

External moderation guidance

Background

External moderation is an important element of the adults national system of quality assurance incorporated in the Knowledge and Skills Statement for Social Workers in Adult Services 2015 (now known as the Post-Qualifying Standards).

In 2015 Skills for Care gathered employer views on models for the national system of external moderation. It was considered that two tiers of external moderation would provide an acceptable level of scrutiny and be practical to administer and support:

- a national moderation panel (NMP) and
- partnership moderation.

The purpose of this national quality assurance system is to give the profession confidence that employers' judgements are consistent across the country.

In the 2022 refresh of the quality assurance framework of the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE), which was a collaborative project with employers, it was decided that the NMP would be subsumed within a new body, the national quality assurance panel (NQAP). The NQAP combines the original NMP function with a new function which is endorsing examples of good practice in relation to the delivery of support, assessment and outcomes. Endorsed examples are submitted to the panel by the sector and made available for adoption by any programme in their journey of continuous improvement through Skills for Care.

ASYE partnerships

Every employer providing an adults' ASYE programme is required to be a member of and participate in, partnership moderation. The partnership moderation process will provide peer review, support, challenge and scrutiny of ASYE employer judgements in order to promote consistency and to identify and encourage the adoption of good practice.

Many ASYE partnerships now embrace both adult ASYE and child and family ASYE. This has happened organically and at the choice of participant organisations. Whereas adults' ASYE employers are required to be a member of and participate in partnership moderation, this is not the case for child and family ASYE employers.

An ASYE partnership will:

- Comprise at least three employers, two of whom support at least two NQSWs through ASYE every year and receive funding from Skills for Care. Where the circumstances of a local partnership area make this problematic over a temporary period, the partnership chair should seek guidance from Skills for Care as to the appropriate way forward.

- The involvement of at least one higher education institution (HEI) in the partnership is desirable and HEIs can be members of more than one partnership.

registered social worker then they should nominate a registered social worker within the organisation to review evidence submitted to the moderation panel.

The partnership must address confidentiality issues, for example a confidentiality agreement can be signed by all members.

Timing and frequency of meetings

The ASYE partnership will consider how often they need to meet in order to fulfil their role of scrutiny, challenge and review although it must be undertaken at least once per year. The frequency and timing of the process will depend on the number of NQSWs within the partnership and their journey through ASYE.

3. Random sampling and reviewing

Partnership moderation should include random sampling of at least 10% over a 12 month period, or no fewer than four NQSW sets of evidence within the partnership. The partnership moderation process must review all fails and marginal submissions and in addition, a 10% random sample of average and good submissions. Each member of the partnership moderation process should read at least two sets of evidence.

When an organisation submits a portfolio to the panel, it should be accompanied by a copy of the internal panel minutes for the portfolio.

4. Reporting and feedback

Common templates/checklists should be used to guide the reviewers and a summary report completed to make sure that information about quality and themes can be collated and sent to individual employers and assessors for their consideration.

On request by Skills for Care, a partnership moderation panel is required to submit their most recent external summary report to Skills for Care.

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All fails and marginal sets of evidence must be submitted for external. A random sample of at least 10% of the average and good submissions should also be submitted for moderation by the partnership.

Random sampling can be performed in different ways according to the size of the partnership and the start dates of NQSWs undertaking ASYE, but it needs to be undertaken in accordance with the spirit of this guidance. The intention is that the external moderation process reviews and scrutinises a random selection of evidence in order to gain a realistic and representative overview of assessment standards.

Partnerships where employers have a significant number of NQSWs undertaking the ASYE can agree that each employer gives a code or a number to each NQSW's evidence set within each category. They would then randomly select 10% from each category using a random number generator or similar tool (see below) to determine the sets of evidence presented to the partnership. This approach may not be feasible for partnerships whose members have a small number of NQSWs or only one. In this case they may need to moderate a greater percentage to ensure that they have good representation across the partnership.

b. Grouping sets of evidence

The partnership moderation process must review all fails and marginal submissions and, in addition, a 10% random sample of average and good submissions.

The term 'marginal' is used to define sets of evidence for moderation purposes, it is not an assessment category. A final ASYE assessment judgement can only be pass or fail. However, in order to uphold standards and promote consistency of assessment, it is particularly important to scrutinise 'marginal

Appendix 1: Random sampling scenarios

Scenario 1: Large partnership of four employers and 131 NQSWs

Employer	Total number of NQSWs on ASYE	Number of fails and marginals	Number of good submissions and number to be moderated (in red)	Number of average submissions and number to be moderated (in red)	Grand Total
Employer 1	80	5	35 (4)	40 (4)	13

an opportunity for all panel members to review one or more pieces of evidence and discuss their evaluation of the evidence, whether moderators would benefit from regular activity focused on supporting the consistency of their evaluation of the evidence.