Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education

TQ Explanatory Note

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1. Assessment Design Walk-Through

The purpose of this document is to help AOs prepare for a successful and productive Assessment Design Walk-through, as per annex 7 of the TQ contract. The Walk-through must contain clear explanation of the proposed structure of the assessment designs, **explanation of the design decision rationale** for the TQ core component and Occupational Specialist Component, and illustrative examples. In order to help everyone maximise benefit from the Assessment Walk-through, the bulk of AO's preparation work should be thinking, analysing the pros and cons of options, and settling on proposed approaches. We are much more interested in the **depth of preparatory thinking and quality of the eventual discussion**, than in receiving documents with a high word count or slick presentation. As indicated in annex 7 AOs need to prepare and submit the slides to be discussed at the Walk-through as part of products submitted at Interim milestone 1.

The Walk-through must contain the following structural elements and rationale. Where applicable, any SAM exemplars required for IM1 can also be used as the examples in the Walk-through.

CORE EXAM

- Example of at least 2 questions and associated mark scheme for each assessment objective to show the range of types of questions proposed, e.g. short answer response/extended response. The examples should also cover a range of levels of demand and show your consideration of which skills are being assessed, why the question is appropriate for the intended difficulty level, and why particular command words have been chosen.
- Plan for ensuring that questions cover the content, are readable for the cohort, and cover each assessment objective. Plan for evidencing that this has been done thoroughly.
- Proposed approach to sampling, with rationale

EMPLOYER SET PROJECT

- Range of assessment methods proposed and the rationale for why these have been selected and not others. Rationale should show consideration of reliability, validity, manageability, and employer input and feedback
- Approximate weightings of assessment methods, the constructs they would assess, and their approximate durations.
- An example of the ESP and its tasks, with associated mark schemes
- Outline of approach to assessing the Assessment Objectives as well as how the core skills will be assessed
- Proposal for exam conditions (available materials, who supervises, when/whether breaks are allowed, what is controlled etc) with rationale which considers manageability for users
- Whether assessments across centres will all take place at the same time or within assessment windows. Rationale for this approach, which considers manageability for users.

OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALISM COMPONENT

- Approach to ensuring that employers have validated the materials, that the employers are experts in the occupational specialism rather than generalists, that employer feedback/ criticism/ concerns are recorded and addressed, and that all of the above is documented for future reference of other stakeholders
- Any areas where synoptic assessment may not be possible and an explanation of why
- Examples of 2-3 OS tasks and associated mark schemes, together with a commentary of how the exemplified tasks would be complemented by any OS tasks not yet exemplified, to allow effective holistic assessment
- Outline of approach to how performance outcomes will be assessed. Rationale for proposed approach showing consideration of reliability, validity, manageability, and employer input and feedback
- Approximate weightings of assessment methods, the constructs they would assess, and their approximate durations.
- Proposal for exam conditions (available materials, who supervises, when/whether breaks are allowed, what is controlled etc) with rationale which considers manageability for users
- Whether assessments across centres will all take place at the same time or within assessment windows. Rationale for this approach, which considers manageability for users.

THROUGHOUT

- Which professional bodies would ideally endorse/ support this TQ, and the plan to engage them
- Which relevant and appropriate employers will be involved, and how the influence of employer engagement will be documented throughout TQ development
- How providers will be involved to ensure that proposed assessment approaches will be manageable
- Perceived main risks to assessment principles associated with the proposed approaches (e.g. issues around predictability, susceptibility to cheating, lack of authenticity). Proposals for appropriate mitigation, and justification/ rationale for proposals

2. Interpreting and Applying Service Requirements

2.1. PURPOSE

This section provides supplementary guidance in addition to the Service Requirements (SR). Where there is any inconsistency or ambiguity between this document and the SR, please be advised that the SR will take priority. This guidance does not represent a variation to the contract.

The selection of consideration points included in this guidance are based on the Institute's and AO's experiences from Wave 1 and 2 of T Level development. The purpose of this document is to give AOs more support interpreting and applying elements of the Service Requirements. This document does not contain an exhaustive list of considerations an AO should make. Considering only these points would not guarantee compliance with the Service Requirements, Ofqual regulations or any agreements reached under Schedule 4 of the Contract.

2.2. INTRODUCTION

TQ development has similarities with other qualification development but can't be approached in exactly the same way. T Levels represent a step change in technical education in England. They are meant to raise quality and streamline the qualifications landscape. New and innovative approaches are needed from AOs to ensure that the TQ element of T Levels is engaging and effective for learners and employers.

AOs are responsible for summative assessment but it's the providers who are responsible for initial, diagnostic, and formative assessment. AOs need to allow providers space to design their curriculum and delivery and we expect that course structures will vary considerably depending on learner characteristics and need, the local employment market, and factors specific to individual providers. TQs involve much more assessment of skill *level* than many previous technical education qualifications. TQ assessment must be focused on the knowledge and skills that a learner must demonstrate in order to achieve threshold competence.

AOs have the opportunity to be creative in their delivery of TQs. The industry placement represents a significant break from previous technical education qualifications, and also offers an opportunity for AOs to use the industry placement as a vehicle for assessment. This feasibility of this will be examined with AOs on a TQ by TQ basis.

The Institute recommends that AOs engage with a fully representative range of providers early and regularly, to get assurances that the TQ will be manageable. Leaving this engagement until later in the development process risks wasting considerable amounts of AO time.

2.3. KEY PRINCIPLES

1. In general, more detail is better than less detail when explaining your approach and rationale for including or not including particular elements in your TQ design. Err on the side of including extra explanation.

2. Share challenges with the Institute sooner rather than later and always try to avoid there being any surprises at a formal submission point. All the organisations involved in T Level delivery want T Levels to be a success, and this is most likely to be achieved if all parties are open with each other.

3. Don't feel you have to wait until the first formal milestone to share the TQ materials you are developing. Where we have capacity, we can give some early feedback on a draft.

4. Think about your end users. How should you generate reliable evidence about their needs, and how manageable they will find the TQ?

a. Will your products give a 16-19 year-old learner and their teachers all of the information they need to be able to successfully achieve/ deliver the TQ? What evidence would give you most confidence in this?

b. Will your TQ provide the basis for motivating and engaging courses for the range of students who will consider taking it? What evidence would give you most confidence in this?

5. Get as much value as you can from employer and provider engagement.

   a. Employers with relevant and current sector experience must be used to co-create the TQ, not just to 'sign off' at the end of development. Think about how the amount and quality of your employer engagement will assure the Route Panel that you have the right people feeding into the TQ and reflecting current practice. How will you provide evidence to the Route Panel about the range and quality of employer engagement you have undertaken?

   b. Providers should be engaged through the development of TQ materials to test their manageability.

2.4. OVERALL GUIDANCE AND TIPS

1. Consider your team structure and product development approach. If different products are being developed by different people or teams, who will take responsibility for ensuring that they form a cohesive whole when combined? Identify who will carry out overall assurance of the documents and ensure compliance with the service requirements.

2. Have you engaged with all the Institute's feedback from the previous milestone and made all necessary amendments and/or provided rationale for any variance?

3. Where we previously gave feedback that related to a specific instance of a general principle, have you applied that same principle wherever else it is applicable?

4. Keep engaging with HEIs to make sure that they are planning on recognising the T Level/ that they have all the information they need to inform their decision as soon as it's available.

2.5. EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

1. Employer input and engagement should be considered from the outset and thereafter suitably experienced and qualified employers must be embedded within the development and lifecycle of the TQ.

2. Employers provide critical input and challenge to content and assessment development alongside your qualification developers, content writers and assessment designers. Employers should also fulfil a quality assurance role to ensure that your submission is technically accurate and that the material is current and meets their needs. Clear demonstration of your employer engagement strategy development, implementation and its impact on TQ development will be essential when providing assurance to the Route Panel about the industry relevance and currency of your TQ products. You should therefore be prepared to demonstrate how the employers you have used are relevant and appropriate to the TQ.

3. To provide the Institute and Route Panel with the required assurance as to the sufficiency, appropriateness and breadth of employers engaged in TQ development you should record details of all the employers you consult and work with and how you have worked with them.

4. To avoid ongoing refinements/duplication of effort across the developmental lifespan, AOs should:

    a. Provide a clear description of their employer engagement strategy (detailing the AO's approach to securing appropriately experienced and current industry experts/professional bodies from across the entire range of occupational specialisms within the TQ) within the Assessment Strategy.

    b. Provide a spreadsheet tracker of all employer engagement[1] activities, which separates each product under development and includes:

        i. Active contributor name, position, company, date of engagement, date of completion (where applicable), TQ development role (e.g. writer, reviewer, TEAB Member)

        ii. A record of AO efforts to engage across the sector which have not resulted in actual engagement/ contribution (or only secured the employer's assistance in sending information on to extended networks). This should be documented and tallied separately. Note, at standard submission points only complete entries/rows (with all fields complete) should be included.

    c. Provide granular detail of employer engagement on TQ product development activities within a Stakeholder Engagement Log. AOs may find it useful to provide this in a 'They said…we did' format to provide explicit evidence of the nature of each instance of engagement and the impact this has had on product development.

    d. Provide granular evidence of separate employer (and provider) engagement on TQ product validation within a further log. Clear evidence of employer and provider scrutiny and validation of completed TQ products forms an essential component of the assurance provided to the Route Panel.

    e. Provide the Institute and/or Route Panel with exemplar copies of any documentation, surveys or questionnaires distributed to employers which are to be used for either product development or validation.

    f. Take care to ensure that where information on employer engagement is submitted across multiple documents e.g. tracking spreadsheets, presentations, assessment strategy narratives etc., these figures are consistent and are evidenced in a manner which does not require further manipulation of data by the Institute.

2.6. GUIDANCE RELATED TO SPECIFIC SERVICE REQUIREMENTS

SR section	Guidance point	SR ref
Service Requirement 1: Designing, developing and managing TQ content	Are you giving Providers enough information and guidance to prepare their learners well? If you are using terms like 'research task', 'significant', 'acceptable', 'a selection of X' will providers interpret these consistently? If not, can you clarify further?	1.1.2.a
	How are English, maths and digital skills embedded throughout the content? Have you clearly indicated where these skills have been embedded? Most of the outline content should	1.1.2.d

[1] The term 'employer engagement' refers to those employers actively engaged in development of TQ products and should not be interpreted as being synonymous with the activity of approaching employers (which may fail to result in engagement).

	provide at least some opportunity to allow learners to develop their English, maths or digital skills. Which of these are the best opportunities?	
	Have you ensured that English, maths and digital are being assessed in a way which is occupationally relevant and appropriately contextualised?	1.1.2.d
	Does your assessment strategy clearly explain everything you have done to make sure the different components, including Occupational Specialisms within the TQ are all of a comparable level of demand?	1.1.6
	Does the Assessment Strategy both set the Guided Learning Hours for each component and clearly explain why you have arrived at each Guided Learning Hours decision?	1.1.9
	Have you explained the strategic oversight and governance mechanisms in place to ensure employer insights and inputs are relevant to the content specifications?	Throughout SR1
	Have you explained your due diligence arrangements for ensuring that employers who are involved in supporting TQ development have current/recent and relevant sector experience? Have you made it clear what criteria you are using to select employers to cover the breadth of the qualifications and each of the Occupational Specialist Components?	Throughout SR 1
	Have you considered and explained your plans for maintaining currency of employers throughout the development phase?	Throughout SR 1
Service Requirement 2: Assessment design and delivery	Every assessment design decision will have an impact on each of the assessment principles. Have you fully explained how you have sought to balance each of the assessment principles? We will need to understand your rationale, not just the decision you have reached.	Throughout SR 2
	Will a teacher at a Provider be able to use the SAMs to understand how their students will be assessed and therefore how best to prepare them for assessment? Do the Guide Standard Exemplification Materials align with the SAMs to clearly illustrate the types of response students will need to produce in order to succeed?	Throughout SR 2
	Do your mark schemes enable sufficient differentiation and enable the full range of attainment?	Throughout SR 2
	Do the mark schemes for each component enable reliable application and appropriate differentiation?	Throughout SR 2
	Do the command words you have used for each question link directly to the mark scheme? Do the command words allow students to access the full range of marks? Do they also link to the appropriate assessment objective?	Throughout SR 2
	Have you reviewed all assessments holistically to ensure that the level of demand is all at level 3, or where it is below level 3, that this is in order to lay the groundwork for level 3 content? Could any low tariff knowledge recall questions be answered from general knowledge?	2.1
	Have you explained your approach to ensuring that the level of demand is comparable between and across assessment series?	2.1
	When reviewing your question wording, have you considered whether each question is phrased to naturally elicit the expected response from a 16 to 19-year-old learner?	2.1

	Have you explained how you have ensured every assessment component supports fair access to attainment, and does not impose unfair difficulties on learners with protected characteristics?	2.1
	To explain the structure of the assessment design and strategy have you included information on the proposed number of assessments, the duration of each, and the conditions under which each would be taken?	2.1
	Have you explained how will you assess skills rather than knowledge? Do your assessors (including those working in assessment centres) need to determine the level of those skills? How should they do that?	2.1
	Do your assessment materials enable students to demonstrate the full range of attainment to ensure threshold competence can be achieved and higher order analysis and evaluation skills where appropriate?	2.1
	Have you included clear information about how each assessment will be timetabled (e.g. in a window or taken at a specific date and time)? Have you explained your rationale for this approach and how it links back to the assessment principles, including any risks (especially for providers)?	2.2.1
	What training will be provided to Assessors (and where internal assessment has been approved, to moderators)? How will your training ensure quality and consistency of assessment and moderation?	2.2.3
	For any assessment where students are supervised, have you given enough direction about who can supervise, and what students can and cannot do under supervised conditions? Are additional instructions over and above JCQ guidance required?	2.2.8
	Have you explained your approach to quality assuring providers? How will you ensure that you have full confidence in the rigour of your approach?	2.2.9
	Will all your assessments continue to be manageable for centres and students where students have access arrangements or additional requirements?	2.2.10
	Do your arrangements for reasonable adjustments take into account any agreements made between other T Level AO's under schedule 4?	2.4
	Do your arrangements for special considerations take into account any agreements made between other T Level AO's under schedule 4?	2.5
	What can you do to identify suitably skilled and current individuals to engage with on the Employer Set Project, early in development? How can you maintain your pools of employer contacts to benefit from their expertise throughout development?	2.6.8
	How have you ensured your OS assessments are synoptic? Where this has not been practical, have you explained why this is the case?	2.7.1
	Have you included a commentary with your GSEMs? Does this commentary explain the level of exemplified performance (rather than how the mark scheme was applied)? Do all the comments only relate to the specific assessment focus rather than implying that credit is given for displaying other knowledge or skills?	2.7.3

	Have your exemplification materials and commentaries been written by the same author or at least proofread by a single individual to ensure consistency of style?	2.7.3
	Have you ensured that no specific mark is suggested in your GSEMs, and that there is no linkage of marks to grades? The exemplified responses should give a good overall impression of the minimum level expected for 'Pass' or 'Distinction', but it is not essential that every response is exactly on the threshold of that grade. For threshold Distinction responses and commentary, have you made sure there is still room for improvement in the response, to indicate that it a *threshold* Distinction rather than a perfect response?	2.7.3
Service Requirement 3: Grading and Awarding	Does your assessment strategy make it clear what the minimum performance requirement is for each grade? If you are using phrases that are open to interpretation like 'learner makes acceptable use of X', have you done everything reasonable to ensure consistency of interpretation?	3.1
	Where assessments will be marked by providers, have you explained clearly how moderation will apply and what factors you have taken into consideration? How will moderation operate in practice, what evidence will moderators review and how will marks be adjusted where required?	3.1
	Does your assessment strategy explain everything you will do to monitor accuracy and consistency of marking, and what you will do if you identify inaccuracies or inconsistencies, whether on a small or large scale?	3.1
	Is it clear from the Assessment Strategy how any combination of marks will lead to a specific overall grade?	3.1
	If you plan to use traditional marking rather than online, have you considered and explained the implications for timescales, the mitigations you intend to put in place and explained your rationale?	3.1
	Do you have any generic assessment policies which you plan to use for the Technical Qualification? What amendments will be needed to make them TQ specific?	3.1

3. Aspects of Technical Qualification (TQ) design

3.1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The Institute service requirements and Ofqual conditions require an AO to balance a range of factors in the design of each TQ. These include, for example:

- effective targeting of the intended constructs
- assessment results being reliable
- assessment requirements and outcomes being comparable over time
- assessments being manageable for centres and learners

Factors such as these typically entail trade-offs. For example:

- The more content an assessment covers, and the more controlled its conduct, the more reliable its results may be (all things being equal) but the less manageable it may be.
- An assessment that covers less content, or is less controlled – or both of these – may be more manageable for users, but its results are likely to be less reliable.
- Assessments that follow a set format or involve prescribed tasks may provide more comparability over time and between centres/learners, but may result in assessments which are overly predictable (and so become rehearsed) or are less authentic.

It is important that factors such as these are considered during TQ development and that this takes place as early as possible. It is also important to keep in mind that, even where areas such as these are partly separable, their implications are entirely interrelated. This requires therefore a coherent consideration of aspects such as:

- the amount and nature of content to be assessed each series
- how this approach to content reflects the assessment purpose
- the number and nature of assessment tasks the content would require
- the durations, weightings and mark tariffs of the necessary tasks
- the conditions under which the assessments must be taken
- the manageability of the approach for learners and centres

The purpose of this note is to support awarding organisations' (AOs) approach to meeting specific aspects of the TQ service requirements and Ofqual conditions, particularly where an appropriate balance of assessment principles such as validity, reliability and manageability is needed.
The note draws on feedback from providers on initial TQ proposals and from discussions with AOs regarding TQs developed to date. The note aims to clarify existing requirements in order to help AOs find an appropriate balance of assessment principles, and does not introduce new requirements or change any existing requirements. The intention is that the note will be reflected on, and updated as necessary, as the T Level reforms as a whole are taken forward.
The note is intended to provide reassurance to AOs and complement discussions between AOs the Institute, Ofqual and DfE which have already taken place. The Institute and Ofqual have confirmed that the clarifications include approaches that AOs could consider in determining how to meet the relevant Institute service requirements and Ofqual conditions.
The note comprises the following sections:

- 1 – Clarification regarding different aspects of the TQ
- 2 – Rationales for clarification and references to service requirements
- 3 – Annexes providing further exploration

3.2. CLARIFICATION REGARDING DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF THE TQ

1. *Content of Occupational Specialism assessments*
    a. The grading for these assessments relates to the measurement of threshold competence, and needs to command public and employer confidence. As such, the assessment will need to:

i. target each performance outcome (taking a synoptic approach to this wherever possible); and
ii. within that, ensure sufficient coverage of the constituent knowledge and skills each assessment series to support reliable grading.

b. Learners may not, necessarily, be required to demonstrate every element of the content in the assessment, provided that the content on which they are assessed is sufficiently extensive to enable legitimate inferences about their attainment and hence support reliable grading.
c. In finding an appropriate balance of assessment principles, AOs can determine, which skills and knowledge need to be assessed every series and which can be sampled whereby demonstration of those sampled would still attest to threshold competence.
d. To ensure validity, some knowledge and skills may need to be developed and assessed in the workplace. The industry placement can be used as the vehicle for development and assessment of TQ content, if it can be assured that:
    i. the assessment would be manageable for providers, employers and learners; and
    ii. it is clear that it is the TQ content which is being assessed and not the Industry Placement itself.

2. *Content of Employer-set Project assessments*
    a. The outline content for the Employer-set project includes core employability skills, such as teamwork. In covering these skills, and finding an appropriate balance of assessment principles, an approach can be used which either or both:
        i. directly assesses sufficient core employability skills each series so that an appropriate proportion of marks can be given to these skills; and/or
        ii. where appropriate, requires the demonstration of a given core employability skill, as this is inherent in the task requirements, but does not have a mark directly allocated to the demonstration of that skill.
    b. Taught content can be specified separately for the Employer-set project. There is no requirement for this assessment to cover all the core's knowledge and understanding. If applicable, the assessment can apply only to the content (if any) which is specified for the Employer-set project. This means AOs can decide which knowledge is best assessed through the project and which by examination and the same knowledge doesn't have to be covered twice. As with all aspects of design, the approach here must be appropriate and a coherent rationale for it provided.

3. *Approach over time to Employer-set Project and Occupational Specialism assessments*
    a. In each case, the assessment design must promote comparability over time, but mitigate excessive predictability.
    b. This might, for example, include using a common assessment/task structure and marking criteria/focuses over time, but varying specific contextual aspects, every series, as well as the specific content targeted if relevant, such that learners/centres cannot prepare to a degree that would undermine the reliability of the assessment.
    c. In cases where the content in scope for the assessment is not all covered each series, the approach to the tasks set each series should not have a repeated bias towards particular aspects of content over time, to help ensure that, as well as mitigating predictability of the assessment, the teaching of the course is not unduly narrowed.

4. *Approach to scheduling of Employer-set Project and Occupational Specialism assessments*
    a. In finding an appropriate balance of assessment principles, AOs can consider the use of non-examination assessment (NEA), such that assessments do not need to be timetabled externally by the AO. That is:
        i. the assessments can be timetabled by providers within a defined 'window' set by the AO for the assessment series;

ii. learners do not (nationally) need to take the assessments at precisely the same time; and
iii. AOs can combine more than one mode of assessment depending on what is being assessed, which could include a mixture of AO-timetabled assessment and centre-timetabled assessment.

b. Where non-examination assessment (NEA) is used, this must be supported by:
   i. the nature of the content being assessed; and
   ii. the tasks through which it is being assessed.

c. Assessments might not need to be taken simultaneously if advance knowledge of the content/focus of an assessment is unlikely to affect its results in an inappropriate way. The reverse is also the case – that is, where advance knowledge of the content/focus of an assessment might unduly affect learners' attainment, and therefore the reliability of the outcomes, this may suggest it should be taken simultaneously. The degree to which the assessment is 'narrow' or 'broad' in its focus is one consideration in this. For example, an assessment where the required responses comprise 'single correct answers' may be more adversely affected by advance knowledge of its content than one where a range of responses to each question/task are viable. (Though this is not to say that where an assessment permits a range of responses to each question/task, advance knowledge of the content/focus of the assessment would necessarily be unproblematic.)

d. Where non-examination assessment (NEA) is used, there must be appropriate controls to ensure:
   i. the security of assessment materials/content; and
   ii. the authenticity of evidence produced by learners.

e. In finding an appropriate balance of assessment principles, it will be important to ensure that the amount of time learners are required to spend in supervised conditions, and/or generating assessment evidence outside of supervised conditions:
   i. is manageable for learners and providers;
   ii. allows learners sufficient opportunity to demonstrate knowledge and skills across the full range of potential attainment; and
   iii. can be set within a window of sufficient duration (or with defined flexibilities) to allow the provider to accommodate differing needs of learners, such that all learners taking the qualification have fair access to attainment.

f. This consideration of manageability includes in terms of:
   i. the overall duration of each assessment;
   ii. the number of discrete sub-assessments;
   iii. whether assessments are centre-scheduled or AO-scheduled; and
   iv. the conditions under which assessments are taken.

5. *Use of tasks and contexts in Employer-set Project and Occupational Specialism assessments*
   a. Given the purpose of the assessment, in finding an appropriate balance of assessment principles, approaches will need to be used which ensure learners are able to work in ways typical of the workplace and produce authentic forms of evidence that would be recognised by employers working in relevant occupation(s).
   b. The details of this may vary between the Employer-set Project and the Occupational Specialism(s) given, for example, their differing purposes and types of content, as well as the different contexts in which they may be completed.

6. *Maths, English and Digital skills*
   a. Maths, English and Digital skills are required for the Employer-set Project and the Occupational specialism(s) in cases where they will help learners reach the required minimum competence in their chosen specialism(s). In the case of the Employer-set

Project, there is an assessment objective addressing these skills, which would require the allocation of a percentage of the raw marks to them.

b. There is no requirement for the core examinations to include a minimum number of marks for Maths, English and/or Digital skills. However, any marks allocated to them must take into account their relative size, the amount of assessment information they generate and be coherent with the marks for the constructs assessed alongside them.
c. Where Maths, English and Digital content is specified separately in the Outline Content, this can be integrated into the specification content (rather than presented separately) in cases where it can be combined naturally with that content and can be properly contextualised.
d. In elaborating outline content, and in finding an appropriate balance of assessment principles, an AO may consider that some Maths, English and Digital content specified in outline content:
    i. is always necessarily required to achieve an occupationally specific outcome (so will be included explicitly in the specification of content), but
    ii. can be indirectly assessed (or inferred) through other marked evidence and so does not need a separate mark allocation.

7. *Overall timing of assessments and assessment series*
    a. The TQ awarding organisations will need to take a coordinated approach to ensure that the timing and sequencing of summative assessments is manageable for providers to deliver.
    b. Consideration will also need to be given to the timing of assessment for other relevant provision – for example, to avoid timetable clashes for learners retaking GCSEs in Maths and/or English.

3.3. RATIONALES FOR CLARIFICATION AND REFERENCES TO SERVICE REQUIREMENTS

This section provides a rationale for the clarifications and references relevant sections of the service requirements.

1. **Employer-Set Project.**

Clarification	Rationale	Relevant Service Requirements include:	
a) The outline content for the Employer-set project includes core employability skills, such as teamwork. In covering these skills, and finding an appropriate balance of assessment principles, an approach can be used which either or both: i. directly assesses sufficient core employability skills each series so that an appropriate proportion of the overall marks can be given to these skills; and/or ii. where appropriate, requires marked assessment evidence (an outcome) which is always necessarily dependent on the application of core employability skill (s), but does not have a mark directly allocated to the demonstration of the skill(s). b) Taught content can be specified separately for the Employer-set project and there is no requirement for the project's assessment to cover all the	a) Core employability skills have been specified in the content for the employer set project to support learners' adaptability once in work. If these are not afforded sufficient mark weighting there is a risk that they will not be taught and learners will leave the course without these important skills. However, it is understood that in some cases work that is marked will be contingent on application of an employability skill –although that skill is not directly allocated marks. b) Where the service requirements require 'assessment of core skills and ***relevant*** aspects of knowledge through [the] Employer Set Project, this can be taken to mean that not all the knowledge specified in the core needs to be in scope for application/assessment in the project. Clarifying which knowledge will be assessed through the project and which	**SR1.1** Specification of Content requirements **SR 2.6** TQ Core Component assessment design and delivery	**1** The Supplier must show that it has covered all aspects of the Outline Content in the TQ at an appropriate depth for a level 3 qualification. **2 The Specification of Content must elaborate on the Outline Content.** The Supplier shall, in the Specification of Content, elaborate on (and not simply replicate) the Outline Content to: (a) enable accurate interpretation of the Specification of Content by Approved Providers (including to facilitate a clear and consistent understanding by Approved Providers of what is required to be taught and assessed for the TQ and to enable Approved Providers to determine (i) the level of competence required for staff who assess learning and (ii) any other physical requirements (such as facilities and hardware) integral to successful learning for the TQ); **7 Assessment of core skills and relevant aspects of knowledge through Employer Set Project.** The Supplier shall develop briefs for Employer Set Projects and shall ensure etc

core's knowledge and understanding. The assessment can just apply to the content which is specified for the employer set project sub-component. This means AOs can decide which knowledge is best assessed through the project and which by examination and the same knowledge doesn't have to be covered twice.	only ever through the examination could support validity and manageability.		
c) In finding an appropriate balance of assessment principles, AOs can use Non-examination Assessment (NEA), such that although the assessments will need proper controls, the assessments do not need to be timetabled externally by the awarding organisation (as examinations). It therefore follows that: i. the assessments can be timetabled by providers within a defined 'window' set by the AO for the assessment series.	c) The service requirements require an optimum balance of assessment principles including validity, reliability, manageability and minimising bias. When considering the use of timetabled examinations for the employer set project, it needs to be considered whether these could present manageability issues for providers and learners. d) If the forms of evidence that learners are required to produce are typically required in the workplace, this is likely to support validity, and better	**SR 2.1** Assessment quality **SR 2.6** TQ Core Component assessment design and delivery	1 The Supplier shall ensure that: (a) the Scheme of Assessment, the TQ Specimen Assessment Materials and the TQ Live Assessment Materials provide the optimum balance of the assessment principles set out below; and (b) the Assessment Strategy sets out a detailed rationale to explain how the TQ Specification, the TQ Specimen Assessment Materials and the TQ Live Assessment Materials meet these assessment principles. **3**. Evidence generated by a Learner in assessments of the Employer Set Project should be marked by an Assessor. However, in very exceptional circumstances set out in the Approved Assessment Strategy, an Approved

ii. learners do not (nationally) need to take the assessments at precisely the same time. iii. AOs can combine more than one mode of assessment based on what is being assessed. This could include a mixture of timetabled assessment and NEA. d) In finding an appropriate balance of assessment principles, approaches can be used which ensure learners are able to work in ways typical to the workplace and produce authentic forms of evidence that would be recognised by employers working in relevant occupation(s).	support learners' preparation for the workplace. This also means, when exemplifying standards of attainment, (for the purposes of assessor/moderator training and or support for providers) employers will be well placed to validate those exemplification materials. *Annex 1 provides a working definition of NEA and further information about NEA used in general qualifications which AOs may find helpful.*		Provider may be permitted to mark assessment evidence generated by a Learner only where the Supplier: (i) puts in place robust arrangements which ensure that such marking achieves valid and reliable outcomes; (ii) uses an approach that is as close to complete independence as possible (such arrangements and approach to be detailed in the Approved Assessment Strategy); and (iii) procures that all such marking is subject to Moderation.2 [These proposed arrangements should form part of the Supplier's Response.]

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2. **Occupational Specialism(s).**

Clarifications	**Rationale**	**Relevant Service Requirement references include:**	
a) To ensure validity, some Occupationally Specific knowledge and skills may need to be developed and assessed in the workplace. The industry placement can be used as the vehicle for development and assessment of TQ content, if it can be assured that: i. the assessment would be manageable for providers, employers and learners; ii. it is clear that it is the TQ content which is being assessed and not the Industry Placement itself. b) In finding an appropriate balance of assessment principles, AOs can use Non-examination Assessment (NEA), such that although the assessments will need proper controls, the assessments do not need to be timetabled externally by the awarding organisation (as examinations). It therefore follows that: i. the assessments can be timetabled by providers within a defined 'window' set	a) Some skills specified by employers in the outline content may only be assessed validly if demonstrated in the workplace. *Annex 2 provides further draft information about the use of Industry placement for TQ assessment.* b) See rationale for Employer Set Project above. c) Ditto d) Synoptic assessment requires learners to draw upon knowledge and skills (from the occupational specialism content) as required by the tasks they are set. This means learners do not, necessarily, need to demonstrate every element of the Occupational Specialism content they have learned in the assessment. *However, Annex 3 provides further suggested guidance on synoptic assessment of occupational specialisms. [DN: subject to further discussion with the Institute, Ofqual and AOs].*	**SR 2.1** Assessment quality **SR 2.7** Occupational Specialist Component assessment design and delivery	1 The Supplier shall ensure that: (a) the Scheme of Assessment, the TQ Specimen Assessment Materials and the TQ Live Assessment Materials provide the optimum balance of the assessment principles set out below; and (b) the Assessment Strategy sets out a detailed rationale to explain how the TQ Specification, the TQ Specimen Assessment Materials and the TQ Live Assessment Materials meet these assessment principles. 1 **Assessment of performance outcomes**. The Supplier shall ensure that: (a) the assessment materials for each Occupational Specialist Component assess all performance outcomes detailed in the Specification of Content for that Occupational Specialist Component; and (b) so far as is reasonably practicable, each assessment is synoptic to reflect how knowledge, understanding, skills and behaviours are drawn together and implemented to develop meaningful occupationally relevant Learner assessment evidence, which attests to Threshold Competence, provided always that where the Supplier reasonably determines that it is not possible to

by the AO for the assessment series, and so; ii. learners do not (nationally) need to take the assessments at precisely the same time. iii. AOs can combine more than one mode of assessment based on what is being assessed. This could include a mixture of timetabled assessment and NEA. c) In finding an appropriate balance of assessment principles, approaches can be used which ensure learners are able to work in ways typical to the workplace and produce authentic forms of evidence that would be recognised by employers working in relevant occupation(s). d) The assessment will need to target each performance outcome and ensure appropriate coverage - being mindful of the need to ensure a sufficient basis for comparability over time. In finding an appropriate balance of assessment principles, AOs can determine (perhaps in consultation with employers), which skills and knowledge need to be assessed every			assess performance outcomes synoptically, the Supplier shall provide a clear and detailed rationale as part of its Assessment Strategy for Submission at Interim Milestone 1 to the Authority and the Authority shall consider whether it is acceptable not to assess performance outcomes synoptically, provided always that the Authority's decision as to whether such approach is appropriate shall be final. • 2. Evidence generated by a Learner in assessments of each Occupational Specialist Component should be marked by an Assessor. However, in very exceptional circumstances set out in the Approved Assessment Strategy, an Approved Provider may be permitted to mark assessment evidence generated by a Learner only where the Supplier: (i) puts in place robust arrangements which ensure that such marking achieves valid and reliable outcomes; (ii) uses an approach that is as close to complete independence as possible (such arrangements and approach to be detailed in the Approved Assessment Strategy); and (iii) procures that all such marking is subject to Moderation.3 [These proposed arrangements should form part of the Supplier's Response.]

series and which can be sampled in a manner which would still attest to threshold competence. This means, the assessment does not necessarily need to require learners to demonstrate every element of the Occupational Specialism content they have learned.			

3. **Maths, English and Digital Skills.**

Clarifications	Rationale	Relevant Service Requirement references include:	
a) Maths, English and Digital Skills are required for the Employer-Set Project and the Occupational specialism where it will help learners reach the required minimum competence in their chosen specialism(s). Where Maths, English and Digital content is specified separately in the Outline Content, this can be integrated into the TQ content where it naturally occurs and can be properly contextualised.	a) The Maths, English and Digital content is included to support learners' development of occupational competence. If, for example, learners need to use maths to cost a construction project, or use English to communicate with a non-technical audience this is why the content should be integrated. b) Given the need to give appropriate mark weighting to core and pathway specific	**SR1.1** Specification of Content requirements	**The Specification of Content must elaborate on the Outline Content.** The Supplier shall, in the Specification of Content, elaborate on (and not simply replicate) the Outline Content to: (d) ensure that, where the Outline Content specifies English, mathematics and digital content, such content shall be integrated within the rest of the content in such manner as shall ensure such content is delivered and assessed in appropriate occupationally specific contexts.

b) There is no requirement for the core examinations to include a minimum number of marks for Maths, English and/or Digital skills. c) In elaborating outline content, and in finding an appropriate balance of assessment principles, an AO may consider that some Maths, English and Digital content specified in outline content: i. is always necessarily required to achieve an occupationally specific outcome (so will be included explicitly in the specification of content), but ii. can be indirectly assessed (or inferred) through other marked evidence and so does not need a separate mark allocation. •	content, there is no requirement to set de-contextualised questions in the examinations (in an attempt to cover the Maths content for example) unless it will directly underpin the development of learner's competence and progression. c) To ensure the overall burden of assessment is manageable for learners, and (as b) to ensure appropriate weighting is given to the content specific to the T level pathway.		

4. Timing and Duration of Assessments.

Clarifications	Rationale	Relevant Service Requirement references include:	
a) In finding an appropriate balance of assessment principles, for the employer-set project and occupational specialisms, it will be important to ensure that the amount of time learners are required to spend in controlled supervised conditions, and/or generating assessment evidence outside of supervised conditions: i. is manageable for learners and providers; ii. allows learners sufficient opportunity to demonstrate knowledge and skills across the full range of potential attainment; iii. can be set within a window of sufficient duration (or with defined flexibilities) to allow the provider to accommodate differing needs of learners, such that all learners taking the qualification have fair access to attainment; b) The TQ awarding organisations may find it helpful to take a coordinated approach to ensure that the timing and sequencing	a) There is a risk that in covering all the content specified, the assessment duration becomes unmanageable for learners and providers. *See Annex 3 on Synoptic Assessment and Occupational Specialisms.* b) There is a risk, for example that if too many core knowledge and understanding examinations are timetabled for the same day in a series, that providers will not be able to administer the assessments; for example find sufficient invigilators. c) Some T level learners may still need to achieve Maths and/or English at level 2 to achieve their T level overall. A proportion of these learners will opt to re-take their GCSEs. If a TQ examination is timetabled on the same day as their GCSE retake this may adversely affect the learner. •	**SR 2.2** General assessment delivery requirements	**1** specify when the TQ assessments can be undertaken during the relevant Academic Year (taking into account any dates prescribed by the Key Dates Schedule for the relevant Academic Year) so that Learners have sufficient time to generate assessment evidence and/or demonstrate the required knowledge, understanding, skills and behaviours;

of summative assessments is manageable for providers to deliver. c) Consideration could also be given to the timing of assessment for other relevant provision, for example to avoid timetable clashes for learners retaking Maths and/or English GCSEs.			

4. Annexes providing further exploration

4.1. ANNEX 1 – NON-EXAMINATION ASSESSMENT (NEA)

Any assessment that is **not** 'Externally set and taken by learners at the same time under controlled conditions' is classified as non-examination assessment. The principles[2] for the use of non-examination assessment are that:

- non-examination assessment should only be used where it is the only – or most – valid means of assessing essential knowledge and skills;
- non-examination assessment must strike a balance between valid assessment of essential knowledge and skills, sound assessment practice and manageability;
- any non-examination assessment should be designed to fit with the requirements of the particular T Level pathway including, for the employer-set project, the relative weighting as compared to that for the examination assessment for core knowledge and understanding.

For technical qualifications non-examination assessment will always be either:

- externally set by the awarding organisation and marked by the awarding organisation, or;
- externally set by the awarding organisation, internally marked by the provider and externally moderated by the awarding organisation.

Clearly, if the assessment requires learners to generate assessment evidence outside of supervised conditions, the awarding organisation must ensure this evidence can be authenticated as the learners' own work. The approaches to mitigating risks to authenticity will need to be detailed in the AOs assessment strategy.
Non-examination assessment necessarily requires providers to take a variety of roles to ensure assessment controls are applied effectively. In the development of non-examination assessment for TQs, it may therefore be helpful if AOs coordinate their approach to ensure:

- a consistent quality standard is applied to the delivery and administration of TQ non-examination assessments across T Levels;
- where appropriate, common procedures and practices are developed to support consistency across TQs and manageability for providers.

4.2. ANNEX 2 – ASSESSMENT OF TQ CONTENT THROUGH THE INDUSTRY PLACEMENT

In line with current assessment practice, to secure assessment validity, an Awarding Organisation may deem it necessary to develop assessment methods which require learners to be assessed performing an activity or activities in the workplace – rather than, for example, a simulated workplace environment organised by the provider at the provider's setting. This may be because application of skills critical to technical competence, and so progression in the occupation, cannot be validly replicated in the provider setting, for example owing to availability of particular resources.

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[2] Adapted from Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) Instructions for conducting non-examination assessments
(new GCE & GCSES specifications) 1September 2019 to 31st August 2020.

As part of their assessment strategy, the AO can provide a rationale for why the content needs to be assessed in the workplace. The assessment approach would need to be approved by the Institute in consultation with Ofqual and the Department for Education Policy Team. As long as appropriate arrangements can be put in place with providers and employers, there is nothing to prevent AOs from using part of the time learners spend on their Industry Placement for the purposes of TQ assessment. The rationale would need to:

- identify which knowledge and skills need to be assessed in the workplace;
- specify the proposed method(s) of assessment, including duration of assessment;
- explain why the validity of the assessment would be significantly improved if conducted in the workplace;
- evidence that the proposed method(s) have been tested with providers, employers and where possible learners, demonstrating that:
    - the method is valid, reliable, manageable and safe, as well as being scalable to deliver such that wherever an industry placement is offered the assessment model will be practicable to deliver to a consistent quality standard;
    - assessment in the workplace would not place burdens on employers, assessors or providers such that it has a bearing on the uptake of Industry placements (and therefore T Levels).

In delivering this approach Awarding Organisations would need to be clear – including to learners, centres and employers – that assessment of TQ content during the industry placement does not constitute assessment of the Industry Placement itself; that is, there will be no separate Industry Placement grade, mark or score.

The Awarding Organisation would need to pay due regard to the design of Industry placement policy, ensuring that they align assessment with a range of Industry Placement models. Further guidance can be found in the Industry Placement Policy Update.

Assessment in the workplace, during the industry placement, would always only ever be a constituent part of assessment for the Technical Qualification. Time for conducting the assessment would be considered as part of the GLH in the TQ specification and would also count towards Industry placement hours, but would not be counted twice in the calculation of the overall T level hours. See worked example:

T Level element	Hours
TQ Core component	540 Guided Learning Hours
TQ Occupational Specialism	540 Guided Learning Hours. 10 Hours are assessed in the workplace.
Industry Placement	315 Hours (minimum). Of which 10 hours are for TQ assessment.
Total (not including, MAR EEP and M&E)	TQ: 1080 GLH IP: 315 hours = 1385 hours *(Not 1395 as the 10 hours are counted just once)*

4.3. ANNEX 3 – SYNOPTIC ASSESSMENT AND OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALISMS

Given that Occupational Specialism assessment is summative and set externally by the AO, it is expected that learners will have learned the content specified in preparation for the assessment. Being synoptic (where possible), and using a compensatory mark-based model, the assessment can require learners to draw upon knowledge and skills *as required by the tasks* they are set. This means learners may not, necessarily, be required to demonstrate every element of the Occupational Specialism content they have learned in the assessment – provided that the content on which they are assessed is sufficient to underpin reliable grading of their attainment. An approach to assessment involving sampling in this way may mean the assessment duration is more likely to be manageable for providers and learners. For example, learners may not need to use all tools and techniques they have learned to produce an artefact, but will need to select the most appropriate for the task/context.

However, in designing synoptic assessment AOs need to be certain that:

- Tasks set do not repeatedly bias particular aspects of content over time, meaning some content is neglected. This may mean that the context, brief or tasks set each series need to ensure different skills and knowledge are sampled from across the range of content – to avoid predictability and a narrowing of what is taught – while also ensuring comparability as appropriate.
- The assessment corresponds to mark weightings prescribed by the AO for the performance outcomes and these ensure each performance outcome is given an appropriate proportion of the overall marks.
- Where assessment requirements are legitimately 'predictable', for example, the requirement to demonstrate a defined skill, specific contextual requirements should be put in place and varied over time, to ensure that the assessment evidence generated by the learner, is clearly unique to the series.

Further considerations:

- In finding an appropriate balance of assessment principles, the AO may determine that it would not be practicable for all learners' evidence to be generated synoptically. This may be because it is not manageable or valid for learners to demonstrate all the skills needed in an assessment window set by the AO, for example if the assessment needs to be conducted in the workplace. As per Service Requirement 2.7 1b, a rationale for this approach must be included in the AOs assessment strategy.
- There may be cases where knowledge and/or skills are required to be demonstrated to attest to minimum required competence – for example, owing to a legislative requirement – and for which differentiation across a range of marks would not be appropriate or reliable. In such cases, this content need not be marked, in the sense of allocated numerical marks in a compensatory way – it could instead be a 'competency' assessment. However, sufficient marks must still be available overall to support effective differentiation and enable reliable grade awarding for the component.
- Knowledge specified in Occupational specialisms may not, necessarily, need to be assessed discretely if it is 'embodied' in the application of skills; that is, the knowledge can be directly inferred through the demonstration of a related skill.

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