

# St. Josephs College



# OCN Examination Policies

## **Access to Fair Assessment Statement**

This document sets out our policy for ensuring access to fair assessment for all learners on accredited training programmes. Assessment practice will be open and consistent with the code of practice and regulations laid down by the OCN NI and any other awarding body.

### **Commitment**

We are committed to supporting equality of opportunity in education and learning and will ensure that all assessments are conducted rigorously and accurately.

We will;

- Promote practice and procedures that support equal opportunities for all individuals, regardless of their culture, sex, ability, disability, age, ethnic background, nationality, religion, sexual orientation (sexuality), marital status, employment status or social class
- Work towards removing all practice and procedures that discriminate unfairly (directly or indirectly)

To meet this commitment, we will:

1. Develop materials and documentation that are easily understood, and reflective of a diverse society and differing needs and abilities of learners
2. Develop quality assurance processes that are fair
3. Provide advice that is sensitive to the widest possible range of learners' needs
4. Use assessments that are based on award requirements only and do not discriminate against anyone

### **Putting this policy into practice**

To put this policy into practice successfully we will:

- issue a copy of this policy to all staff, trainers and verifiers and ensure they are familiar with it
- make it readily available to learners upon request
- monitor and review the effectiveness of the policy and make improvements where appropriate.

### **Learning support**

As part of the induction process all learners will be asked if they have any learning support needs that may require additional mechanisms to be put in place.

**Internal assessment**

Internal assessment will be conducted by the tutor/assessor. Assessment will be internally verified in accordance with the Internal Verification Policy and the OCN NI's verification/moderation procedures.

Feedback will be given to learners as soon as possible after assessment. Feedback will be as helpful as possible to the learner, i.e. confirming what has gone well and giving clear guidance on what actions the learner might take to improve on their performance.

**Arrangements for learners with special assessment requirements.**

Assessment will be available to all those who have the potential to achieve standards required for a particular qualification or course. However, some learners may need access to alternative means of providing evidence and/or additional support. We will take care to ensure that any proposed assessment methods are of equal quality and rigour to those being used for all learners in order to demonstrate that the learner with special assessment requirements has achieved the standard expected.

Learners may be identified as having particular assessment requirements in relation to, for example, learning difficulties, a visual or hearing impairment, a mental illness, or English as an additional language. This means that they will need appropriate support in their development to help them meet the required standard such as;

- Help with communication and number skills
- Adapted equipment and physical environment
- Special information technology
- Confidence building

**Assessment Appeals**

All learners will be informed of the assessment appeals procedure at the beginning of the programme.

## Appeals Procedure for Learners

In the event that an individual Learner disagrees with an assessment decision they are entitled to appeal against it using the procedure outlined below. The aim is to resolve the issue within 14 working days after it has been raised or as soon as is reasonably practical.

### Stage 1

- ❑ If a learner does not agree with an assessment decision he should raise the issue with the assessor concerned as soon as possible and within 5 working days of the assessment decision being taken.
- ❑ The assessor should consider the learner's objection, review their decision and provide clear feedback to the learner about their reviewed decision.

### Stage 2

- ❑ If a learner is dissatisfied with this outcome and the learner feels unable to discuss this with the assessor concerned, they should submit an appeal in writing, setting out the grounds upon which they disagree with the assessment decision.
- ❑ This appeal documentation should be forwarded to the internal verifier.
- ❑ The internal verifier should review all relevant documentation including the appeal, the assessed work, the assessment decision and course specifications. If necessary, the internal verifier should discuss the issue with the assessor and the learner.
- ❑ The internal verifier should reply in writing within 5 working days of receiving the written appeal stating the outcome of the appeal.

### Stage 3

- ❑ If the learner is still dissatisfied at this stage, the learner may submit a written request to the quality manager to review the decision of the internal verifier. In this instance the quality manager will invite an independent reviewer to review all the documentation and meet with those involved to discuss the issue at the earliest opportunity.
- ❑ The decision reached by the independent review will be final. A record will be kept and copied to all parties concerned.

## **Complaints Policy & Procedure**

### **Our complaints policy**

We are committed to providing a quality education and training service to all our learners, maintaining high standards of conduct in our operations and working in an open and accountable way. By listening and responding to the views of our learners we can improve the quality of our services to them. We try to ensure that

- Making a complaint is easy and straightforward,
- We treat all complaints seriously and sensitively,
- Complaints are dealt with promptly and politely,
- We respond to complaints proportionately, i.e. ranging from an immediate informal apology through to a formal written response.

### **Informal approach**

An informal approach is appropriate when it can be achieved. Therefore, in the first instance you should raise the issue with the member of staff concerned as soon as is reasonably practicable, in order that the matter might be resolved swiftly and informally. If, however, the matter cannot be resolved satisfactorily you should follow our formal complaints procedure.

## Formal complaints procedure

### Stage 1

You should make a formal complaint to us in writing. This can be by letter or email. Your letter/email should set out

- the details of your complaint
- how this has affected you as a result, and
- what you consider should be done to resolve the issue.

You can expect your complaint to be acknowledged within 3 working days of receipt.

In our reply we will **either** give our response to your complaint **or** give you an interim response along with the reason/s for not yet being able to provide a response. The usual reason for this is that we need to make further investigations which will take a number of days to complete.

You can expect to receive our response to your complaint and an explanation within 10 working days.

### Stage 2

If you are not satisfied with our response you can appeal this by writing to our Management Committee. This should be by letter and addressed to the Chair of the Management Committee. Your letter should set out your complaint and the reason/s for your dissatisfaction with our response.

You can expect this appeal to be acknowledged within 3 working days of receipt. The Chair of the Management Committee will appoint a member of the committee to review your complaint and our response. You may be invited in to a meeting as part of this review process.

You can expect to receive the Management Committee's response to your appeal within 20 working days. The decision of the Management Committee is final.

We keep full records of all formal complaints.

## **Disability Discrimination Policy**

### **Aim**

The aim of this policy is to promote equality of opportunity and to avoid discrimination against people who have a disability (including physical, hidden, sensory or mental impairment). Discrimination occurs when – for a reason relating to the disability – a disabled person is treated less favourably than a person to whom that reason does not apply without justification. The policy should also ensure relevant support is provided to enable students with disabilities to complete their course of study in the Centre.

### **Scope**

This policy applies to all aspects of the Centre's provision and to all members of the Centre community (management, staff, students, contractors/suppliers and members of the public).

### **Relevant Legislation**

- The Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- The Disability Discrimination Act 2005
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Order 2005 (SENDO)
- Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006.

### **Reasonableness**

Whether particular steps are reasonable is contingent upon

- Cost
- Effectiveness
- Size and resources available to the Centre
- Extent of disruption
- Availability of financial or other assistance

## Specific Definitions

Disability is defined as:

A physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term effect on ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Physical or mental impairment is defined as:

A clinically well-recognised illness.

- Excludes addictions and various personality and social disorders
- Includes disfigurement

Substantial is defined as:

- The time taken to carry out an activity
- The way in which an activity is carried out
- The cumulative effects of an impairment
- Effects of behaviour
- Effects of the environment

Long-term effect is defined as:

- it has lasted for twelve months
- likely to be twelve months
- rest of the life of the person affected

Normal day-to-day activities are defined as:

- Mobility
- Manual dexterity
- Physical coordination
- Continence
- Ability to lift, carry or otherwise move everyday objects
- Speech, hearing or eyesight
- Memory or ability to concentrate, learn or understand
- Perception of risks of physical danger

Employment is defined as

- Employment under a contract of service
- Or of apprenticeship
- Or of a contract which leads to any work

## Responsibilities

The Centre will ensure that all its employees and users of its facilities are made aware of the legal obligations and rights bestowed by the Disability Discrimination legislation as outlined above. All staff have a duty to observe the provisions of the relevant legislation which state:

- It is unlawful to discriminate against disabled people or students by treating them less favourably than others. In addition, responsible bodies are required to provide certain types of reasonable adjustments to provision where disabled students or other disabled people might otherwise be substantially disadvantaged.
- Responsible bodies are required to make adjustments that involve the provision of auxiliary aids and services;
- Responsible bodies will be required to make adjustments to physical features of premises where these put disabled people or students at substantial disadvantage.

The duty to make reasonable adjustments includes:

- Adjustments to premises
- Allocating some of the disabled person's non-key duties to another employee
- Transferring them to fill a vacancy
- Altering the place of work or working hours
- Acquiring or modifying equipment
- Providing a reader or interpreter
- Providing supervision
- Allowing absence for rehabilitation, assessment or treatment
- Providing training
- Modifying procedures for testing and assessment
- Modifying instructions/reference manuals

Procedures in respect of the above legislation include:

**Staff Awareness:** All staff will receive information and guidance on provision for disabled students, as it is recognised that those students may be found in any area of the Centre.

**Admission Arrangements:** A trained member of Centre staff will interview all students identified as having a learning difficulty. At this interview any special requirements will be noted and applied if reasonable as defined above.

**Facilities and Support:** Any student with a disability, who, after an assessment by staff, is thought to need extra assistance, will be facilitated as required.

**Examination Arrangements:** Students who require special arrangements or additional support during examinations should make this request to the Tutor who should then make the necessary arrangements with the Centre.

**Facilities:** All sites provide facilities for disabled students, including lifts, toilets, etc.

**Staff Procedures:** Staff receive basic specialist training i.e. for visually impaired students, Dyslexia.

**Complaints:** Every student with a complaint is entitled to have that complaint dealt with, if necessary, by a senior member of staff with an appeal to the Management Committee. The Tutor would, in the first instance, deal with any complaint from a student with a disability.

**Monitoring:** All monitoring is reviewed by the Centre on an annual basis.

## **Internal Verification Policy.**

### **Internal Verification**

Internal verification is a key part of the organisation's quality assurance arrangements and can contribute significantly to quality improvement.

Effective internal verification ensures that the standard of assessment remains consistent over time and that there is consistency and standardization in the assessment decisions made by different assessors. This in turn ensures that learners are treated fairly and equally in the assessment of their work.

To achieve this, it is our policy to:

- Appoint internal verifiers who are sufficiently qualified and experienced to undertake the role
- Provide training and/or support to enable them to complete their work effectively
- Ensure the model of internal verification applied and sampling strategy adopted are appropriate for the context and circumstances
- Ensure that internal moderation is planned prior to a course commencing
- Ensure that we keep accurate internal moderation records

### **Internal verification procedures**

The purpose of our internal verification procedures is to:

- evaluate assessment practices and decisions
- ensure the validity of assessment decisions,
- ensure the standardization of assessment decisions, and
- Identify good practice and areas for improvement

This is achieved by preparing an internal verification plan which includes a systematic approach to sampling assessment activities and documentation across our provision and specifies how and when assessor's assessment practices and decisions will be reviewed.

## Internal Verification Plan

The internal verification plan will include:

- the sampling of verifiable evidence, i.e. completed assessment records and related documentation/products,
- the observation of assessment practices and
- a brief discussion with one or more the learners.
- a professional discussion with the tutor/s

The plan will specify the sampling strategy being used. The sampling strategy will take account of the following variables (as appropriate) to ensure it is representative.

- Delivery: number of sites, methods of delivery
- Tutor/assessors: number of tutors, assessment experience, prior performance
- Learner groups: number of groups, mode of attendance (f/t, p/t, online)
- Assessment: different methods of assessment, different forms of evidence
- Learners: assessment performance, reasonable adjustments, borderline assessments

The verification plan will be issued to assessors and the dates of observations and professional discussions agreed.

## Reporting

The internal verifier will complete a written IV report for each cycle of activity. This report will identify good practice, remedial action required, opportunities for making improvements. Where remedial action is required the IV will agree actions for improvement with the tutor/assessor

The following records will be maintained

- IV plan
- IV reports
- Appeal documentation (if applicable).

## **Internal Verification Appeals Procedure**

In the event that an individual disagrees with an internal verification decision they are entitled to appeal against it following the procedure prescribed below. The aim is to resolve the issue within 14 working days after it has been raised or as soon as is reasonably practical.

The tutor/assessor should raise any problems, questions or queries with the Internal Verifier (IV) concerned within 5 working days of the IV decision being taken or as soon as is reasonable practicable, to discuss and attempt to resolve the issue at the earliest opportunity.

In the event that the issue remains unresolved or the tutor/assessor feels unable to discuss this with the IV concerned, they should complete the appeal documentation and forward it to the Quality Manager.

The Quality Manager will review all the relevant documentation and if necessary discuss the matter with the IV and the tutor/assessor. The Quality Manager may consult with the External Verifier prior to making a decision. The IV and tutor/assessor will be issued with the decision, in writing.

At the point of External Verification, the External Verifier appealed decisions will be highlighted for inclusion in the review sample.

The Quality Manager will retain all documentation pertaining to the appeal.

## **Malpractice Policy**

Our organisation takes very seriously the issues of malpractice.

Malpractice is taken to mean any activity, neglect or practice that compromises assessments, the validity of assessment results or the integrity of a qualification. Malpractice can include maladministration.

Maladministration is taken to mean any activity, neglect or other practice that results in a failure to comply with the specified requirements for the delivery of a qualification.

## Malpractice

Examples of learner malpractice may include:

- Misuse of assessment/examination material
- Bringing unauthorised material into an assessment/examination environment
- Obtaining or passing on assessment/exam related information through talking or passing notes
- Copying from another learner
- Plagiarism of another's work
- Disruptive behaviour during the assessment/examination
- Impersonation - pretending to be someone else, or arranging for someone else to undertake the assessment/examination in your place
- Breaching security of assessment/examination materials
- Failing to follow instructions provided by an assessor/invigator
- Changing result statements or certificates

This list is not exhaustive and any other action deemed to compromise the integrity of the qualification/course will be subject to the policy.

In instances where there is evidence of malpractice by learners the Learner Disciplinary Policy and Procedures would apply.

Examples of staff malpractice may include:

- Assisting learners in the production of work for assessment
- Producing falsified witness statements about learner performance
- Changing assessment results/examination marks without sufficient evidence to support the decision
- Allowing evidence, which is known by the staff member not to be the learner's own, to be included in a learner's assessment portfolio.
- Improper assistance to a learner during assessment/examination
- Moving the time or date of the assessment/examination without prior agreement of those concerned
- Failure to supervise the assessment/examination properly
- Falsifying records/certificates, for example by alteration, substitution, or by fraud.
- Fraudulent certificate claims, that is claiming for a certificate prior to the learner completing all the requirements of assessment
- Failure to keep assessment/examination materials secure

This list is not exhaustive and any other action deemed to compromise the integrity of the qualification/course will be subject to the policy

In instances where there is evidence of malpractice by staff the Staff Disciplinary Policy and Procedures would apply.

## **Procedures for Reporting and Investigating Malpractice**

If St Joseph's College discovers or is made aware of alleged malpractice, we will conduct a full investigation.

If our organisation is accused of malpractice an independent investigator will be appointed to carry out the investigation.

Individual/s being investigated for alleged malpractice will be informed of this in writing at the earliest possible opportunity. This notification will detail the nature of the malpractice for which they are being investigated and the possible consequences they may face should they be found guilty. Any individual accused of malpractice will be given the opportunity to respond to any allegations made against them.

If an anonymous report of malpractice is made, it will only be investigated if sufficient evidence is provided, or if it is serious enough to warrant investigation on the claim alone.

## **Recording and Reporting**

Investigations of malpractice will subject to the production of a written report to include the following, as appropriate:

- Details of all the facts, details of any circumstances, and details of the investigation carried out.
- Written statement(s) from the person under investigation.
- Written statement(s) from all other persons involved.
- Details of any mitigating circumstances.
- Details of the conclusions as to whether and what malpractice is deemed to have taken place.

After the compilation of the report an independent advisor will be appointed to:

- review the report
- decide whether the correct procedures have been adhered to in conducting the investigation
- ensure that the individual accused of malpractice has had a fair chance to explain themselves
- review the conclusions of the report and agree/disagree with the findings
- discuss and agree appropriate penalties/actions

Each case will be considered on an individual basis dependant on all the information given.

**Sanctions**

St Joseph's College will take action/impose penalties in order to prevent the individual/s from gaining an unfair advantage and to maintain the integrity of the assessment/examination and the confidence in the public of the awarding procedures.

Any sanction/penalty imposed will reflect the severity of the malpractice. The following sanctions may be imposed:

- An official warning
- Withdrawal of contract (in the case of associates/trainers/verifiers etc)
- Loss of part of the marks gained for the assessment/examination
- Loss of all the marks gained for the assessment/examination
- Disqualification from the whole qualification
- Disqualification from all qualifications taken in that series

St Joseph's College will report all allegations of malpractice to OCN NI in line with the OCN NI Centre Approval terms and conditions.

## Centre Contingency Plan

### Plan Purpose:

1. To ensure the Centre is evacuated safely in the event of any major incident occurring – such as fire, flood, bomb warning etc – that may be dangerous or life-threatening to staff or other users.
2. To ensure that all students will be able to continue their studies in the event of the Centre withdrawing certain course services or closing down as a result of any unforeseen circumstances, physical or administrative.

### 1. Incident

**Responsible Personnel:** The Centre Manager and Centre Co-ordinator have immediate overall responsibility for ensuring the safe evacuation of the premises in the event of any adverse incident occurring.

**Define event:** Fire, Flood, Bomb warning, Structural failure of building, Gas leakage, Electrical failure which disrupts safety equipment, lifts etc in a dangerous way, Any other dangerous event

**Warning indicators:** Room lights not working, Air-conditioning not working, No power to instruments, Lifts jammed, Fire/smoke alarms, Internal telephones not working, Phone warnings registered, Verbal warnings in person

### Areas Affected:

- Centre area only
- Associated rooms/hallways/stairs
- Entire building

**Recovery Time Objective:** Five minutes.

### Notification:

- Key staff to inform all users of impending emergency
- Call for assistance to appropriate emergency service if not notified by central monitoring system. Notify personnel and all users in the centre to evacuate or clear the way for the arrival of emergency services.
- *Alarms with centralized monitoring to signify immediate evacuation and to notify appropriate emergency services.*

### Initial Response

- Determine the potential danger and act immediately to evacuate all staff and users.
- Do not wait to switch off any equipment or look for personal items
- Ensure all staff rendezvous at the agreed meeting point at safe distance from the Centre
- Advise all other users to go home.
- Ensure head count of all staff to ascertain no-one is missing
- If any member of staff not accounted for, inform emergency services immediately
- Keep staff and users informed at all times

### Ongoing

1. Liaise with emergency services and monitor situation
2. Re-evaluate at 30 minute intervals
3. If situation not rectified or resolved safely after a reasonable time advise staff that they should also go home for the day and await further notification
4. Ensure all students are kept informed of the situation in order that their course of study is maintained either at the Centre when fully functional/safe again or at a suitable alternative accredited venue (or venues) suitable for, and accessible to, the students.

### Recovery

If confirmed that situation has been resolved safely within a reasonable time frame, return to Centre and check all equipment functioning properly and safely before re-commencing any training or other activities.

## 2. Centre closure

In the event of the centre having to close or withdraw services, the Centre Manager or delegate has the following responsibilities:

- Immediate communication will be made to OCN NI outlining detail of situation (e.g. organisational closure), and a timeframe for implementation of subsequent points of this plan.
- Communication will be made to all learners currently serviced by the organisation as to the situation (e.g. organisational closure) and a proposed detailed course of action to continue current learning and potential qualification outcomes with OCN NI. This includes learners who are commencing or in the process of training and assessment, those with assessment being internally verified, through to learners awaiting certification.
- Contact will be made with OCN NI recognised centres in proximity in order to secure opportunities for learning commitments to be fulfilled externally. This will take into account the specific tailored needs of learners in question.
- Detailed commitments for fulfilment of obligations by third party OCN NI recognised centres will be communicated to OCN NI and to learners as appropriate.

## Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy

St Joseph's College is committed to supporting equality of opportunity in education and learning. In addition to Access to Fair Assessment we operate a policy on reasonable adjustments and special considerations.

A reasonable adjustment in the context of assessment is an adjustment that helps to reduce the effect of a disability or difficulty that places a learner at a substantial disadvantage in the assessment situation.

Special consideration in the context of assessment is where consideration is given to circumstances that occur just prior to or during assessment that place the learner at a disadvantage.

This policy sets out the procedures that staff and learners should follow when implementing reasonable adjustments and special considerations.

### Reasonable adjustment

Reasonable adjustments are intended to help reduce the effect of a disability or difficulty but must not affect the validity or reliability of the assessment outcomes or give a learner an unfair advantage.

An adjustment may involve

- changing usual assessment arrangements
- adapting assessment materials
- providing assistance during assessment
- re-organising the assessment physical environment
- changing or adapting the assessment method
- using assistive technology.

The work produced following a reasonable adjustment must be assessed in the same way as the work from other learners.

Not all adjustments described below will be reasonable, permissible or practical in particular situations. The learner may not need, nor be allowed the same adjustment for all assessments.

Examples of reasonable adjustments:

- Allowing extra time, e.g. assignment extensions
- Using a different assessment location
- Use of coloured overlays, low vision aids, CCTV
- Use of assistive software
- Assessment material in large format or Braille
- Readers/scribes
- Practical assistants/transcribers/promoters
- Assessment material on coloured paper or in audio format
- Language-modified assessment material
- British Sign Language (BSL)
- Use of ICT/responses using electronic devices

## **Applying reasonable adjustment**

In the first instance reasonable adjustments must be agreed by the Assessor and Internal Verifier prior to assessment commencing.

Requests for reasonable adjustments will comply with Awarding Organisation terms and conditions and applications for reasonable adjustments made according to the Awarding Organisation's procedures.

A learner does not have to be disabled (as defined by the DDA) to qualify for reasonable adjustment; nor will every learner who is disabled be entitled to reasonable adjustment. Allowing reasonable adjustment is dependent upon how it will facilitate access for the learner. A reasonable adjustment is intended to allow access to assessment but can only be granted where the adjustment does not:

- affect the validity or reliability of the assessment
- give the learner(s) in question an unfair advantage over other learners taking the same or similar assessment
- influence the final outcome of the assessment decision.

All reasonable adjustments will be transparent and unbiased, recorded on relevant documentation and will be kept on record.

## **Special consideration**

A special consideration is consideration given to a learner who was prepared for and present for assessment but who may have been disadvantaged by temporary illness, injury or adverse circumstances that have arisen at or near the time of assessment.

A special consideration cannot give a learner an unfair advantage but can be considered when their performance may be affected by circumstances beyond their control. Examples of circumstances may be:

- recent personal illness
- accident
- bereavement
- serious disturbance during the assessment
- the alternative assessment arrangements which were agreed in advance of the assessment proved inappropriate or inadequate
- any part of an assessment has been missed due to circumstances beyond the control of the learner.

St Joseph's College will submit a written Special Consideration request to the Awarding Organisation. All applications for special consideration can only be made on a case-by-case basis and thus separate applications must be made for each learner.

Learners may apply for special consideration during or after an assessment but may not apply for special consideration in the case of a permanent disability or learning difficulty. The size of the adjustment will depend on the circumstances during the assessment and will reflect the difficulty faced by the learner.

Requests for special consideration will comply with Awarding Organisation terms and conditions and applications for special consideration made according to the Awarding Organisation's procedures.