio delivery
- Industry Standards for the scalability of on-line systems

4 e-Assessment – Summative Assessment

This policy outlines the minimum requirements that SFJ Awards expects to be met when delivering summative assessment electronically. The requirements of the policy are in addition to our normal SFJ Awards policies, procedures and regulations relating to assessment and internal quality assurance which form part of the centre approval requirements.

Registering Learners

You should ensure that all necessary SFJ Awards learner registration requirements have been fulfilled before a learner's first assessment is carried out.

Learner Preparation

Learners need to become familiar with undertaking e-assessments, and understand the differences between traditional paper-based assessment and e-assessment, to ensure that they are not disadvantaged by taking an on-screen assessment. This is particularly important where the learner is not familiar with using technology or has not been exposed to any of the specific item types used within e-assessment, such as 'drag and drop' or 'hot spots' so they are able to navigate through the e-assessment appropriately.

e-Assessment Environment

e-Assessment should take place within an environment that meets standard requirements.

You must give consideration to the following:

- The safety of the testing environment
- Disability access
- Spacing of the computers
- The noise level and other possible distractions
- Technical stability of the testing computers

Where e-assessments are delivered via the internet, measures must be taken to ensure that learners are not disadvantaged by inappropriate equipment or slow connections.

Space between workstations must be sufficient for comfortable working. In order that learners can work in some isolation, computers should be spaced at least one metre apart and not be overlooked by other learners (a minimum distance of 1.25m is recommended). The spacing should be measured by the outer edge of one screen to the next nearest monitor. This does not apply to monitors positioned back to back. When recommended spacing cannot be physically implemented, alternate machines must be used.

A recommended checklist is available to centres for this purpose.

e-Assessment Preparation

Learners must be made aware of the e-assessment regulations prior to the test and must not have access to outside information for the duration of the e-assessment, where the assessment leads to a regulated qualification.

Typical assessment regulations, particularly for regulated qualifications, might include (*the list is not exhaustive and is intended for guidance only*):

- If the learner tries to cheat, or break the rules in any way, their assessment will be voided
- Books or other help cannot be used during the assessment
- All Learners must switch off mobile phones
- Learners must not observe each other's work
- Learners must not try to talk to, communicate with, or disturb other learners once the assessment has started
- If a learner leaves the assessment room unaccompanied by a member of the centre staff before the assessment has finished, they will not be allowed to return
- Learners must not ask the Invigilator for help with the assessment questions during the assessment
- Learners may only address the Invigilator in cases of hardware or software failure
- No Learner should leave the room used for assessment, unaccompanied during the assessment
- Learners should not access search engines or other on-line resources during the test (unless this is a legitimate component of the test)

Where an infringement of the assessment regulations occurs, the e-assessment must be terminated and invalidated.

The centre must investigate any suspected malpractice in accordance with SFJ Awards' Malpractice policy, available from the website – www.sfjawards.com/malpractice

Technical Failure

In cases of serious technical failure which affects the whole learner group, assessments may be rescheduled or where appropriate learners offered the assessment in paper form.

Incidents that occur during the e-assessment must be recorded and reported to SFJ Awards, as necessary, for example where special considerations are being sought or when a learner is making an appeal.

Cheating/Plagiarism/Malpractice

The use of any form of e-assessment may increase concerns over cheating, plagiarism and malpractice, however the use of technology can enhance the validity and security of assessments.

e-Assessment sessions that lead to a regulated qualification must be fully monitored to ensure they are performed in the required manner. The Invigilator must be present at all times from e-assessment preparation through to completion.

Useful information about learner conduct and malpractice can be found in SFJ Awards' Learner Study Conduct Policy and Malpractice Policy available from our website – www.sfjawards.com

Authenticity

A learners' identify should be checked by the Invigilator before an e-Assessment is undertaken, if the learner is not already known to them.

Invigilation/Learner Observation

e-Assessment sessions that lead to a regulated qualification must be fully monitored to ensure they are performed in the required manner.

It is good practice for new Invigilators to be observed whilst conducting their first live assessment session, to ensure that assessment regulations are being followed and for all active Invigilators to be observed conducting live assessments annually.

Video Monitoring

Where learners are being assessed electronically, remote from the centre, it may be possible to agree with SFJ Awards a suitable strategy for monitoring learner e-Assessment sessions remotely (eg through Skype, FaceTime or another reliable method). The strategy must ensure that learners do not have access to outside information for the duration of the e-assessment. The strategy must be agreed with SFJ Awards before it is implemented.

e-Assessment Feedback to Learners

Learners should be given general feedback, referring to qualification specification areas where mistakes have occurred, to assist with their revision before the next assessment. Detailed question by question breakdown must not be provided.

Re-Takes

If a learner fails the e-assessment, they should not be permitted to re-take another assessment on the same day. There must be a full calendar day between attempts. For example, if a learner fails an assessment on a Tuesday, they may not re-take the assessment until Wednesday. This is to allow the tutor to feedback on areas that may need further revision, before the learner is reassessed.

Re-sit fees may apply. Please refer to SFJ Awards Fees List available from the website – www.sfjawards.com

5 Retention of Evidence

Centres must ensure that they not only retain the evidence itself for the required period for appeal (as currently happens with paper based evidence) but also that they retain the applications required to view it or alternatively, that they convert it into a format that remains accessible for the retention period required.

Please refer to SFJ Awards' Centre Handbook and SFJ Awards' Data Retention Policy, which is available from the website – www.sfjawards.com/data

Loss of, or damage to, electronic evidence is treated in the same way as loss of, or damage to, paper based evidence. The likelihood of this occurring can be minimised by ensuring back-up copies are stored separately for safe-keeping.

6 Appeals

Please refer to SFJ Awards' Enquiries and Appeals Policy, which is available from the website – www.sfjawards.com/appeals

7 Language Requirements

For further details please refer to SFJ Awards' Language Policy, available from our website – www.sfjawards.com/language

8 Special Arrangements

SFJ Awards will support the use of Assistive Technology by centres to enhance learning and to enable assessment for learners with identified needs.

For further details about permitted Reasonable Adjustments & Special Considerations, please refer to SFJ Awards' Reasonable Adjustments & Special Considerations Policy, available from our website – www.sfjawards.com/RA&SC

Where e-assessment are not appropriate to accommodate agreed special arrangements for learners, SFJ Awards will support centres to provide a traditional paper-based alternative.

9 Review of the Policy

This policy will be reviewed by the Quality and Assessment Manager on a regular basis as part of SFJ Awards' self-evaluation arrangements and revised as necessary in response to lessons learnt, customer feedback, changes in legislation and guidance from the Qualifications Regulators.

Our review of the policy will ensure that SFJ Awards procedures continue to be consistent with the regulatory criteria and are applied appropriately and equitably.

Policies and formal amendments to policies are approved at the next meeting by the Quality & Standards Committee.

If you have any queries about the content of the policy or you wish to give feedback then please contact SFJ Awards Tel: 01142 841970 or email info@sfjawards.com

10 Location of the Policy

You can download copies of the policy from our website: www.sfjawards.com/e-assessment