Contingency planning for Further Education and Training in the ETB sector

This paper has been prepared to address the requirement of the ETB sector to implement alternatives to current assessment approaches due to the exceptional circumstances COVID19 has presented. The content has been agreed by the ETBI Directors of Further Education and Training Forum and approved by the Chief Executives Forum.

It is based on what is deemed reasonable as alternative methods of assessment to those previously validated or detailed in component specifications.   By reasonable, it is meant that the learning outcomes can be assessed and approved by academic governance, the approach requires the alternative methods to be practicable, and adequate time be allowed for the development of the alternative assessment methods.

Like other providers, once the ETBs have agreed a contingency plan either at sector level or provider level, a copy will be provided to QQI and published on each provider's website.

OVERALL APPROACH:

ETBs will work towards meeting the applicable programme deadline (where at all possible) using the following overarching principles:

1.Learners will be communicated with regularly using appropriate methods to keep them informed.

2.Alternative methods of assessment are being used solely and strictly on an exceptional basis (i.e.COVID19) and will have no precedent value into the future

3.All exams (exceptions outlined below) will be replaced with alternative methods of assessment

4.As far as possible, learners will be enabled to submit recorded skills demonstrations remotely

5.As far as possible practical exams or exams that cannot be delivered remotely will take place where required, adhering to HSE guidelines.

6.Teachers/tutors to identify learners that:

- Do not have access to digital technology and the internet

- Require access to learning resources
- Require time management/self-directed learning skills

7.Consider a centralised approach at ETB level to developing a loan system for devices that can be provided to learners

8.Consider developing a resource kit for learners that equips them with time management skills and effective strategies to succeed in digital learning environments where required

9.Internal Verification must take place

10.CAO courses will be processed for certification as a priority

11.External Authentication to take place where it can be conducted remotely

12.Options to address modules with common assessment components both within the various settings of an ETB and across the ETB sector will be explored

13.The setting of alternative methods of assessment will take place at class/centre level as determined by the professional judgement of teachers/tutors and will be advised to local management and Quality Councils, where they exist.

14.If a local issue arises in respect of alternative assessment arrangements it should be addressed by the teacher/tutor in the normal manner, i.e. in the first instance to the Line Manager/Principal/Co-ordinator and if necessary to the Director of FET who may be advised by the ETBI FET Quality Group

Other points for consideration

Communications around contingency planning to take place with staff representatives and key stakeholders, locally and/or nationally if required

DFET Forum Quality Strategy Group to act as advisory group to ETBs for any assessment-related issues that may arise over the course of the coming weeks

On-going engagement with QQI and relevant stakeholders

The following may be considered by ETBs in responding to the challenges that have arisen as a result of the national emergency COVID19.

Teacher/Tutor challenges

- Professional development required to deliver effective digital instruction
- Access to digital tools needed to effectively deliver instruction from home
- Ability to stay connected to learners beyond digital tools
- Identifying learners that require support

Recommendations

- Provide training opportunities around digital learning to institutions and teachers where practicable
- Develop a resource hub for educators to access materials necessary for digital learning where appropriate
- If required, offer guidelines to educators on how to stay connected to learners beyond traditional digital forms of communication (e.g. phone conversations, letter writing, etc) while adhering to the GDPR and having regard to privacy considerations for both educator and learner
- Consider a centralised solution to gathering of data on learners in a standardised way and the solutions to be agreed when cohort is identified

Remote learning challenges

- Remote learning can encompass a wide variety of learning opportunities that are unfamiliar
- Needs to consider ways that student learning can continue offline, and could include exploring the natural world, activities to support students' local communities (with appropriate social distancing), and engaging, hands-on projects and artistic creations that stem from students' own passions and experiences, all in adherence with HSE guidelines.

Recommendations

It is suggested that the following approaches may be considered by ETBs:

- large-group video or audio conference calls
- 1:1 phone or video calls
- email
- work packets/projects
- reading lists include links with borrow box (Co. Council library free resource)
- online learning platforms, and other resources to effectively engage with students

These tools could be used to deliver lessons, provide individual student support, provide resources (including instructional material and student assignments), connect students to each other and their teacher, and provide feedback on student work.