Title: Teagasc Further Education Assessment Design Procedure

Purpose:

This guidance document provides a structured approach for developing assessments for Teagasc Further Education and Training (FET) programmes, in alignment with Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) core guidelines. It aims to ensure that all assessments are valid, reliable, fair, and consistent, supporting learners' achievement of learning outcomes and maintaining the quality and integrity of Teagasc's educational programs.

Scope:

This document is intended for use by all tutors, assessors1, and program coordinators involved in the design, development, and delivery of assessments across Teagasc FET programs, including agriculture, horticulture, forestry, equine, food and other related disciplines.

Roles and Responsibilities:

- Centre Management and Course Coordinators:
    - Oversee the assessment development process and ensure alignment with QQI standards and program learning outcomes.
    - Coordinate internal authentication and external authentication processes.
- Tutors and Assessors:
    - Develop and deliver assessments in accordance with this guidance document and QQI guidelines.
    - Ensure assessments are fair, valid, reliable, transparent, and inclusive.
    - Provide clear communication to learners regarding assessment requirements and criteria.
- Learners:
    - Engage actively with the assessment process, understanding the requirements, criteria, and deadlines.
    - Provide feedback on the assessment experience to contribute to the continuous improvement of assessment practices.
- Teagasc Curriculum Development and Standards Unit:
    - Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of assessment practices and ensure compliance with QQI core guidelines.
    - Provide training and support to staff on assessment development and quality assurance processes.

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1 The term assessor is an umbrella term to include teachers, tutors, trainers, instructors.

Principles of Assessment Development:

1. Validity:
Assessments must accurately measure the intended learning outcomes and competencies. They should align directly with the knowledge, skills, and abilities that the program aims to develop.

2. Reliability:
Assessments should produce consistent results over time and across different assessors. Clear marking schemes and standardized assessment procedures should be used to ensure reliable outcomes.

3. Fairness:
All learners should have equal opportunities to demonstrate their competencies. Assessments should be designed to accommodate diverse learning styles and provide reasonable accommodations for learners with special educational needs.
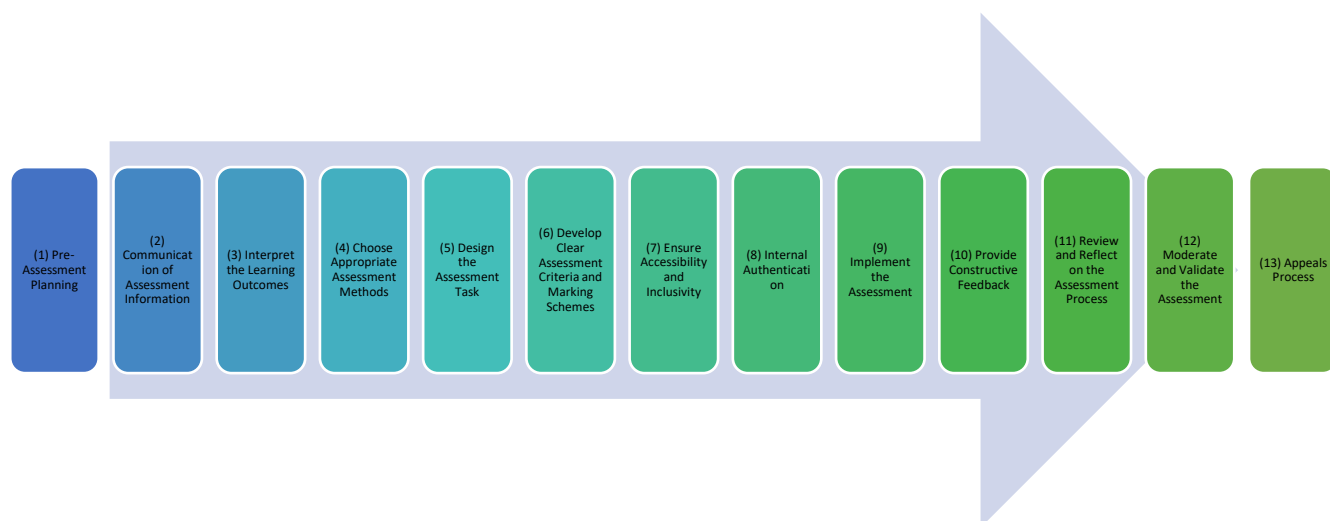
4. Transparency:
Assessment criteria, methods, and requirements should be clearly communicated to learners. Learners should understand how their performance will be evaluated.

5. Inclusivity:
Assessments should be inclusive and accessible to all learners, ensuring that no group is disadvantaged.

Steps for Planning and Developing Assessments:

The flowchart shows the following steps in sequence: (1) Pre-Assessment Planning, (2) Communication of Assessment Information, (3) Interpret the Learning Outcomes, (4) Choose Appropriate Assessment Methods, (5) Design the Assessment Task, (6) Develop Clear Assessment Criteria and Marking Schemes, (7) Ensure Accessibility and Inclusivity, (8) Internal Authentication, (9) Implement the Assessment, (10) Provide Constructive Feedback, (11) Review and Reflect on the Assessment Process, (12) Moderate and Validate the Assessment, (13) Appeals Process

1. **Pre-Assessment Planning:**
   - **Responsibility:** Tutors, Assessors, Course Coordinator & Internal Verifier
   - Develop an assessment plan at the beginning of each course or module, clearly outlining the types of assessments (formative, summative, continuous, and practical), assessment criteria, methods, and schedules.
   - Each assessment plan should be reviewed to ensure alignment with the program's learning outcomes and the principles of fairness, transparency, consistency, validity, and reliability.
   - Ensure the assessment plan is comprehensive, accommodating diverse learner needs, including reasonable accommodations for those with disabilities or special educational needs.
   - The assessment plans should take into account the overall assessment load on learners throughout the program and aim to distribute this workload as evenly as possible.

2. **Communication of Assessment Information:**
   - **Responsibility:** Tutors, Assessors, Course Coordinator
   - Provide learners with detailed information about the assessment process, including the types of assessments, criteria, deadlines, and expectations, at the start of each course.
   - Distribute assessment rubrics and marking schemes to help learners understand how their work will be evaluated.
   - Use multiple communication channels (e.g., Quercus, VLE Platform, printed materials) to ensure all learners receive and understand the information.

3. **Interpret the Learning Outcomes:**
   - Ensure that learning is being assessed at the correct level In order to ensure that learning is being assessed at the correct level and that assessments are fair, consistent, valid and reliable it is necessary that assessors utilise the following:

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- the award specification
- the validated Teagasc programme descriptor
- National Framework of Qualifications grid of level indicators which outlines the knowledge, skills and competencies required at every level
- QQI grading classifications
- QQI grading criteria

4. **Choose Appropriate Assessment Methods:**

Select assessment methods that are appropriate for measuring the specific learning outcomes. Consider using a variety of assessment types, such as:

- Formative Assessment: Ongoing assessments conducted throughout the course to provide feedback to learners on their progress and areas for improvement. This may include quizzes, assignments, practical activities, and classroom participation.
- Summative Assessment: Evaluations conducted at the end of a course or module to determine if the learner has achieved the specified learning outcomes. This may include final exams, major projects, or comprehensive assignments.
- Continuous Assessment: A blend of formative and summative assessments conducted throughout the duration of the program to monitor learner progress and development.
- Practical Assessment: Assessments designed to evaluate practical skills and competencies relevant to the learner's field of study, such as laboratory work, farm operations, practical demonstrations, or fieldwork.
- Examinations: Formal written or oral examinations conducted under controlled conditions to assess learners' knowledge and understanding of the program content.
- Online assessments using Teagasc approved Virtual Learning Platform e.g MOODLE – all assessments using a VLE must be supervised in the centre and completed using centre/college equipment and not the learners own device (e.g laptop/tablet/iPad/smartphone but not limited to are not permitted)

Ensure the chosen methods are suitable for the subject matter and the learner cohort, that they align with the module specifications and that they provide a fair opportunity for all learners to demonstrate their competencies.

5. **Design the Assessment Task:**
   - Develop assessment tasks that are directly aligned with the learning outcomes. Ensure that tasks are clearly defined, with unambiguous instructions.
   - Consider the cognitive level required for each task (e.g., knowledge recall, application, analysis, synthesis) and align it with Bloom's Taxonomy to ensure a range of complexity e.g NFQ level 5 and level 6
   - Design tasks that allow for multiple means of expression, where possible, to accommodate different learning styles and abilities.

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6. **Develop Clear Assessment Criteria and Marking Schemes:**
   o Establish specific, transparent criteria that outline what is expected from learners for each assessment task.
   o Develop a detailed marking scheme or rubric that defines how marks will be awarded for different levels of performance. Ensure the marking scheme is aligned with the learning outcomes and reflects the relative importance of each criterion.
   o Share the assessment criteria and marking schemes with learners at the start of the module or course to ensure transparency.
   o Develop sample or suggested answers to guide the assessor in marking the final assessment. In devising outline solutions the assessor should refer to:
     ▪ the assessment guidelines in the provider's validated programme module for the weighting of the examination
     ▪ the format of the examination and the allocation of marks per question

The table below outlines what is required for each assessment technique.

Assessment Technique	Required
Assignment	Brief & detailed marking scheme
Collection of Work/ Portfolio	Brief(s) & detailed marking scheme
Examination (written or online) (1st attempt & repeat paper)	Examination paper & detailed marking scheme & outline solutions
Learner Record	Brief & detailed marking scheme
Project	Brief & detailed marking scheme
Skills Demonstration	Brief(s)/task list(s) criteria used for each assessment & detailed marking scheme

7. **Ensure Accessibility and Inclusivity:**
   o Review the assessment to ensure it is accessible to all learners, including those with disabilities or special needs. Provide reasonable accommodations where necessary (e.g., extra time, alternative formats, assistive technology).
   o Use plain language and inclusive design principles to make sure that all learners can understand and complete the assessment tasks.

8. **Internal Authentication**
   o Perform internal authentication of all assessments before they are administered to learners. Any actions identified through this process must be addressed, and the final version of the assessment must be signed off by the peer verifier. Document this entire process.
   o When course has finished and all assessments have been marked and results entered on Quercus conduct internal authentication of a representative sample learners for each module.

- Verify each assessment type for each learner in the sample to ensure consistency, fairness, and adherence to the assessment criteria specified in the module guidelines.
- Review the marking process and outcomes to confirm alignment with established standards.
- Provide feedback to tutors and assessors based on the findings from the authentication process to enhance assessment practices.
- Ensure any required actions are completed before the Centre's Results Approval meeting.
- Document the entire process.

9. **Implement the Assessment:**
   - Administer the assessment according to the planned schedule and in line with standardized procedures to ensure fairness and consistency.
   - Ensure that all learners are aware of the assessment requirements, criteria, and deadlines, and provide adequate preparation time.

10. **Provide Constructive Feedback:**
    - Provide timely and constructive feedback to learners on their performance, highlighting strengths, areas for improvement, and suggestions for further development.
    - Ensure feedback is specific, actionable, and aligned with the assessment criteria.

11. **Review and Reflect on the Assessment Process**:
    - Conduct a post-assessment review to evaluate the effectiveness of the assessment in measuring the intended learning outcomes.
    - Collect feedback from learners and assessors to identify areas for improvement and inform future assessment development.
    - Document any changes or recommendations for future assessments in line with QQI guidelines and Teagasc's quality assurance processes.

12. **Moderate and Validate the Assessment:**
    - Conduct internal moderation of assessment results to ensure consistency and accuracy in grading. This may involve cross-marking or peer review by other tutors.
    - Arrange for external authentication of assessment outcomes by an external examiner or validator to ensure the integrity of the assessment process.

13. **Appeals Process:**
    - Learners have the right to appeal their assessment results if they believe there has been an error or unfairness in the assessment process.
    - The appeals process should be clearly communicated to learners, and all appeals should be handled promptly and fairly.

Review and Update:

- This guidance document will be reviewed as required to ensure it remains aligned with QQI guidelines and best practices.