TUTOR TALK: Learning Outcomes

By the end of this module, learners will:

- Be able to make assessment decisions about occupational competence.
- Be able to provide required information following the assessment of occupational competence.
- Be able to maintain legal and good practice requirements when assessing occupational competence.
- Be able to plan the assessment of occupational competence.

Unit Aim

The aim of this unit is to develop your ability to carry out the assessment of occupational competence in the workplace. This means within a business or organisation, for example, hotels, hair or beauty salons, mechanical engineering facilities, office or retail environments.

The main difference between this unit and assessing vocation skills, knowledge and understanding, is that this does not allow for simulation and is usually to achieve an NVQ.

Evidence requirements

You will need to produce the following types of evidence to demonstrate that you have met the criteria for the unit.
**Audio-visual record** of you planning an assessment, performing an observation and giving feedback on two separate occasions to at least two candidates, to assess their knowledge, understanding and skills, i.e. four assessments in total covering at least three different assessment methods. This evidence will be observed by your assessor, so will need to be clear and supported with the documentation below.

**Products of work** to show the planning of the assessments referred to above. The planning should cover a minimum of three of the methods of assessment from the following list:

- Assessments of learners in simulated environments
- Skills tests
- Oral and written questions
- Assignments
- Projects
- Case studies
- Recognising prior learning

You will need to show how the assessment methods that you are planning to use, meet awarding organisation requirements and the needs of the learner in terms of their readiness for assessment and preferred learning and assessment styles.

For those methods not used in the actual planning for the assessments that you will submit as evidence, you must provide information of how and when they would use those methods and a **reflective account** may illustrate the justification for your decisions.

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**Learning Outcome 1: Be able to make assessment decisions about occupational competence**

Here we are going be looking at different sources of evidence to that of vocational assessment, bearing in mind the differences between the two types of assessment.

*The definition of ‘Occupational competence’ [UK Training Agency (1988) – although there are many more current definitions]: ... the ability to perform the activities within an occupation or function to the standards expected in employment. (This includes) ... the ability to transfer skills and knowledge to new situations ... organisation and planning of work, innovation and coping.*

What this means is that occupational competence is the ability and capability to perform tasks, actions, and demonstrate skills to meet a specific outcome. In a holistic sense this also includes the application of certain life skills, and applying all of these skills to varying scenarios and people while meeting nationally agreed standards and criteria in the process.

Assessment criteria 1.1: Use valid, fair and reliable assessment methods including:

- observation of performance
- examining products of work
- questioning the learner
- discussing with the learner
- use of others (witness testimony)
- looking at learner statements
- recognising prior learning

Here we will look at the range of assessment methods that are applicable to assessing in the workplace.

**Observation of performance:** this should generate evidence of competent performance in the work-place. We must remember that the evidence still needs to meet the criteria identified as being one that must be observed. For example, if visiting a hairdressing salon, observing a candidate washing a client’s hair will be of no value if it has not been identified as a criterion to assess. However, if the requirement for assessment of ensuring responsibility for actions to reduce risks to health and safety is appropriate, then this might satisfy the requirement. This will have been identified during the planning stage, which we will look at in outcome 4 of this unit.
Examining products of work: this will involve a product or physical outcome which the learner might produce while you are there as part of the observation. For example, in the setting above, a hair up, or a make-up in a beauty salon, or a meal in a restaurant. Alternatively, may produce photographic evidence or videos of products of work they have created or made earlier to satisfy the criteria if they cannot perform or make what is required on the day. The value of this evidence is that it can show consistency of performance over time which of course, is a major part of occupational competency. If this is the case, you will need to ensure that this evidence is authentic and this can be done by asking the candidate questions or interviewing other people who are regarded as witnesses. Again, the products have to be mapped to the criteria to be considered sufficient and you need to ensure that the evidence is valid and relevant to occupational standards.

Questioning the learner: these can be quite valuable in terms of checking that the underpinning knowledge is being applied correctly to sequences and decisions in the practical process. Questions should be recorded and relevant and appropriate to the practical task being carried out.

Discussing with the learner: any discussion should be planned between the assessor and the learner/candidate and the aim should be clear. For example, it might be necessary to explain how the learner/candidate took into account health and safety while performing the tasks that were observed, as this is an area in common across all competencies, and yet cannot always be overtly observed. An accurate record of the discussion must be kept and can consist of a document to record the minutes of the discussion, or audio-visual material which, if used, will need to be available for internal and external audit purposes so will need to be kept somewhere accessible.

Use of others (witness testimony): within the workplace, witness testimony will be invaluable and contribute evidence over time to validate the candidate’s constancy and help to fill any gaps in the evidence that the visiting assessor cannot see on the day. You will need to establish the authenticity of the witness, their qualifications and experience. There will be guidelines from the awarding organisation regarding what should be a minimum requirement of the witness, and this will usually request that they are qualified to assess in the workplace, or that they are familiar with the standards of the NVQ that the candidate is working towards. There are also several templates that can be used; however, all testimony must still identify the criteria that the candidate is claiming.

Looking at learner statements: this can include reflective accounts as well as records that might be necessary for organisational procedures, like treatment records, or, in the case of the hairdressing salon placement, records of colours and products used. Case studies also provide opportunities for the assessor to see how the candidate might deal with a variation to a planned activity. Where any records are used they need to be authenticated and this can be done by questioning the candidate as well as colleagues.
Recognising prior learning: sometimes a candidate may have achieved units from other qualifications that are in common with what they are working to now, for example, in hairdressing and beauty there is a unit G18: Promote additional product or services to customers. If this is the case you must first check for currency, according to the awarding organisation requirements and see the original certificates, then sign a copy of the certificate and provide a statement for the learner’s portfolio.

No matter how many of the methods are used, they will best be applied in a holistic way. You need to remember the importance of accurate recording of assessment outcomes and standardisation documentation for sampling and verification, to meet the organisational and awarding organisation procedures. You will also need to apply the principles as already discussed.

You must ensure:

- Fairness towards the candidate.
- Opportunities for achievement of the outcomes and ranges are identified.
- Authenticity and sufficiency of evidence is gathered.

Assessment criteria 1.2: Make assessment decisions of occupational competence against specified criteria

The criteria will be specific to occupational competency and so will be inclusive of aspects like commercially-acceptable timings or standards and levels of work, as well as working ways, without support and in a responsible and autonomous way. While you will observe performance, you can also examine the underpinning knowledge based work that the candidate has done to ascertain their ability to apply knowledge in the practical sense and adapt or change procedures to accommodate any variations to an initial plan or task.

You must only follow the criteria and not make additional assessment requirements over and above those identified to meet occupational standards.

A common mistake when assessing in the workplace is to over-assess. This means:

‘an assessment of the quality or amount of something that is higher than it should be’

Source: http://www.collinsdictionary.com

This is particularly important when judging skills, as the skills at Level 2 will be specific yet basic, whereas the skills defined at Level 3 will differ in terms of knowledge requirement and the application of that knowledge and will usually require more autonomy.
As an example, let us look at a few similar criteria from hairdressing at Levels 2 and 3 to compare the depth of knowledge or skill that needs to be assessed at each level. This will apply across many occupational areas from floristry to plumbing as you will see if you investigate the differences in Levels on the Ofqual site. What you need to be aware of is the fact that the outcomes are quite similar.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The art of colouring hair (Knowledge)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Colour hair to create a variety of looks (knowledge)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State how to communicate and behave within a salon environment</td>
<td>Describe the different consultation techniques used to identify service objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outline safe and hygienic working practices</td>
<td>Explain the safety considerations that must be taken into account when colouring and lightening hair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Practical competency</strong></td>
<td><strong>Practical competency</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Select and use the application method, products, tools and equipment to temporarily and semi-permanently colour hair</td>
<td>Select and use colouring techniques, products, tools and equipment to colour the hair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mix and apply the colour using neat sections*</td>
<td>Prepare and apply the colour and lightening products to complement the desired look</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remove the colour product thoroughly from the hair and scalp*</td>
<td>Check that the colour is thoroughly removed from the hair and scalp without disturbing any packages still requiring development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* can be assessed through oral questioning</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Regardless of what you are assessing you are making decisions against the criteria and the plan should have identified exactly what the candidate would perform in order to meet the criteria. To meet the criteria above at Level 3, you would need to ask the candidate to collate evidence or observe the candidate performing a full colouring treatment, using a range of colours and techniques to fulfil the criteria.

They could include evidence of full head application or different sections of colour applied as highlights or lowlights. They could present a number of photographs as we discussed in criterion number one, however, if they produce this kind of evidence, you will need to validate and authenticate it as previously highlighted.
Your decisions should be clear, this means to state if the outcome was competent or not competent. You must be able to justify the reason for your decision which will be communicated to the candidate. All decisions must be recorded clearly to enable a full audit trail with copies of the decisions being available to the candidate, yourself and any others involved in the assessment process, for example, their supervisor or mentor.

**Assessment criteria 1.3: Follow standardisation procedures**

Even when you are out in the workplace, you will still need to follow your organisational standardisation procedures. This is particularly important when assessing in the workplace as there are so many variables that can happen when not in a controlled environment like a vocational setting.

One of the best ways to standardise is to attend meetings at your centre and they vary quite a lot depending on your particular vocational setting and whether the qualification is skill-based like in practical-based qualifications, like hospitality, engineering or hairdressing, or whether it might be more customer-service or admin-based. Issues regarding paperwork and recording are quite easy to address, as much of the documentation can be changed to ensure that everyone follows the same process with the introduction of tick boxes or a logical sequential flow to lead the assessor through the administrative process which is vital to quality assurance of the assessments.

The main focus of standardisation at most meetings and events is the consistency of judgements across a number of assessors who would be assessing the same outcomes. This can be met by having a group judging pieces of evidence and identifying and sharing good practice.
Where competency in skill is required there may be workshops that you will need to attend where you can organise shadowing of other assessors or evaluate procedures to use with your work-based learner/candidate.

It is quite usual for a work-based learner/candidate to be allocated one assessor and there are a number of reasons for this, one is to provide the opportunity to build an open and trusting relationship which will reduce anxiety and tension during the assessment process. Another is that a learner/candidate will feel more comfortable offering and working with the same person when it is their time to start and think of other sources of evidence as they will be more relaxed in their approach to the task.

It is a good point of practice to associate yourself with a candidate almost like a team member, where you work together to find the evidence to meet requirements. A statement I am fond of using is one where I introduce myself, and explain that I am not there to examine them, but to look at what they can do, and let them know if they are performing to the appropriate level to meet occupational standards. I will go on to say that we can work together to identify areas that might need more practice and application, but ultimately I am there to help them achieve their goals.

Where there might be alternative, or numerous, assessors this is when the standardisation process is most applicable, as not only will each assessor need to rely on the recording and planning of a previous assessor, but they will have to ensure that their decisions are the same. An example could be where one assessor has not accepted some evidence, so has requested something specific to meet the criteria. The candidate has agreed to demonstrate or produce this on the next assessment, but the following assessor does not see the reason for the activity and does not accept it. This is one of the biggest complaints from learners/candidates, that they are asked to produce something which is then not accepted by another assessor. To ensure this does not happen, if you do request anything specific, you must justify the reason in your reporting so that the following assessor can apply a standardised and consistent approach.
Standardisation ensures that learners are not disadvantaged; therefore it is important to collate evidence from numerous sources to feedback to your assessors at standardisation events, which can include learner feedback as well as IQA and external reports which will form the basis of good practice.

**Assessment criteria 1.4: Provide feedback to learners that affirms achievement and identifies any further implications for learning, assessment and progression**

To feedback effectively, you will use a combination of all of the communication and interpersonal skills covered throughout this course in a sensitive and empathetic way. You will be mindful of your appearance, use of body language and maintain the way you speak, ensuring that your feedback is positive, constructive and supportive.

Feedback in the workplace needs to cover the basic principles, but must also be appropriately delivered as this is in an actual workplace or business, and so you must be mindful of the impact your presence could have on the day to day affairs and running of the business. You might need to talk to other staff members as well as the candidate for the actual assessment; however, if the workplace is small or there are no private or quiet areas, it might be better to leave the site of the assessment so that there is privacy, less chance of interruption and more space to examine any paperwork or associated evidence.

If you do decide to use a different location where you can discuss the outcome in detail, check that this is acceptable to the candidate and their line manager. Remember that there may be time constraints owing to the candidate’s other responsibilities so keep check on how long the candidate can be excused for and keep your feedback succinct and make sure that they understand the outcome and reason for it.

If further evidence is needed, this should be related to criteria and standards with opportunities for improvement highlighted. Any development plans outlined will formulate the basis of the next assessment plan and should be recorded and agreed while all is fresh.
Basic principles of feedback

In summary, we need to remember that the structure of the feedback, whether formal or informal, should follow these guidelines:

- be as close to the actual assessment as possible while actions are fresh in the mind
- in a supportive area or environment, private or away from others
- include the learner’s/candidate’s opinion of how the assessment went
- highlight areas of good practice that you have observed and inform where others have contributed to positive comments and feedback
- ensure that the learner/candidate understands what they have to do in order to achieve if they have not
- use language that the learner/candidate understands and that is appropriate to the level of the qualification and in line with the criteria and standards
- behave in an empathetic manner, aware of your positioning, voice and body language as discussed previously
- summarise any development or action with a plan that the learner/candidate and other assessors can follow
- arrange follow up reviews and set target dates for achieving outcomes

Ultimately you need to remember to:

- give your assessment decision clearly so that the learner/candidate knows if they have passed the assessment or have to do more work
- sandwich any developmental issues between positive statements and always start and end on a positive note
By ensuring that the feedback is constructive and supportive, we will hopefully build a trusting relationship with the learner/candidate, which will encourage openness and goodwill, and reduce the instance of them defending or making excuses for their actions or doubting your decision. Remember also that not all learners/candidates are young people, but many are returning to the work-based training environment as a career change later in life, so your feedback should be respectful at all times.

Clear information to help you formulate feedback can be found at:

- [www.faculty.londondeanery.ac.uk/e-learning/feedback/giving-formal-feedback](http://www.faculty.londondeanery.ac.uk/e-learning/feedback/giving-formal-feedback)

For the purposes of this qualification you will need to provide evidence of giving feedback to candidates who:

1. Are competent
2. Are not competent
3. Provide insufficient evidence

**TUTOR TALK: Did you know?**

Assessments can cover a wide range of occupational areas and do not always meet QCF qualifications and some can take place in some rather unusual places, like for example, the field based MMO course, which is the Marine Mammal Observation course which is a three day ‘vessel-based’ course which could be based anywhere at sea.

More information is available at [http://www.gardlinemarinesciences.com](http://www.gardlinemarinesciences.com).

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**Learning Outcome 2: Be able to provide required information following the assessment of occupational competence**

Assessment records should catalogue where competence is achieved and where it is yet to be met, and be an accurate reflection of the learner’s/candidate’s activities. All the activities will cover a range of applications and you will need to use a range of assessment methods in order to fully map the evidence to the criteria. During this time, you will document action plans/personal development plans as well as complete assessment paperwork like plans, reviews and logbooks with records of oral questioning and written assessments. While the candidate may be assessed in the workplace, they will have had their induction and initial assessment at the main training provider, so evidence will contribute to the overall portfolio.
Here you need to show that you can identify and know what your responsibilities are to the centre and awarding organisation with regard to keeping records and following procedures. This is an outcome in common with assessing vocational, skills, knowledge and understanding, and some of the content is applicable to both outcomes.

**Assessment criteria 2.1: Maintain records of the assessment of occupational competence, its outcomes and learner progress**

Before we look into the information, its content and management, let us first look at who will need to considered and who might need access to these types of information in a work-based setting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Reason for access</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Training centre administrator/exam co-ordinator</td>
<td>To register candidate with awarding organisations, apply for special consideration and dispensations, enter for on-line testing. Claiming certificates when completed. Co-ordinating work-based assessor visits and confirmations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learner/candidate</td>
<td>To know what their registration numbers are, what level of standards and criteria they are working towards. Assessment, development and action plans and reviews, feedback, test and exam results and to know if they are following the programme at the correct pace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-based trainer/witness</td>
<td>To provide additional support as identified, follow programme and provide testimony to support evidence submission. The witness must be a qualified work-based assessor or familiar with the occupational standards that the candidate is working towards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessor</td>
<td>To ensure standardisation and consistency across decision making, to monitor progress through tracking sheets and accurate recording of planning and assessment decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Quality Assurer</td>
<td>To monitor the consistency of assessment decisions within the centre, standardise and support the approach to assessment through meetings and workshops.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Verifier</td>
<td>To inspect the quality of the assessment recording, tracking and accuracy of decisions and claims.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All documentation must track the progression of the learner/candidate throughout their journey and achievement of their competency. Many records will include products of work such as portfolios or information that will contribute to the portfolio and will be assessed throughout the duration of the work-based programme and can be hard copy, handwritten or produced on PCs or electronic records that are uploaded to an online system or e-portfolio.

Records can include, but are not limited to:

- enrolment information
- individual learning records
- initial assessment results
- tutorial records
- formative assessment plans
- summative assessment plans
- records of assessment methods used or tracking sheets to track the different methods used
- feedback and development and action plans
- written assessment
- records of oral questioning
- candidate observation records
- completed assessment logbooks
- assessor observation reports
- records of meetings with learners/candidates
- records of standardisation meetings and workshops
- assessor CPD records
- IQA sample records and feedback sheets

In addition to accurately completing the kinds of information above, you must follow your centre systems for organising and managing the work, particularly as you will be field based, so organisation is a must.
For example, you might want to consider the following:

- What would happen if work went missing?
- What is the organisational stance if an assessor has their brief case or laptop stolen?

Regardless of the type of records that you will need to maintain, there are a few guidelines when creating and handling information.

**Principles of good record keeping:**

- All handwriting should be legible.
- Plans and changes to plans and records should be signed. In the case of written records, the person’s, name and job title should be printed alongside the first entry.
- Date and initial all records.
- Your records should be accurate and recorded in such a way that the meaning is clear.
- Records should be factual and not include unnecessary abbreviations, jargon, meaningless phrases or irrelevant speculation.
- Records should identify any risks or problems that have arisen and show the action taken to deal with them.
- You should communicate fully and effectively with your colleagues, ensuring that they have all the information they need.
- You must not alter or destroy any records without being authorised to do so.
- The learner/candidate should be involved in the record keeping process.
- The language that you use should be easily understood.
- Records should be readable when photocopied or scanned, as duplicates will be needed for audit.
- Do not use coded expressions of sarcasm or humorous abbreviations to describe the learners.
Based on the source: [http://www.nmc-uk.org](http://www.nmc-uk.org)

**Assessment criteria 2.2: Make assessment information available to authorised colleagues**

This criterion is in common with Assessing Vocational Skills, Knowledge and Understanding 3.2, and is adapted to the workplace.

In the previous criterion we looked at other people who would be involved in the sharing of information and what kinds of information would need to be made available whether in a vocational or work-based setting.

Assessment information relating to those learners registered for a qualification must only be available to those who are authorised access who are usually other assessors, the IQA and external verifier. Often information can be shared with regulatory bodies such as the SFA, or the awarding organisation for the purposes of benchmarking trends and data pertaining to outcomes of programmes.

Records must be secured at all times and if electronic, saved in a format that will prevent copying or changing. These days, and with the increase in electronic material, this can be achieved by securing PDF documents or encrypting word documents with a password or restricting editing.

Remember that all entries and comments must only reflect the competency against the criteria and not be of a personal nature.
The portfolio will be the property of the learner throughout the programme and will contain products of their own work as well as plans and feedback from assessors. When information is required from the portfolio, or it is required for assessment, care and tracking must be followed scrupulously and you should treat all work with respect and care. You need to advise your candidates to keep their portfolio securely at all times to ensure that only those authorised to examine the candidate’s work do so, as well as reducing the possibility of work to be lost, stolen or plagiarised by other learners.

Sharing information does not just pertain to allowing others to physically examine records, but can also be shared during meetings, for example, general discussions relating to the learner’s progress and whether they are on track, if there are any issues identified from within the work placement or with other staff or colleagues or if there is information pertaining to the learner’s emotional well-being or state of mind.

Assessment information is also valuable in internal CPD workshops where it might contribute to standardisation and consistency of the assessment process, for example, where a group of learners/candidates are not meeting the standards.

**Assessment criteria 2.3: Follow procedures to maintain the confidentiality of assessment information**

This criterion is common with Assessing Vocational Skills, Knowledge and Understanding 3.3, and has been adapted to meet the assessing of competency in the workplace.

The main theme of this section is to demonstrate how you, while representing your organisation and visiting the workplace to assess occupational competence, will follow procedures conforming to the Data Protection Act, and so ensuring the confidentiality of personal information relating to the person, i.e. the learner/candidate.

This covers written records, as well as verbal, so here we will look at what handling information, confidentiality and data protection is all about.

Before we look at confidentiality and data protection, let’s just examine how to record information properly. Remember that any report or file has to be accurate and give a current picture of that learner’s progress.
A simple way to remember what you need to do to record information well is to remember the mnemonic – ACES. The information should be:

- Accurate
- Clear
- Easy to read
- Shareable

You must not record personal judgements that are not linked to the standards and criteria and maintain your professional values including anti-discriminatory practice, equality, respect for diversity and maintaining the safety and security of learners.

Confidentiality means that information is regarded as the private property of the individual it concerns. It cannot be passed on to another person unless that person has a specific and overriding need to know, or unless the individual chooses for it to be made known. As a result, information should not be shared so there are a number of actions that you should be aware of that are regarded as good practice:

- You should not talk to anyone about the learners openly in, or outside, the workplace setting unless it is a meeting specifically held for them.

- Only relevant information about the learners should be recorded.

- Confidential information pertaining to all assessments, and personal records should be kept in locked cabinets.

- Hard copy personal information should not be left where unauthorised people can pick it up and read it.

- Electronic personal information should not be left unattended on a computer screen and all electronic information should be password protected.

You need to understand the limits of confidentiality. If someone tells you something in confidence that is detrimental to their health or well-being, this information has to be transferred to a senior member of staff or the pastoral department within the training organisation, however, you must inform the person that you have a duty of care to inform that person.
Data Protection

Data Protection is about protecting any detailed information which we hold on anyone that is written, computerised and verbally discussed. Data protection is enshrined in law (The Data Protection Act 1998). This is because all UK citizens have the right to privacy and we are all responsible for ensuring that personal information is held securely and lawfully. You can be prosecuted if you do not adhere to the DPA principles. It is easy to store and share information these days, and the DPA principles are in place to ensure that data are managed appropriately.

The Act is concerned with an individual’s personal data and the individual’s expectations of privacy and security in the use of that personal data. It also provides a framework of rules and procedures to be followed in collecting, storing, securing, transferring, accessing, retaining and destruction of personal data. This Act also gives the individual right of access to his/her personal data.

The Act states that:

- Data must be kept secure – Written confidential information should be kept in locked filing cabinets, information should not be left where unauthorised people can pick it up and read it.

- Data stored must be relevant – Only relevant information about the service users should be recorded and this should not be left on view for unauthorised people to access.

- Data stored must be kept accurate and up-to-date.

- Data stored must be kept no longer than necessary.

- Data must be obtained and processed lawfully.

- Personal information should not be left unattended on a computer screen and should be password protected.

- Information shared should be shared only on a ‘need to know’ basis.

The Data Protection Act 1998 is needed to ensure that personal information is not misused or released to anyone without consent and extends to all or any information stored by any person, organisation or institution and not specific to any specific vocational sector or setting.
In summary, to ensure good handling of information:

- Follow procedures in your setting for storing personal information.
- Lock away records which contain personal information.
- Never give out information over the phone about learner’s (or staff).
- Do not share passwords for information systems.
- Protect electronic files with passwords.
- Always deliver feedback in a suitable and private setting.
- Do not gossip about learners.

**TUTOR TALK: Did you know?**

While tattoos may be a fashion trend at the moment, most contain messages within the images, like scenes and reminders of events or people.

Historically a tattoo was used by certain tribes as a display of a member’s seniority within the tribe, like the Maori, or Native American Indians.

Later, in the wars, many prisoners of war were tattooed with identification numbers so that they would easily identified should they escape.

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**Learning Outcome 3: Be able to maintain legal and good practice requirements when assessing occupational competence**

This outcome is similar in content to that of Assessing Vocational Skills, Knowledge and Understanding 4.1. The legal requirements still need to be followed, however, this focuses our attention on the work place and the additional requirements that you need to follow.

You will find some of the documentation you will need to source to meet this criterion will apply to others across other areas of this unit, but this is not about identifying the appropriate documentation, but following the legislation and procedures within them. Ultimately your evidence might be a professional discussion or statement to show how you applied the procedures to the actual assessments.
Assessment criteria 3.1: Follow relevant policies, procedures and legislation relating to the assessment of occupational competence, including those for health, safety and welfare

As an assessor working within a team, or alone, you will still need to follow the guidelines that were explained to you at your induction with the training provider who is ultimately responsible for the work-based programme and assessment.

These guidelines were put in place to ensure that your centre meets the awarding organisation’s standards for visits to the workplace.

These have been drawn up initially by regulatory bodies such as Ofqual before being adopted by the sector skills councils for each of the vocational areas and will relate to the competence of the assessors and other quality assurers,’ as well as assessment strategies. Included in this area will be the standardisation requirements for assessors and witnesses within the workplace.

In particular, you will need to be aware of the impact of implementing policies, for example, health and safety in a different environment, as this might require much more planning and preparation in some vocational areas where machinery is used, like engineering.

If machinery is involved there will also be accident reporting and first aid procedures to follow, and you may need to wear PPE for the purposes of following procedure.

You should also ensure that you know who to contact in the event of an emergency and how to contact them. You will also need to consider fire and evacuation procedures and what to do if there is an incident that requires evacuation.
Risk assessment of the premises where the assessments are carried out will be an important part of the initial process and are usually conducted at the beginning of a placement to ensure that the learner/candidate is not being put at risk. Not only will the organisation need to produce insurance and compliance policies, like employer’s liability, professional indemnity, etc. but there will usually be an inspection by either someone from your centre, or this may be something that you will need to do to ensure the welfare of your learner/candidate.

A ‘Work placement health and safety checklist’ or equivalent will need to be completed and this will cover all aspects of the work placement that will affect the candidate.

The following are examples of the areas that would need to be checked:

- Health and Safety Policy
- Risk Assessment and Control
- Accident, Incidents and First Aid
- Supervision, Training, Information and Instruction
- Work Equipment
- Personal Protective Equipment and Clothing
- Fire and Emergencies
- Safe and Healthy Working Environment
- General Health and Safety Management
- Equality and Diversity Employer Checklist

Following on from the checking of these areas and comments regarding how they are implemented, there would be risk banding, to give the Organisational Risk Level (ORL):

**Low Risk:** Demonstration of high standards of health and safety, detailed evidence of compliance with health and safety contractual requirements.

**Medium Risk:** Demonstration of basic standards of health and safety, reasonable level of compliance with health and safety contractual requirements. Improvements required in accordance within an agreed development plan.

**High Risk:** Demonstration of poor standards of health and safety, insufficient compliance with health and safety contractual requirements. Significant improvements necessary, unacceptable until development plan with strict time-scales has been agreed and initiated.

**Unacceptable:** The organisation’s attitude and/or non-compliance with health and safety requirements, means that the sub-contractor is unacceptable unable to agree development plan.
**ACTIVITY**

List all the policies that might pertain to an organisation that you might have to visit. Indicate those that you think will have a direct impact on your assessment activities.

While many of the points above focus on physical risks, there are other types of risks that you should be aware of. If the candidate is working within a health and social care environment with vulnerable adults, or with children, you have to consider other procedures that support duty of care and physical and emotional safeguarding.

These can include strict procedures for access to the organisation, like ensuring that you have a current DBS certificate, that you inform all necessary people well in advance of your intention to visit, that you observe signing in and out in procedures, present identification if required and agree to wear identification whilst in the building.

Learner welfare will also require that they are informed of disputes and appeals procedures but, more importantly, know how to support them to make an appeal without fear of recrimination or discrimination in future assessments.
This is a guide to some of the policies and procedures that your organisation may have and that are appropriate to the learner from training perspective and affect the quality of their support, assessment and welfare outside of the work placement:

- IAG policy
- Appeals procedure
- Complaints procedure
- Safeguarding policy
- Sustainability policy & environmental policy
- Disaster recovery policy/business continuity plan
- Equality & diversity policy
- Data protection policy
- Quality assurance policy
- Assessment policy
- Learner support policy
- Whistle blowing policy
- Withdrawal policy
- At risk policy
- Malpractice and maladministration

In the next criteria we will look in more detail at equality and diversity in the workplace.

**Assessment criteria 3.2: Apply requirements for equality and diversity and, where appropriate, bilingualism when assessing occupational competence**

You need to know and apply the principles of your organisation’s equality and diversity policy to ensure a fair and transparent assessment process within the workplace. This unit is in common with assessing vocation skills 4.2, although is tailored to meet the variations of the work place, and will need to encompass the general equality and diversity guidelines from your own organisation as well as take into account any specifics from the organisation that you are visiting, so it is important to become familiar with their policy as well.

With regard to actual support for assessment in the workplace regarding equality and diversity, you may need to look outside of that policy to see what procedures to follow to support, for example, bilingual learners and look to your awarding organisation for guidance. By supporting these learners/candidates, you are meeting the lawful requirement of the Equality Act 2010. If you should provide an assessment of learners who are bilingual in another language, for example Welsh, then the assessment must follow mechanisms to ensure consistency, so that the outcome would be the same regardless of whether it was conducted in England or Wales.
An equality and diversity policy and procedure should contain reference to the following:

**Commitment** – a statement from the organisation will state that, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010, they encompass all strands of equality and diversity legislation (age, disability, race and ethnicity, gender and sex, religion, belief and non-belief, and sexual orientation). It is their policy to ensure that no person involved or associated with the organisation will receive less favourable or less fair treatment, than any other individual on any grounds, recognising each individual’s starting point and preferred route to achieving their goal. They will expect that all connected with the organisation will fully comply with the policy and this will apply to employees and trainees.

There will usually be a number of sections to the policy and might take the following form, although each centre has the freedom to create its own policy structure so long as it meets the requirements by law.

**Anticipatory Duty:** this means that the organisation will state that it will try to anticipate for the likely requirements of all individuals by planning in advance.

**Breach of Policy:** will state what action will be taken against any employee/learner who is found to have committed an act of discrimination or harassment.

**Harassment, Bullying, Victimisation:** where such behaviour is motivated by gender, sexual orientation, marital status, race, colour, national or ethnic origin, nationality, age or disability, it also amounts to infringement of equal employment opportunity. This behaviour can range from extreme forms such as violence or bullying, to less obvious actions like practical jokes and ridiculing colleagues or subordinates.

**Confidentiality:** any information disclosed that is considered personal or sensitive, including disability, will be on the understanding that it is done so in confidence and will only be shared with relevant personnel by prior written agreement and not shared without explicit consent being given by the individual.
Complaints & Grievances: in order to protect staff and learners alike, this will ensure that each person has redress against harassment and bullying at work or during any part of learning. Any employee/learner making a complaint of unfair discrimination will be protected from victimisation in any form.

Right to Advice, Counselling & Mediation: this will state that the organisation supports everyone’s right to advice and to legal protection, and will aim to address grievances internally through its own policies and procedures. If this is not possible, there will be a procedure in place to support the source of independent advice, counselling or mediation for the individual to pursue, if they so wish.

Monitoring: to meet many requirements for data collection for the SFA and benchmarking, regular monitoring of recruitment, together with all other equality and diversity policies and processes for both staff and learners will take place to ensure that we pursue an effective policy of equality of opportunity.

Information Computer Technology (ICT): a statement relating to the use of electronic communication will be included to ensure that no offensive material is introduced into the training or working environment and that personal privacy of data is protected. This will also state compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998, giving access to anyone whose personal data is stored.

Rehabilitation of Offenders: there will be a statement from the organisation to confirm that they will not discriminate against anyone who has a spent conviction under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

Age: discrimination or harassment on grounds of age by employers is prohibited in the areas of recruitment, promotion and training. It is unlawful for an employer to discriminate against a person when determining to whom employment should be offered. Similarly, it is unlawful to discriminate against that person in terms of opportunities for promotion, a transfer, training or receiving any other benefit.

Disability: there will be a commitment to equal opportunities for employees/learners regardless of whether or not they have a disability. This will also outline the commitment to support, flexibility and arrangements regarding the removal of barriers.

Race & Ethnicity: this will be a commitment to racial equality for all learners and employees and the provision of an environment which is supportive. All individuals should be treated with courtesy and respect and their contribution to the learning process is valued in an environment where learners and staff are treated solely on the basis of their merits, abilities and potential, regardless of ethnic or national origin.
**Gender & Sex:** the gender equality duty is a legal requirement on all public authorities, including colleges, when carrying out all their functions, to have due regard to the need to promote gender equality in proportion to its relevance, i.e.

- Ensuring that all of a trans-person’s rights are met, as are every employee’s rights, under the Sex Discrimination Act and Equal Treatment Directive.
- Ensuring that trans-members of staff have equal access to all forms of training and staff development.
- Ensuring that there is no discrimination on grounds of gender identity in relation to dismissal of staff.

**Equal Pay:** men and women are entitled to be paid equally without any bias on the grounds of sex and that this right is set out in the Treaty of Rome and is enforceable under UK law.

**Sexual Harassment at work:** this is a particular form of harassment. It is conduct at work directed towards an employee by another employee or group of employees which is of a sexual nature, or which is based on a person’s sex, and which is regarded as unwelcome or offensive to the recipient.

The following examples illustrate the sort of conduct that may be treated as sexual harassment:

- Unwanted physical contact or conduct which is intimidating or physically or verbally abusive. Harassment can also be non-verbal, for example, staring or gestures.
- Suggestions that sexual favours may further a person’s career, or that refusal may hinder it.
- Sexual advances, propositions, suggestions or pressure for sexual activity at or outside work.
- Derogatory or demeaning remarks based on gender, or the display of sexually explicit material in the workplace.
- Sexual harassment is a denial of equal employment opportunity and has the effect of insulting and demeaning the employee who is harassed.
**Religion, Belief & Non-Belief:** through the implementation of the relevant policies and procedures, the organisation will ensure the following:

- Recruitment and selection are based entirely on relevant criteria, which do not include religious belief or non-belief (except in the case of a genuine occupational requirement).
- Members of any religion, or none, are treated with equal dignity and fairness.
- Under-represented groups in society are encouraged to apply for jobs.
- Where possible, appropriate services are provided to meet the cultural and religious needs of all employees.
- The right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion is absolute, but the right to manifest beliefs is qualified by the need to protect the rights and freedoms of others.

**Sexual Orientation:** within the regulations, sexual orientation is defined as:

- Orientation towards persons of the same sex (lesbians and gay men).
- Orientation towards persons of the opposite sex (heterosexual).
- Orientation towards persons of the same sex and the opposite sex (bisexual).

Once you are aware of your responsibilities under the equality and diversity guidelines, you will actively be able to embrace the flexibility required to ensure that everyone has access to a fair and transparent assessment process within the workplace.

**Assessment criteria 3.3: Evaluate own work in carrying out assessments of occupational competence**

This unit is in common with Assessing Vocational Skills 4.3 and applicable to work-based assessment as well as vocational assessment.

**What is evaluation?**

Evaluation is the collection and analysis of information in order to make an objective and systematic assessment of merit, worth and significance, using criteria governed by a set of standards of an object or subject.
The significance of this, in this context, is to identify and provide information that can be used to influence our decision making and help us to improve our own performance and output. The main type of evaluation that you will engage in will be formative evaluation, which will be used to examine your assessment ability and the quality and reliability of your assessment decisions.

The other type of evaluation is assumptive or summative evaluation, which examines the effects or outcomes of some object or subject. This is usually to do with the final outcome and is usually more statistically based.

To get the information that you will need to perform your evaluation, you will need to plan to collate what you need. Your evaluation will only be as reliable as the information that is fed into the process; therefore, you need to ensure that it is correct, informative, clear and emotive.

Sources of feedback will come from many sources, so you need to collate that information to make sure that you are not missing anything. Once you have the information, you need to map the feedback to see if there is enough for you to make judgement on your own merits.

A good way to do this is to think about your role in the organisation and who you interact with, and what requirements and standards you need to meet.

CASE STUDY ACTIVITY

Nicola is an experienced work-based assessor. She spends a lot of time on the road visiting her caseload of candidates and supplies excellent tracking records and feedback to the centre and candidates. She is notified that her annual appraisal is imminent and has to complete a section of self-reflection and evaluation of her role.

- What do you think she needs to consider?
- Where do you think she can get the information from?

Deciding what information you want to collate and use for your evaluation can appear challenging, but that will only be because you are unsure of what to use. Whatever you choose to do, remember that the data, or information provided will fall into two main areas, both of which are of equal importance in an all-round evaluation, they are quantitative and qualitative.

**Quantitative**: this will give you statistics and numerical results. For example, the average pass mark of learners in various knowledge tests, the percentage progression of learners through a programme, the number of times work is referred, the number of full outcomes in a cohort.
While quantitative methods are most often used to assess a project’s outcome, they are invaluable in terms of progression. In your instance, you can take registration data, national benchmarking data regarding registration, retention and achievement within your vocational area, centre or departmental targets and outcomes regarding caseload numbers and outcomes. You can even see if your IQA holds information regarding the number of successful assessments in relation to the different assessors meeting the criteria. This is hard data and will enable you to see if you are performing to the standards that are set and are not subjective.

**Qualitative information:** this is descriptive and more to do with attitudes and opinions, so is good to assess aspects such as approachability, professionalism, support, general ability and output of products such as neatness of work, IT ability and so on.

To aid the qualitative collection of information, questionnaires are a good source. Sources of feedback can include peers and other colleagues, IQA, EQA, learners. A good idea is to try and keep the questions quite simple, and a usual format is a statement and then the opportunity to agree or disagree.

For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nicola is very approachable</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree or disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>(please circle)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Comment (optional)**

The main outcome of the evaluation should complement the appraisal process and contribute to the setting of personal goals and personal development planning.

**Assessment criteria 3.4: Maintain the currency of own expertise and competence as relevant to own role in assessing occupational competence**

This unit is similar and in common with Assessing Vocation Skills 4.4, and adapted to meet the requirements of a work-based assessor.

In unit one, we looked at the value of continual professional development and reflective practice and have already discussed the benefits of each. As a work-based assessor, it is your responsibility to maintain your occupational competency, that is, the actual skills you possess to maintain your credibility as an assessor. You should also aim to be qualified to at least one level above that which you are assessing.
ACTIVITY

- Conduct an evaluation on yourself and select three areas that you need to maintain.
- Draw up a plan to show how you can maintain those skills over the coming year.

As we have discussed, CPD is not just about attending courses, it has to have a value and be accessible to you, so you also need to consider the value of the development and whether this can be an internal, informal activity, or whether it does require specific training.

Standardisation workshops can contribute to CPD, particularly if involving the standardisation of paper-based processes, however, the real value CPD in maintaining your competency skills will come from practically-based training courses and those that have real value in the workplace.

If you are employed by a training organisation, they will usually provide appropriate training and development opportunities to enable you to meet your responsibilities and will involve a certain amount of appraisal or review of your competence. This can be centred to your vocational skills and also encompass the use of new technology if that is an integral part of the process, e.g. for the support of learners/candidates with online portfolio submissions.

Following this, there would be a personal development plan to help you achieve your personal goals and meet the targets set by the centre.

If you are a freelance assessor, you still need to maintain your own understanding of relevant standards and other assessment requirements, so this could be achieved by making yourself available to work within a placement as a volunteer, or conduct specific skill updates in your vocation area like, for example, hairdressing or hospitality. In this instance, the onus will be on you to organise appropriate activities and placements and the recording of these activities.
The creation of a CPD log might be as a template from your awarding organisation which you complete. A very simple one is included here and allows you to plan your personal development and identify what kind of activity is included, whether practical or evidence-based research, and any use of technology that has been used. This will provide the record of your ongoing commitment to maintaining your currency and development in line with the awarding organisation’s requirements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date (Year) &amp; time spent</th>
<th>Description of CPD activity &amp; location</th>
<th>Area of skills, knowledge or practice developed or kept up to date</th>
<th>Reflection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st June 2 hours</td>
<td>Vision2learn – online portal workshop standardisation in Customer Service Business Administration Newcastle</td>
<td>Online material standardisation for business admin and checking assessment decisions against criteria. Including new guidance on units following an EV visit.</td>
<td>Good sharing of updates on how to use the V2L platform. Examples of good practice and outlined new criteria following change. Discussed and can now use 2 shortcuts which will save time. Very valuable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16th Aug 3 hours</td>
<td>Check changes in HR legislation. Remote via PC</td>
<td>Business admin legislation, updated knowledge.</td>
<td>Very important change, informed learners and main office regarding updating materials and assessment criteria.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other activities that will be valuable and can contribute to your currency and own competence, which could be carried out within the training organisation, department or with the awarding organisation, are:

- development of assessment strategies
- review of assessment materials
- modification to assessment plans and practice
- apply changes to policies and procedures

**TUTOR TALK: Did you know?**

Legal systems are rooted in history and while some rules, regulation and legislation seems to change every day, there are some ‘laws’ that not have not changed for years.

For example, under ‘Archery Law’ in the city of York, UK, it is quite legal to murder a Scotsman within the ancient city walls of York if he is carrying a bow and arrow. Excluding Sunday…

**Learning Outcome 4: Be able to plan the assessment of occupational competence**

This outcome is similar to the preparation outcome in ‘Assessing Vocation Skills’, as the planning process needs to follow rigorous processes to ensure that it fair and create sufficient and reliable assessment outcomes.

**Assessment criteria 4.1: Plan assessment of occupational competence based on the following methods:**

- observation of performance in the work environment
- examining products of work
- questioning the learner
- discussing with the learner
- use of others (witness testimony)
- looking at learner statements
- recognising prior learning
Having previously looked in detail at the planning process from a knowledge point of view and the methods of assessment in the first outcome of this unit, we now need to apply that knowledge and in a practical sense, to the workplace. NVQ will require that all criteria is covered and that simulation is not allowed, however, not all criteria will need to be observed by an assessor, so other sources of evidence will be acceptable.

The learner/candidate will need to be involved in the planning of the assessments so that they can contribute to the identification of holistic assessment opportunities and identify other sources of evidence. As a result, the candidate will know when, where and at what time the assessment will take place, what is being assessed, what form this assessment will take and which methods will be used.

Remember also that the learner/candidate needs to agree to the plan which needs to be in written or electronic format so that any revisions or updates can be logged. You will need to record what methods you have selected to use and why. As a summary:

**Observation of performance:** This will follow planning once the learner/candidate is ready for assessment and feels confident in the job role and the evidence will be identified from the criteria and will arise from real work activities which the assessor will observe.

**Examining products of work:** These can be actual products, like for example, bouquets, jewellery or items that require manufacture, meals, or paper-based evidenced like non-confidential records of treatments, minutes of meetings, reports, risk assessments, products of journalism, or photographs which are generated by the learners individually or to which they have contributed. As mentioned, the value of this evidence is that it can show consistency of performance over time.

**Questioning the learner:** As the assessor, you should make full use of oral questions, ensuring that they are relevant to the task. Record the words used to answer the questions – do not rephrase or paraphrase the answers as they will no longer be genuine.

**Discussing with the learner:** This is an effective method to question the learner’s knowledge and understanding of policies, procedures, legislation and how they will affect practices within that field. It should be structured and specific to the task and criteria being assessed.
Use of others (witness testimony): You will need to confirm the status and experience of the witness and record this. Your centre will usually have a template to complete for contributors to the assessment process that are not directly associated with the training organisation. Evidence from the learner’s workplace can be effectively recorded via the use of witness statements and testimony if structured correctly.

Looking at learner statements: Reflective accounts are suitable forms of evidence if they are contextualised, and supported, with additional information to show that this is a true reflection of an activity. They should be mapped to the criteria and be signed and dated by the learner and assessor.

Recognising prior learning: As previously discussed at the beginning of this unit, relevant prior experience can be used providing it meets the requirements of the standards and is authentic, current and valid. You will need to check the original certificate and content of the training undertaken. The evidence needs to be cross referenced with the criteria, photocopies taken and signed and dated by the learner and assessor.

The plan should be applied in a holistic way.

Assessment criteria 4.2: Communicate the purpose, requirements and processes of assessing occupational competence to the learner

This criterion is in common with Assessing Vocational Skills 1.3, and adapted to meet the needs of the work environment. The main purpose of this criterion is that you show that you have involved the learner in the planning process and that they understand what is required by them to meet the criteria and the assessment process as a whole.

As we have discussed, at induction the learners will have been made generally aware of the standards and criteria against which they will be assessed, e.g. awarding organisation requirements, vocational skills, knowledge and understanding, as well as additional and specific requirements.
Specific requirements are those that might change over the course of the programme of study for each individual and can include, but are not limited to:

- methods of assessment
- format for evidence and the use of visual aids and other media
- testing procedures
- expected outcomes
- benefits of assessment
- opportunities for, and appropriateness of, feedback in terms of level of criteria and standards
- appeals procedure and standardisation
- change of deadlines
- change of venue
- requirements of the learner, e.g. preparation, specific needs, activity, evidence required

All of these considerations need to be included in the assessment plan, which should be communicated and discussed before being followed up with the production of written assessment plans. You will provide evidence of assessment plans to support this, in which you must ascertain your candidate’s understanding.

We have briefly looked at communication in unit 1, learning outcome 2, with regard to questioning. While this is an important part of the assessment process, it is not the only part, as you should be approachable at all times and should make the most of your interpersonal skills.

Effective interpersonal skills also help others to feel valued, appreciated and listened to. So to become an effective assessor and communicator, there is much more than just talking or asking questions and you need to be able to recognise body language in others as well as yourself.

Only a small percentage of the impression you make on other people is a result of speaking to them. The main impression given is through non-verbal messages – body language.

Many gestures and signals are communicated without us consciously realising them, so it’s vital that you understand both types.
Verbal communication

Not only do you use language to communicate, but your voice can be also be used to communicate your emotions and feelings by altering certain characteristics. We will look at them in a moment, but we must also remember we need to incorporate listening skills. Try to use reflective, or active listening skills, to let the person know you are really listening; this is particularly important when checking for understanding.

Active listening is demonstrated with body language, i.e. nodding your head or by the sort of things you would say in reply. For example, you may repeat something a learner has just said or answered or interpret the learner’s emotions/feelings if they are feeling anxious.

When speaking, consider the following:

**Tone:** Try to keep your voice warm and friendly, as cool can come across as hostile. A smile warms the voice and reduces tension; you can hear a smile in someone’s voice.

**Pitch:** Try to keep your pitch low, calm and authoritative. Lower pitched voices sound warmer and more authoritative. Boredom is usually expressed by a monotonous voice so use pitch to create variety and interest in your feedback. Lift your voice at the end of sentences, it sounds more optimistic even if you are giving constructive feedback. Stress can make your pitch sound tight and tense, so be aware of this when listening to your learners’ voices.

**Volume:** Volume is a powerful indicator of your feeling and personality. Nervous people speak very quietly, so you should aim to speak at a normal volume, and be aware of those who are speaking very quietly.

**Pace:** Should be slow and controlled, not too fast and excitable. If you need to speak or give feedback on the telephone, speak lower and slower; it gives people a better chance to absorb what you say. Pause to stress important things, allowing time for the learner to respond and try to adjust to the other person’s pace. If they speak slower, you should also speak slower. A quicker pace conveys enthusiasm; whist a slower pace indicates seriousness.

**Content:** Always ensure that you are using words that the other person can understand. Be careful not to use too much jargon or technical language as this will alienate the person and might confuse them so that they do not understand the actual process, task or question.
Remember, an open question is likely to promote a detailed or long answer, so this should be used when trying to engage the learner to show their understanding of a topic. This means that they can seek opinions or detail and are the opposite of closed questions, so give you opinions and feelings, time to think, reflect and respond. Open questions can be difficult to interpret; if not formed correctly the question may not be specific enough to promote a correct answer.

A closed question is one that can be answered with either a single word or a short phrase.

This means that they are usually answered with a yes, or no, but sometimes can be a one word answer. They give you facts and are quick and easy to answer; they are direct so there is little room for misinterpretation.

**Non-verbal communication**

Even when you are quiet and not speaking, you are sending messages to everyone around you through your physical appearance, your gaze, your posture, your gestures, and your facial expressions. We must be aware of our body language and its role in communication. It can replace or emphasize words and it can show whether there is any contradiction between what is being said and what is being thought.

It is an indicator of mood and feelings, so if you can recognise such messages, you will be able to modify your delivery and adjust what you are trying to say, as well as recognise whether there is any disparity between what is being said, and true understanding. For example, the picture here when she says, “Yes, I get it …”

There are seven main elements of body language:

- facial expressions
- gaze
- posture
- gestures
- proximity
- touch
- appearance

**Facial expressions** are one of the most obvious ways of communicating our emotions. While the spoken word can be greatly enhanced if said with a broad smile rather than a frown, we need to guard against our own negative body language, particularly in the assessment process.
Your face is capable of indicating and communicating your innermost feelings, even when you would prefer to hide them, to other people. For example, after seeing something that does not meet the assessment criteria, you may raise your eyebrows or frown to show your disapproval, so be mindful of this when planning assessments and giving feedback.

**Gaze** – When you communicate face to face with others you will normally have eye to eye contact. This can signal a great deal about what is being felt by you and the person you are talking to. A strong gaze shows that you are being attentive and concentrating on what the other person is saying. If you become embarrassed you sometimes try to hide embarrassment by breaking eye contact.

You have to maintain careful control of your eyes when dealing with other people. Hard, piercing stares might be a sign of aggression, so you need to be aware of this in the assessment. What you should have is eye contact that looks at the other people to whom you are speaking, but can be broken with the occasional blink and the occasional look away to make them feel more comfortable.

**Posture** – Body language can be negative as well as positive; positive body language is open and inviting, welcoming and warm, relaxed and approachable. It encourages conversation of openness – there does not appear to be any barriers.

Negative body language is closed and does not encourage conversation. Frowning and arms crossed, as well as averting the eyes, are all negative signs and put up physical barriers to contact. You will need to be able to recognise these signs in order to develop good and effective interpersonal communication.

**Gestures** – In certain circumstances you can use a gesture to replace the need for words. This may be your only way of communicating, especially if you are trying to communicate with someone who has English as a second language or is hearing impaired. During the assessment process, you need to look out for tell-tale signs that might indicate that the candidate is uneasy or anxious. For example, someone stroking their own hair or scratching their face can demonstrate that they are uneasy or concerned about what is taking place.

**Proximity** – How close two people are physically can often indicate how close they are emotionally or how positive their relationship may be. You can communicate your status, your level of intimacy with another person and how much you like each other by the proximity with which you talk. Learners will feel intimidated if you are standing very close, so even though you may feel comfortable, with people you are meeting for the first time and your candidates, you should maintain a professional proximity from a learner.
**Touch** – The number of times you touch someone and the type of touch you use will depend on how well you know and like each other. Touch is important in building relationships with others. Formal touches are important when you meet someone for the first time. If you give a firm, strong handshake this will indicate self-confidence, while a limp, weak handshake reveals timidity.

**Appearance** – Your appearance will be one of the most significant areas of communication. The first impression of you as an assessor will more than likely be based on your appearance.

You should present yourself in a professional manner, which does not necessarily mean a business suit, as some learners might find this intimidating. It may not be appropriate to your vocational area, but whatever you do wear should be smart, clean and conservative. You may also need to wear a uniform or change the way you dress for certain assessments with the appropriate PPE if required.

Regardless of what you do wear, you should always provide a good role model for your learners and candidates’, as well as for the profession that you represent.

Remember that communication is the key to the candidate understanding the process; you should always adopt a positive and sensitive approach to planning and feedback.

**Assessment criteria 4.3: Plan the assessment of occupational competence to address learner needs and current achievements**

Following the initial assessment of the learner/candidate when enrolling on the programme, this would have identified any reasonable adjustments and special considerations that would be necessary to apply as well as support, such as with literacy or numeracy. The planning of an assessment must consider if these have been met, as to arrange an assessment prior to the completion of any support would be unfair to the candidate and go against good practice requirements.

As we have seen, or will see, in Assessing Vocational Skills, 2.2, there will be specific guidelines regarding what will be acceptable levels of support throughout the assessment process and how this can be adapted for the individual’s needs. The guidelines will be available from the awarding organisation and the centre, so you need to show and evidence that you can plan to take into account the needs of the learner.

As you will be assessing in the workplace, the standards must meet national occupational standards, so while you may be able to rephrase questions, where permitted, you must still be sure that the candidate does understand and have the appropriate level of knowledge and skill to work at the level they are trying to attain.
You will need to take into account when planning the availability of resources like, for example, equipment and technology as well as the physical work environment.

An example of this might be where the criteria states that the candidate is responsible for and needs to adjust the environment to accommodate client needs, however, this may not be a physical action that can be met owing to central control of, for example, air conditioning or temperature and ventilation owing to lack of windows or security issues.

In this instance, you may need to communicate with relevant parties to ascertain how this could be met, or arrange a discussion to meet this criterion.

Physical needs of the candidate might require that the assessment is planned to accommodate additional time, or special resources like space or equipment.

Whenever planning, remember that this is an *individual* plan and that the finalisation will include an agreement of any changes to previous plans. This can also include the updating of plans because the candidate has the opportunity to progress sharply within a short space of time. This is known, particularly towards the end of a programme, when often the employer will develop a trust and faith in the candidate and may increase their level of responsibility in line with their day to day improvement and accomplishments allowing them to work in a more rounded way.
Assessment criteria 4.4: Identify opportunities for holistic assessment

As we have already seen, the holistic assessment represents the blend of knowledge and practical outcomes. These can be witnessed across a range of scenarios and settings establishing the application of skills and knowledge to different situations, producing a progressive development of competency.

Before the assessment, at the planning stage, you will need to discuss with your candidate how the specific units and competence are going to be assessed, and together, you should agree what will contribute to the process. Always encourage the candidate to suggest any forms of information or evidence that will be appropriate to the assessment opportunities within their workplace, after all, they spend more time there than you so will be more aware of what can be of value.

You may decide and agree that your candidates have a specific task to carry out which might meet a number of assessment criteria relating to the competence requirements of different units. You will need to go through the units in detail and identify specific learning outcomes and assessment criteria which could be assessed holistically.

For example, VTCT Level 1 Front office operations – UV11053

Practical Outcome 1 – Be able to work in the front office

1.1 Meet and greet customers
1.2 Follow procedures when answering telephone calls
1.3 Pass on simple messages accurately
1.4 Deal with routine enquiries including enquiries about local events and services*
1.5 Prepare and copy routine documents

The assessor and candidate agree an observation on a Friday afternoon within the reception area of the hotel where the candidate is placed. The candidate has already established that this is a busy time with people arriving for the weekend, and thinks that she might be able to meet all of the criteria within a certain amount of time including being able to answer enquiries about local events.
The assessor agrees to this, but highlights that the ‘dealing with routine enquiries about local events and services’, can be discussed, so it is agreed that this will only be included if it naturally occurs and that the candidate must not try to force any guests to listen if they are not interested.

Once agreed, the specific details will need to be recorded and signed and dated by both the assessor and candidate. Holistically assessing the following situations can take the following form:

**Greeting guests**

The candidate can greet the guests (1.1), check them in preparing and completing the appropriate check-in documentation (1.5) and provide information on local services (1.4).

**Answering the telephone regarding a booking enquiry**

The candidate could claim for (1.2), answering in the correct way, taking the name and contact details of the enquiry and informing them that they will transfer the call to the booking desk. Inform the booking desk of the name and nature of the enquiry accurately with correct details (1.3).

As you can see from this simple example, holistic assessment is a cost and time efficient method of assessment which encourages learners to achieve more quickly as the situations are more natural.
TUTOR TALK: Did you know?

Many surnames come from our ancestor’s professions e.g.

- Smith – blacksmith
- Miller – someone who worked in a grain mill
- Taylor – someone who made clothes
- Tanner – was a tanner of skins (leather)
- Butler – a servant in charge of bottles or vats of wine

Imagine if we knew which workplace we were going to, based on the person’s name!

Have a look at www.surnames.behindthename.com to find what your means!

TUTOR TALK: You have now come to the end of this assignment. Answer the questions relating to the work that you have just covered and return them to the College for marking.

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“Everyone who got where he is has had to begin where he was.”

Robert Louis Stevenson
STUDENT NOTES: Please use the space below for recording what you consider to be any pertinent information or notes. You may find it helpful to refer back to it later on!