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INTRODUCTION

Thank you for choosing Vocational Learning towards your journey to achieve your qualification. We would like you to first fully understand the terms of our working relationship. We hope you will enjoy your learning and shortly achieve your qualification. We guarantee that you will achieve your qualification as long as you meet all course requirements.

Please read through this handbook before starting your course. If you have any questions or feedback about anything contained in this handbook, please do not hesitate to contact us. You will be referred as a ‘candidate’ throughout this handbook.

This handbook aims to inform you about Vocational Learning, assessment framework, processes and your rights as a candidate. The handbook will also act as your companion linking the methodology of Vocational Learning and awarding body regulations. Your individual needs will also be added to this mix in our pursuit of achieving a conducive learning environment. This is a general handbook for all qualifications offered by Vocational Learning. Some information contained in this handbook might not be relevant to your particular course especially if the assessment process is purely by written or online tests.

About Us

Vocational Learning provides training at our own premises, other locations throughout the UK and globally. We provide training on a one to one basis, in small and large groups. Some of our training is provided online and by distance learning, using various blended learning techniques and technology. We only deliver level 3 and above vocational qualifications accredited by Ofqual regulated awarding bodies.

What are Vocational Qualifications?

Vocational Qualifications differ from academic qualifications mainly in the following ways:
Candidates are principally assessed on their ability to do the job, rather than by means of examinations.

Assessment is via a portfolio of evidence.

A holistic overview and a range of assessment methods can be used.

They take account of previous experience.

Assessment is undertaken, where possible, in the work environment.

Credits can be achieved for each completed unit.

Vocational Qualifications are based on the Regulated Credit Framework (RQF).

Resources and Responsibilities

All candidates on enrolment will be set up on our online portal (Access) where you can access resources, coursework, support and further information. You will be expected to view the announcements published under the Forums. Our internal moderation dates, support sessions, web conferences and workshop dates will be published under Events.

It is your responsibility to be committed and actively participate in course activities. This includes being proactive, working hard, completing coursework, submitting evidence of your competence and following our standardised procedures. Our responsibility is to support you and make available opportunities to aid your learning.

Centre Staff

Our assessment team are occupationally competent and have experience in all sectors we deliver. This is of great benefit to our trainees as we are able to incorporate real life experiences throughout our courses. We know the dilemmas of working in the sectors and can relate to the challenges of being candidates as we have also been there! Vocational Learning is passionately committed to the principle of making high quality professional development opportunities available to all members of staff to enhance knowledge and professional practice.

Standards and Quality Control

Vocational Learning is committed to ensuring high standards throughout our courses. We abide by awarding body and sector regulations to deliver our courses.
training. We are committed to improving the quality and educational experience for all our trainees and encourage continuous professional development based on evidence based practice ethos.

**Equality and Diversity**

We are committed to provide an equal opportunities environment and promote inclusion. We appreciate equality and diversity and are proud of our flexible approach that aims to meet the needs of candidates and maximise their potential. Our values as a training provider include respect, accessibility, confidentiality, competence and integrity. We do not just say or write about our policies, we implement and practice them! More information about our equality policy is located towards the end of this handbook.

**Centre Contact Details**

The main office for Vocational Learning is located at Fitzgerald House. The full address and contact details are:

**Vocational Learning**
Fitzgerald House
Sutherland Road
Stoke On Trent
ST3 1HH
Tel: 0800 612 8895
Email: support@vocationallearning.co.uk

**Opening Hours**

Our opening hours are 10am till 4pm (Monday to Friday). We do not open during bank holidays and weekends. We are however open on some Saturdays when there are scheduled workshops or support sessions. Please note, due to the nature of our business (training offsite obligations etc.) the assessment team is not always at Fitzgerald House. Even when the office is open we may not be able to see you without an appointment due to issues such as health, security and safety concerns. Our staff could also be engaged in confidential activities such as scheduled meetings, workshops, assessments or moderation. Visits and appointments therefore require written prior arrangement of at least 24 working hours.
**Course Dedicated Days**

We operate a dedicated day for all our courses. Assessors normally carry out assessments and other course activities on this particular day. Dedicated days are particularly important for candidates on our blended learning courses. Tutorials should normally take place on the course dedicated day.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day of the Week</th>
<th>Course</th>
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| Monday          | Level 3 Certificate in Advice and Guidance  
                  Level 4 Diploma NVQ in Advice and Guidance  
                  Level 4 Certificate NVQ in Learning and Development  
                  Level 5 Diploma NVQ in Learning and Development |
| Tuesday         | Level 3 Award in Education and Training  
                  All Level 3 Specialist Teaching Awards  
                  Level 4 Certificate in Education and Training  
                  Level 5 Diploma in Education and Training  
                  All Level 5 Speciality Teaching Diploma's. |
| Wednesday       | Level 3 Award in Understanding the Principles and Practices of Assessment  
                  Level 3 Award in assessing vocationally related achievement  
                  Level 3 Award in assessing competence in the work environment  
                  Level 3 Certificate in assessing vocational achievement |
| Thursday        | Level 4 Award in Understanding the Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice  
                  Level 4 Award in Understanding the External Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice  
                  Level 4 Award in the internal quality assurance of assessment processes and practice  
                  Level 4 Certificate in Leading the Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and practice  
                  Level 3 Award in Health and Safety in the workplace |
| Friday          | Level 3 Diploma in Adult Care  
                  Level 3 Diploma for the Children's and Young People's Workforce  
                  Level 5 Diploma in Adult Care |
Getting Started

When we receive your booking and payment we allocate an assessor and create an account for you on our learning management portal (Access). The same email that contain your access details will also contain the name of your assessor and how to establish contact. You will be expected to complete our online basic assessment form (This form has replaced our IGP document ). The basic assessment form allows us to capture and process information that is required to register you with the awarding body. Some of the information will be used as part of your initial assessment.

You will need to read the information located under ‘Getting Started’ to have an idea of the course ground rules, delivery and assessments.

You are expected to participate in an induction session either face to face or by web conference. Dates and times are published under the “Events”. You are responsible for booking yourself on any of the induction sessions. Please liaise with your assessor if the dates available are not convenient or you require further information or a mini-induction.

Evidence of Learning

Our courses are not just about completing course work. In order to gain an RQF qualification you have to demonstrate learning by meeting all learning outcomes. This is a critical issue which needs to be addressed in order to avoid problems at moderation. You risk not being signed off if there are concerns regarding your conduct on the course. You can be asked to submit your Guided Learning Log at anytime.

It is our policy to withhold assessments and feedback if there are concerns regarding your course participation. The hold can be lifted only when you start to address this essential condition of your enrolment.

Online Forums

You will need to ensure you introduce yourself on the forums. Forums are an essential part of your course as they are the primary source of support and compliment the assessment and moderation process. They are also part of embedding a number of minimum core skills. They are also used to enable you to meet course Guided learning Hours, gain peer support and document
your learning journey. All your forum entries are dated and recorded. You will need to demonstrate learning over a period of time not just at the end of the course. We also publish our announcements under the forums section.

**Weekly Reflective or Learning Log**
Candidates enrolled on courses with more than 12 weeks duration are required to complete a weekly reflective journal or Learning Log using the appropriate forms that can be downloaded on Access. The forms have to be submitted on a Monday by 4pm. The forms can also be used by candidates who do not wish to participate on the online forums.

**Observation Request**
When you require an observation in the workplace it is your responsibility to book one by completing the relevant observation request form published on Access. No observation will be planned without completing and submitting your form.

**Unique Candidate Numbers**

A Unique Candidate Number (ULN) is a 10-digit reference number, which is used alongside the Personal Learning Record (PLN) of anyone over the age of 14 involved in UK education or training. Candidates will retain the same number throughout their lives, whatever their level of learning and wherever they choose to participate in education, training and learning.

Vocational Learning will ask you for your Unique Candidate Number when you complete your IGP document. You can find your ULN on award certificates or results slips. If you cannot find it ask your current or previous learning provider to collect it from the Candidate Records Service or to create a ULN for you.

If you do not have one, we can apply for one from the Learning Records Service as long as you have given us permission to do so.

You can find out more about ULN’s and PLR’s from [https://idp.lrs.education.gov.uk/](https://idp.lrs.education.gov.uk/)
Meeting your needs – Assessment and Support Structure

Aims and Objectives

The aim of our training is to give you:

• The skills you need to develop a lifelong career
• Training, support and guidance to help you achieve a qualification in your chosen field
• The confidence to achieve your personal goals and aspirations

Your training course is designed to meet your individual needs and is based on the assessments and interviews carried out with you before and during your Induction. If you have any queries or concerns about your training please contact your assessor or the office.

Support

You do not need to feel alone! Please use the Communication and Assessment Centre to correspond with your assessor. You will need to open a new discussion or add a comment to an existing issue. Assessors normally respond within 72 working hours. It might take longer if you require support from an assessor, as they might only be available during the next course dedicated day depending on the complicity. Please refer to page 7 to find out your course dedicated day. Support requests that require assessment feedback will be responded to in line with the feedback timescales of your course. You can find out about your course time scales on Access.

All enquiries regarding payments, extensions, IT and general staff will need to be addressed by our Centre Support team. In order to contact our team, you need to send an email to (support@vocationallearning.co.uk). It can take up to 72 working hours to respond to your support request.

You are welcome to phone our office on 0800 612 8895 during our office hours. If you require course work support you need to follow the procedures outlined below.
Support from Assessors

Tutorial Support

Assessors require an appointment to be agreed at least 72 working hours prior. Do not be offended if assessment support cannot be provided without an appointment. We operate a course dedicated day system. Your assessor might not be available if there is no agreed appointment.

Please note that at times your assessor might also be in the office as the tutor on duty or carrying out other designated duties. They might also be on call, teaching, supporting other candidates, assessing, taking part in moderation and other admin tasks. Due to these commitments they may not be able to divert from their duty when an appointment has not been agreed!

You will need to arrange an appointment by using our Appointments system on Access. You can also manually do so by opening a new discussion on the Communication and Assessment Centre by providing at least three or more dates and times you are free. Your assessor will attempt to match one of the times.

We require a record of all our support sessions. Your assessor will provide you details you can use for the tutorial.

Individual Learning Plans (ILPs)

To make sure that your training course meets all your needs and expectations we ask you to complete some assessment questionnaires and/or exercises. Once you have finished them, we will discuss your results with you and agree on the training you need. All of this information will be written on your ILP.
Your ILP includes details about your short and long-term goals, which might include career aspirations. Your assessor will also generate a holistic assessment plan as part of your ILP. This will detail the training you will be receiving, the qualification you will be working towards with target completion dates and details of any additional support you will receive.

Flexible Working

We work with you within reason to be flexible as possible. All candidates will be required to follow their holistic assessment plan. You are required to actively get involved in the assessment planning process in order for your assessor to fully understand your needs and tailor your training.

Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)

You will receive information, advice and guidance before you start your qualification to ensure that you are choosing the right qualification for your needs and to advise you of short, medium and long-term options and opportunities available to you. You will be allocated your own assessor who will explain how you are going to achieve your qualification in more detail. Some of you will also attend workshops to help you to complete your qualification. This will be discussed with you during the development of your individual learning plan. IAG will be provided to you on an ongoing basis throughout and at the end of your training.

Progress Reviews

Whilst you are on your training programme you will receive regular progress reviews as long as you are active. The aim of these reviews is to give us an opportunity to discuss your progress and to ensure that you are still on target to meet the objectives you agreed as part of your Individual Learning Plan (ILP).

The reviews will be carried out by your assessor and will involve your employer or any other relevant people if appropriate.
Additional Support

We want you to be successful on your training course and will give you as much additional support as we can to help you succeed. Examples of the support we can give you includes:

- Information about and referral to a wide variety of counselling and support services such as the Citizens Advice Bureaux, Drug and Alcohol Advice, Pregnancy Advice
- Help with English and Maths including language support if English is not your first language
- Access to additional training courses and qualifications, which will count towards your continual professional development (CPD).

In addition, if you have any personal problems we can arrange counselling and assistance in sorting out practical problems. If you would like to talk to somebody then speak to your Assessor at the first instance.

Sickness and Absence

We understand that from time to time people are sick and are unable to attend pre-booked appointments or training sessions. If this occurs you must let us know as soon as possible.

Your Opinion Counts

Your opinion is important to us. We will ask you what you think about your training at various times during your training. Please be honest, as we cannot make things better if we do not know what is wrong. Please feel free to give anonymous feedback if you prefer.
Exit and Aftercare

Your expected completion date will be established after your induction with your assessor. It will be published on your holistic assessment plan. You can complete early as long as all course requirements are met. You can also apply for an extension if you fail to complete within your normal course duration.

If you decide to leave your course before your expected completion date for any reason then please don’t just disappear, let us know, so that we can make sure that you are given the correct information, advice and guidance as to what options are available to you.

Once you have finished your training, we will ask you to complete an exit interview. If you need any additional assistance either before leaving or after you have left then do not hesitate to ask. Anyone who has been on any of our courses is entitled to a written reference.

The Assessment Process

Assessment of the candidate will take place in a number of ways using a range of methods to assess, which includes workbooks, assignments, questioning, observation, professional discussions, reflective accounts and accredited prior learning (APL). Assessment decisions will be based on the assessment criteria. Assessments can also be withheld as already highlighted if there are concerns regarding your course participation.

Evidence for your course

To be awarded your vocational qualification, you need to gather evidence. Candidates are required to compile a portfolio of evidence, which needs to be submitted for assessment at the end of your course. All your evidence will be expected to meet all the assessment criteria. The nature of the evidence required is a matter for negotiation and agreement between the candidate, tutor or assessor. The evidence may be drawn from a number of sources including:

- Witness statements
- Observations
• Product evidence
• Oral/Written questions and answers
• Evaluation reports
• Forum entries
• Learning logs
• Reflective Accounts or journals
• Worksheets/workbooks/assignments
• Witness statements
• Recorded evidence (video or audio)*
• Photographic evidence*
• Case studies
• Simulation (if stated as being acceptable)
• Role plays
• Presentations
• Group work
• Classroom activities
• Interview/discussion

* NB if you are using taped or photographic evidence with other people, you will need their permission. It is important to remember that evidence must be explicit and clearly demonstrate how you met the assessment criteria. Consequently evidence such as photos, posters, and questionnaires will need further explanation. You should ensure you do not breach confidentiality and any other applicable regulations and legislation. We do not want to see personal details of other people including organisational secrets.

**Quality of your Evidence**

You need to ensure that your work reflects the Level Descriptors as highlighted on page 19. You also need to ensure your evidence meets the following criteria:

• Relevancy
• Sufficiency
• Authenticity
• Confidentiality
• Currency
• Plagiarism
• Harvard Referencing
Apart from the evidence that you are asked to produce to give details of the organisation that you work for and the people you work with, each piece of evidence must be relevant to the assessment criteria. If you are unable to explain why a piece of evidence is relevant to the assessment criteria then that piece should not be included.

Relevancy

Your evidence has to be related to the assessment criteria. You cannot provide evidence that does not reflect how you have fully met the assessment criteria.

Sufficiency

Candidates often overwhelm their assessor with large amounts of evidence. This only serves to confuse the assessor who prefers clear, concise examples, which specifically demonstrates the candidate's competence. It is important to avoid duplicating evidence, which meet the same performance criteria or range unless directed to do so by the assessment brief. When a piece of written evidence is long and bulky, a summary of it should be included or the key points identified and highlighted.

Authenticity

Your assessor will need to be satisfied that the evidence you present is actually your work. Wherever possible, you should submit evidence that can be readily attributed to you e.g. a certificate with your name on, minutes of meetings where your competence is mentioned, letters you have signed, official records bearing your name etc.

Witness testimony can also be used to authenticate specific pieces of evidence and can also be used to authenticate personal reports.

Confidentiality

You should always check your evidence to ensure that it is not confidential. Some documents may be submitted with confidential information blanked out provided that the documents are still relevant. Where evidence cannot be
included because it is of a confidential nature, a witness testimony can be used to testify that the evidence was produced and demonstrated competence.

**Currency**

It is advisable to submit recent evidence wherever possible. All evidence should be dated and reflect current practice, regulations and legislation.

**Plagiarism and Collusion**

You are reminded that all work you submit should not be plagiarised. You will need to acknowledge all sources you use. Not acknowledging sources is cheating or fraud. Vocational Learning has a zero tolerance with candidates caught colluding or plagiarising at least three times.

**Harvard Referencing**

Harvard Referencing should be used for all qualifications from Level 4. Where references are used within the body of your work, please include a reference list at the end of your assignment.

**Improving your work**

You should follow our requirements of how to present your work, which includes using the Coursework presented. Some courses also require you to complete a planner prior to completing your assignment.

You are expected to copy the assignment, question or task from Access. Paste on the Coursework template before your response. Please use the Ariel font, size 12 and 1.5 spacing.

The assessment process involves checking if your response fully addresses the assessment criteria. You should ensure you include any keywords that have been used in the assignment brief. If an evaluation is required, you will only be signed off when one has been provided. If you are expected to demonstrate several ways, you will not be signed off if only one has been provided.
If the question is made up of multiple questions please ensure you respond to all questions. Please do not use any sub-headings. Do not assume that the reader will make links to what you are writing about and the assessment criteria. It is your responsibility to make your work clear. You should never assume the reader knows what you are writing.

All tables, images and graphs should be submitted as part of an appendix. Please do not list or use bullet points unless requested to do so.

During the assessment process the reader will be checking your knowledge and understanding. Please use as many examples as possible and make links to your specialist area to demonstrate the depth of your knowledge and understanding. Where practice requires being evidenced please identify dates and times of the activities you are discussing.

**Feedback**

Feedback will be provided inline with the timescales published on your course. Assessors will attempt to provide feedback as soon as possible. Where the assessor believes that written feedback will take a bit long to provide, they might decide to give you verbal feedback in the interim.

Timescales do not apply when you have failed to follow guidelines and procedures such as submitting a planner prior to completing any coursework. They also do not apply when you have submitted more coursework than expected. Normally candidates completing medium to long courses are not allowed to complete more than two assignments per month without the permission of the assessor. Feedback can also be withheld as already highlighted if there are concerns regarding your course participation.

In line with our policies there are times when the assessor can withhold feedback until a feedback session has taken place. This is to explain the findings of the assessor and discuss developmental points. It is your responsibility to provide dates and times when you are free for this session.

You are free to appeal against any assessment decision. Please refer to our appeals policy located at the end of this guide.
## Level Descriptors

### Level 3 - level descriptor

**Summary**

Achievement at Level 3 reflects the ability to identify and use relevant understanding, methods and skills to complete tasks and address problems that, while well defined, have a measure of complexity.

It includes taking responsibility for initiating and completing tasks and procedures as well as exercising autonomy and judgement within limited parameters.

It also reflects awareness of different perspectives or approaches within an area of study or work.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Knowledge and Understanding</th>
<th>Application and Action</th>
<th>Autonomy and Accountability</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use factual, procedural and theoretical understanding to complete tasks and address problems that, while well defined, may be complex and non-routine. Interpret and evaluate relevant information and ideas. Be aware of the nature of the area of study or work. Have awareness of different perspectives or approaches within the area of study of work.</td>
<td>Address problems that, while well defined, may be complex and non routine. Identify, select and use appropriate skills, methods and procedures. Use appropriate investigation to inform actions. Review how effective methods and chosen actions have been.</td>
<td>Take responsibility for initiating and completing tasks and procedures, including, where relevant, responsibility of supervising or guiding others. Exercise autonomy and judgement within limited parameters.</td>
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**By the end of the course, candidates will be able to demonstrate:**

- Awareness of the relationship between theory and practice
- Awareness of key concepts and principles in their area of study
- Application of knowledge and understanding of key concepts and principles to personal and professional practice
- Evidence of reading
- Development of academic writing skills
- Clear expression of ideas and arguments
- Awareness of the Harvard bibliographical referencing system
- Effective communication of information and arguments to a range of audiences
- Accurate use of grammar, punctuation and spelling
- Evidence of commitment to working within a professional value base
## Level 4 - Level Descriptor

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Summary</th>
<th>Knowledge and Understanding</th>
<th>Application and Action</th>
<th>Autonomy and Accountability</th>
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<tr>
<td>Achievement at Level 4 reflects the ability to identify and use relevant understanding, methods and skills to address problems that are well defined but complex and non-routine. It includes taking responsibility for overall courses of action as well as exercising autonomy and judgement within fairly broad parameters. It also reflects understanding of different perspectives or approaches within an area of study or work.</td>
<td>Use practical, theoretical or technical understanding to address problems that are well defined but complex and non-routine. Analyse, interpret and evaluate relevant information and ideas. Be aware of the nature and approximate scope of the area of study or work. Have an informed awareness of different perspectives or approaches within the area of study of work.</td>
<td>Address problems that are complex and non-routine while normally fairly well defined. Identify, adapt and use appropriate methods and skills. Initiate and use appropriate investigation to inform actions. Review the effectiveness and appropriateness of methods, actions and results.</td>
<td>Take responsibility for courses of action, including, where relevant, responsibility for the work of others. Exercise autonomy and judgement within broad but generally well-defined parameters.</td>
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### By the end of the course, candidates will be able to demonstrate:

- The relationship between theory and practice
- Evaluation of key concepts and principles in their area of study
- Application of their knowledge and understanding of key concepts and principles to personal and professional practice
- Evidence of reading and research
- Concise, precise academic writing showing evidence of planning
- Clear formulation of ideas and arguments
- Utilisation of the Harvard bibliographical referencing system
- Effective communication of information and arguments to a range of audiences
- Accurate use of grammar, punctuation and spelling
- Analysis of and reflection on concepts and evidence to support a particular point of view
- Evidence of commitment to working within a professional value base
**Level 5 - level descriptor**

<table>
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<th>Summary</th>
<th>Knowledge and Understanding</th>
<th>Application and Action</th>
<th>Autonomy and Accountability</th>
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<tr>
<td>Achievement at Level 5 reflects the ability to identify and use relevant understanding, methods and skills to address broadly-defined complex problems. It includes taking responsibility for planning and developing courses of action as well as exercising autonomy and judgement within broad parameters. It also reflects understanding of different perspectives, approaches or schools of thought and the reasoning behind them.</td>
<td>Use practical, theoretical or technical understanding to find ways forward in broadly defined, complex contexts. Analyse, interpret and evaluate relevant information and ideas. Be aware of the nature and scope of the area of study or work. Understand different perspectives or approaches or schools of</td>
<td>Address broadly-defined, complex problems. Determine, adapt and use appropriate methods and skills. Use relevant research or development to inform actions. Evaluate actions, methods and results.</td>
<td>Take responsibility for planning and developing courses of action, including, where relevant, responsibility for the work of others. Exercise autonomy and judgement within broad parameters.</td>
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**By the end of the course, candidates will be able to demonstrate:**

- A critical reflection of the relationship between theory and practice
- Critical evaluation of key concepts and principles in their area of study
- Critical application of their knowledge and understanding of key concepts and principles to personal and professional practice
- Evidence of detailed research and reading, including professional publications
- Concise, precise academic writing showing evidence of detailed planning
- Clear analysis and development of ideas and arguments
- Utilisation of the Harvard bibliographical referencing system
- Effective communication of information and arguments to a range of audiences
- Accurate use of grammar, punctuation and spelling
- Critical analysis of and critical reflection on concepts and evidence to support a particular point of view
- Accurate use of numerical calculations and interpretation of data
- Use of Information and Communication Technology
- Evidence of commitment to working within a professional value base
Portfolio Building

Candidates are responsible for compiling their portfolio of evidence. You will need to use the ‘Portfolios Index and feedback reports, progress indicator (when available) and other resources provided to complete your evidence records sheets. Your portfolio will need to contain evidence of how you have met all learning outcomes and assessment criteria.

When building the portfolio and gathering evidence, you should concentrate on the quality of the evidence you are including, not the quantity. There has been a tendency in the past for portfolios to be large. This is not necessary. If you are building a large portfolio you are probably producing more evidence than is required, and may find that some of it is not relevant. It is sufficient for assessors to see evidence and note where it is kept. It does not always need to be photocopied for the portfolio. Evidence should be kept where it naturally occurs.

Generally speaking when there is large amount of evidence, it is likely that while some of the evidence will be relevant, much of it is likely not to be relevant. Producing too much evidence will mean you are doing too much work and, you will be making too much work for your tutor or assessor. Tutors and assessors are interested in quality not quantity, and would expect to see only examples of evidence in the ideal portfolio. Some evidence will prove competence in more than one assessment criteria.

When you have compiled a portfolio and all of the required units have been completed and the assessor is satisfied that you have fully met the assessment criteria your portfolio is passed on for moderation. Certification will be requested if the Internal Moderator agrees with the assessor. Your portfolio will need to be passed to the external moderator if we do not currently have Direct Claim Status for your course. Certificates normally arrive within 14 days after internal or external moderation. They will be posted to you by first class recorded mail to the address we have on file. Please ensure this is up to date.
Candidate Charter - Roles and Responsibilities

As your learning and development partner we promise to:

• respect you and maintain your confidentiality
• provide an enjoyable and stimulating learning experience.
• ensure our assessors are qualified and competent in their subject.
• provide appropriate resources and make specialist support available when needed.
• facilitate a healthy and safe learning environment.
• give honest information about us, your training/support and how it will be organised.
• listen to, and act upon, your comments and suggestions.
• provide equality of opportunity in all aspects of your learning experience.
• signpost or offer advice regarding other learning opportunities.
• protect the integrity of the qualifications we deliver.
• ensure you evidence your learning journey (This might involve putting your assessments and feedback on hold if you do not satisfactorily participate in course activities).
• work with other stakeholders when there are potential breaches such as plagiarism
• embed minimum core skills
• make available to you opportunities to appeal assessment decisions.
• make available to you procedures to address grievances.
• promote wider skills.

In return, we expect you, as a the candidate to:

• remain working within our terms and conditions, policies and procedures.
• remember you have not enrolled to buy a qualification but to earn one.
• strive to complete within your course duration.
• be professional, not to be rude, harass or distress our staff.
• not to plagiarise or collude (All sources should be acknowledged).
• follow our standardisation procedures.
• complete all forms and actively participate in an induction.
• attend and participate in course activities.
• arrive in good time for the start of the session.
• use the facilities effectively and responsibly.
• enjoy learning to the best of your ability and meet set deadlines.
• ask for help and support if you need it.
• update your weekly reflective journal or learning logs.
• inform your assessor regarding any issues that may affect progress.
• provide information about your work place.
• plan and facilitate work based observations.
• take responsibility and ownership of your own work and learning.
• you are responsible for compiling your portfolio of evidence and completing evidence records sheets.
• ensure you login on Access for the latest course updates and course work (You are expected to login at least twice a week).
• not to jeopardise our reputation and participate in libellous activities.
• respect other people and their property and ours.
• help keep the learning environment healthy, safe and friendly.
• provide feedback, comments and suggestions to us.
• notify any absences to your tutor or assessor.
• notify us in good time of any change to agreed arrangements.
• submit your coursework and portfolio at the agreed time.
• to conduct your self in a reasonable manner which includes following the guidance of your assessor and quality assurance staff.
• embrace the principles of assessment and quality assurance.
• respond to your assessor request to get in touch within the timescales given.
• produce quality work, which reflects the level descriptors.
• full participation in the planning, assessment and learning process.
• follow your holistic assessment plan and address any action points raised by your assessor.
• Keep a log of your guided learning hours and teaching hours (if applicable).
• meet the terms of your employer or funding body (if applicable).
• ensure your payments are up to date.

You are entitled to raise a complaint if you feel we have fallen short of our responsibilities under our Candidate Charter. Where the candidate has breached their obligations we are entitled to instigate our disciplinary procedures.
Extenuating Circumstances

1. Introduction
Candidates are welcome to access our extenuating procedure if they believe that their performance was affected by circumstances beyond their control. It might be that you have been unable to submit work by a deadline date or attend a micro-teach, presentation or any assessed activity. It might be that the circumstances have meant that the work you have completed has not been to your usual standard and so you have underperformed in the assessment task. You should submit the 'extenuating circumstances form' no later than the deadline date for coursework assessment. If extenuating circumstances are submitted outside these specified timescales, the Extenuating Circumstances may not be considered, unless at the same time you give a valid and acceptable reason for submitting the form late. You are also advised to keep your tutor(s) informed of your extenuating circumstances and ask them to provide a supporting statement on your application if relevant and appropriate.

Please note; all candidates have a responsibility to manage their learning, revision and assessment activities. It is therefore essential that you carefully plan and manage workloads throughout this time, and do not leave too much coursework, learning, revision or similar activities to be undertaken until too late in the assessment period.

It is also essential to recognise that illnesses and difficult or distressing life events do occur, and that it is a normal part of life to have to manage these and continue with work or study. Such difficulties are not normally accepted in mitigation for a candidate's poor performance in assessment activities, and will only very exceptionally be accepted as extenuating circumstances. All candidates are expected to conduct their work and study with maturity and diligence, and to cope with the type of difficult and distressing events, which unfortunately do occur in life. It is extremely unlikely therefore that the Vocational Learning would accept documentary evidence of such events (e.g. employment-related difficulties, domestic, personal or financial difficulties) as extenuating circumstances. In addition, candidates should try to avoid situations, which might otherwise lead to extenuating circumstances notifications, and should try to limit adverse effects on course performance.
2. What are "Extenuating Circumstances"?

"Extenuating Circumstances" refer to those things which cause exceptional interference with performance during the course and which are of a very serious nature which is over and above the normal difficulties that happen in life, and which could not be avoided or prevented, or their effect on performance could not be mitigated.

Extenuating circumstances should be capable of being verified by independent documentary evidence, and their timing should link to the timing of assessments. Even if exceptionally difficult, distressing or unpleasant events have happened, these are not in themselves extenuating circumstances. There must also be evidence and a demonstrable adverse effect on academic performance.

If extenuating circumstances are formally notified in the way described below, Vocational Learning will consider the information and evidence you provide, and any other relevant information such as dates of assessments, and will make a decision about whether or not extenuating circumstances might have adversely affected your performance.

3. What are not "Extenuating Circumstances"?

Some examples of situations which could have been avoided, or in which a candidate could have acted to limit the impact of the circumstances are:

- completing and submitting coursework too late and missing deadlines
- losing coursework not backed up on disk
- normal work commitments reducing time available for study or coursework
- a minor ailment such as a cold, or a domestic upset
- a long-standing condition, such as susceptibility to hay fever
- misreading the examination timetable
- over sleeping / alarm clock not going off causing you to be late for or miss an exam or assessment
- holidays or travel

Situations which are sad, unpleasant, difficult or distressing but which do occur in life are unlikely to be considered as acceptable extenuating circumstances.
4. Documentary evidence

If you notify extenuating circumstances you must provide independent documentary evidence to support the circumstances you describe. Examples of extenuating circumstances:

- Illness: letter or certificate from GP or hospital, hospital appointment cards (showing name/dates), prescription or medicine labelling (showing name/dates); approved counsellor
- Theft or burglary: crime report and number
- Exceptional work commitments: letter from employer
- Unforeseen transport difficulties: which could not have been avoided: letter from transport company, detailed travel tickets or similar documents
- Criminal investigation or proceedings, litigation, other legal matters: solicitor’s letter; court documents
- Personal or domestic problems: letter from someone who has direct knowledge of the problems and / or has been involved in supporting you (e.g., pastor/minister, employer)
- Bereavement: death certificates; supporting evidence of effect of bereavement from parent/guardian, doctor or counsellor

5. Submission of Independent Evidence

Independent evidence to support your extenuating circumstances must normally be submitted with the ‘Extenuating Circumstances Form’. This would normally be an original (not photocopy) document written and signed by an appropriate third party, giving details of the circumstance, its dates and/or duration, and, where possible, its impact. An appropriate third party would be one who knows you in a professional capacity or one who can verify the circumstance from a position of authority (e.g. police officer, solicitor, GP) and who is in a position to provide objective and impartial evidence. Letters from family members, fellow candidates or personal tutors are not normally acceptable.

Medical certificates

Vocational Learning does not normally consider medical certificates for long-standing controlled conditions, or self-limiting illness, as mitigation for poor performance. This is because you would normally have had the benefit of experience, medical knowledge or help to control the condition; and support from the course team from the beginning of your studies.
Exceptionally however, there may be a need for candidates to submit evidence of extenuating circumstances, if suffering a temporary serious incapacitating medical condition that may have directly affected the ability to attend or complete an assessment, or to perform to the full extent of their ability. If you consider you are in the above category, then any medical certificates/notes to support your extenuating circumstances must:

- relate specifically to the dates and duration of the illness
- contain a clear medical diagnosis or opinion and not merely report your claim that you felt unwell, nor report your claim that you had reason to believe you were ill. It may therefore be difficult for you to obtain a medical certificate if you request one from a doctor after your illness is over.

But please note that:

- doctors are entitled to charge for any medical certificates or notes they provide
- doctors do not always provide certificates for short periods of illness
- doctors might not provide certificates after illness has ended, because after you have recovered it might be impossible to know that you had been ill.

6. Timescale of extenuating circumstances

If you wish to notify extenuating circumstances, you must show that their timing was such that it might have adversely affected your assessment, and have evidence of the timing. An example of this is if you had an accident shortly before a coursework deadline and had to attend hospital for treatment and could not submit work by the deadline.

If you believe that you have extenuating circumstances adversely affecting a range of assessments, or if there are non-academic reasons, which you think will adversely affect your performance over a longer period, please raise this with your allocated assessor.

Appeals Procedure

You can appeal against any assessment decision within 21 days when you first receive your feedback. You will be expected to explain the basis of your disagreement to the assessor as soon as possible. The assessor will respond to your query and provide an explanation, which might be based on the
assessment criteria and standardised procedures. This stage of the appeal is regarded as the informal negotiation stage.

If the disagreement has not been resolved, the Appeals Procedure shown below should be invoked. No further assessment should take place while the appeals procedure has been fully invoked!

Records of all formal appeals will be recorded and will be made available to our regulators.

Candidates can appeal against the following:

- The assessment plan – the candidate can appeal if they do not agree with the suggested methods, location, time and criteria
- The assessment – the candidate has the right to appeal if they feel that the assessment differed from what was agreed on the assessment plan or they feel that they did not receive a fair assessment.
- The assessment was inconsistently or not in accordance with the specification for the qualification.
- If the Candidate is dissatisfied with the re-assessment opportunities offered
- If the Candidate’s assessment performance has been affected by ill health. In this case, the appeal must be supported by a medical certificate. Please refer to our extenuating policy.
- The assessment decision – the candidate can appeal if they feel the assessor’s judgment was unfair.
- If the Candidate is dissatisfied with the time allowed for the assessment

**Formal Appeals Procedure (Stage 2)**

If, after the informal discussion with the assessor, the candidate wishes to make a formal appeal, the candidate must complete our appeals form, which is available on Access. This form will be passed over to the Internal Moderator. Your completed appeals form must be submitted within 5 working days after the informal stage with your assessor had been completed. The Internal moderator on receipt of the formal appeal from the candidate will
• Try to seek a solution negotiated between the relevant assessor and candidate

• They may express their opinion about the merits of the complaint.

• Make a quality assurance decision such as asking for further learning or assessment opportunities to be observed.

• If it is not possible to reach an agreement then a date will be set for an Appeals Panel to meet within 28 days. The Appeals Panel will consist of a minimum of two qualified assessors not involved in the original decision.

The outcome of the appeal may be as follows:

• Confirmation of the original decision

• A re-assessment by an independent assessor

• One of the assessor should be an internal moderator

• A judgment that adequate evidence meeting the assessment criteria has been shown;

• An opportunity to re-submit for assessment within a revised agreed timescale.

• The written decision of the Appeals Panel will be issued to the candidate within five working days after the meeting. The Panels findings will be copied to the Centre Manager and recorded for awarding body inspection.

If the candidate is still not satisfied with the decision at this stage and this procedure has been exhausted, then the candidate can contact the awarding body they are registered with. The awarding body should only be contacted when this procedure is FULLY exhausted. Please note, the awarding body will request you to do so even if you try to bypass our procedures!

**Grievance (Complaints) Procedures**

The procedures are designed to address genuine complaints ensure fairness and to protect the interests of candidates and programme staff. We take complaints seriously and encourage candidates to let us know when they seek re-address on any grievance.
Candidates who feel that our services have disadvantaged or discriminated against them personally or professionally may use the Grievances Procedure. These procedures can only be instigated by candidates. In line with our organisational ethos and to encourage fairness all candidates are required to follow our internal quality procedures. Our management will only get involved at stage three. Please do not be offended if our management cannot come to the phone prematurely.

Any third parties who wish to make any complaint should write directly to the Centre Admin (support@vocationallearning.co.uk) who will make a decision based on our terms and conditions, policies and a point of law.

Candidates must first attempt to resolve disputes through negotiation and only resort to the Grievances Procedure when these avenues have failed. It is your responsibility to engage in our appeals and grievances procedures and to observe any applicable deadlines, as this will have an impact on decisions and outcomes. No assessments should take place while our Grievance Procedures are in progress!

Our Grievances Procedures are superseded if we have already instigated any of our disciplinary procedures for serious misconduct such as plagiarism, unreasonable behaviour, broken any laws and making libellous comments. You will however be advised after an investigation on the grounds you could appeal or complain and any associated deadlines.

Unreasonable behaviour includes assaulting and insulting our staff and other candidates, being uncooperative during the assessment process, lying and making unsubstantiated claims, not following our standardised procedures, behaviour that puts your self or others at harm. Any further instances after a warning might result in being withdrawn from the course. Please refer to our terms and conditions found on our main web site.

**Stage One (Informal Complaint)**

In the first instance every attempt should be made to resolve complaints informally through a dialogue with those immediately concerned.
If you are unhappy with any aspect of the service that you have received or requested you should raise your concern with Vocational Learning as soon as possible and not later than two weeks of the incident.

Candidates should speak to their assessor or tutor in the first instance.

**Stage Two (Formal Complaint)**

If you are unhappy with the outcome from your assessor or tutor you may wish to make a formal complaint by completing our complaints form located on Access.

Vocational Learning will not respond to anonymous complaints.

Once your form has been received by Vocational Learning we will:

- let you know within 5 working days that we have received your complaint;

You will normally receive a reply to your complaint within 10 working days, informing you:

- whether we uphold your complaint;
- what we plan to do about the issues raised in your complaint;
- if we do not agree with your complaint and the reasons
- how you can appeal if you are unhappy with our decision.

As far as possible a response will be given within 10 working days but if the complaint is particularly complex this may take longer.

**Stage Three (Your Right of Appeal)**

If you are dissatisfied with our response to your complaint you can appeal in writing to the Centre Manager. Your appeal must state the reasons of your appeal. If the Centre Manager finds that there are justifiable grounds for your appeal an independent assessor is appointed to investigate the complaint. If
the Centre Manager determines from the findings that there are no grounds of appeal he or she will decide to either:

- dismiss the complaint as unfounded;
- refer the complaint back and propose an amicable settlement;
- uphold or partially uphold the complaint, offer an apology, recommend appropriate steps to be taken to address the issue to avoid a similar problem arising in future.

The decision of the Centre Manager is final and you will be advised in writing of the outcome within 10 working days.

**Taking a Complaint Further**

If you continue to be dissatisfied with the outcome of our complaints procedure then you might wish to consider appealing to the awarding body you are registered on as a candidate. The awarding body will usually require evidence that you have exhausted all channels of our complaints procedures. Once you appeal to the awarding body, you have to follow their complaints procedures, which are usually published, on their website. Vocational Learning will formally withdraw you from your course after 21 days (from day you are given our final decision or any set deadline) if we do not hear from you or the awarding body regarding your situation.
Diversity, Equality and Equal Opportunities

Vocational Learning is committed to promoting diversity and practising equality of opportunity. We aim to create a culture and environment where trainees and staff are treated equally regardless of race, ethnic origin, nationality, gender, disability, age, religion, sexual orientation, marital or parental status, political belief or social/ economic group.

We want to build an institution that is truly inclusive; that understands, appreciates and values the diversity of each individual and incorporates measures that make people feel valued and able to participate and achieve their full potential.

Our diversity is our strength. We are committed to tackling discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity and good race relations.

Everybody on our training course will be treated fairly and will not be discriminated against for any reason whatsoever including race, colour, ethnic origin, sex, marital status, background age etc.
You are expected to treat everybody that you come into contact with whilst you are on your training course with respect. Any disruptive or abusive behaviour will be dealt with severely.

You are also protected from any acts of bullying or harassment such as being touched if you don't want to be, being threatened or being victimised. If you are unhappy with the way you have been treated or suffer from any acts of bullying or harassment then come and talk to any member of staff.

This policy covers all areas of staff and student life. It ensures that the provisions of all equalities legislation are met in full, in particular the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 and the Disability Discrimination Act; Special Educational Needs and Disability Act October 2002. The policy is also mindful of future legislation, which will have an impact on the organisation, namely the “Framework” Equal Treatment Directive, Disability Act 2004, Sex Discrimination Amendment Act 2005 and the Equality Act 2010. The policy ensures firm action is taken to redress inequality wherever possible. Our Diversity, Equality and Equal Opportunities Policy are available on request.

**Data Protection**

Vocational Learning is required to collect, hold and process personal information on students for various academic and related administrative purposes. This information will largely be provided by you on application. Regulatory bodies or their representatives have a right to access some information we hold about you! They might use some of this information to get in contact with you.

Vocational Learning will confirm, update and enhance personal records as you progress with your course. All personal information will be processed in accordance with Vocational Learning data protection policy which, in turn, enshrines the data protection principles as set out under the Data Protection Act 1998 and GDPR.

We take security very seriously. All staff are made aware of the security procedures they must follow when handling personal data.
Please note that email is never a 100% secure way of communicating. By using it, you agree that you will send any information at your own risk.

Whilst we take reasonable precautions to make sure that other organisations that we deal with have good security practices, we are not responsible for the privacy practices of those organisations whose websites may be linked to our services.

Please note that there may be instances were we have to break confidentiality where there is a risk of harm to you or others! We might also use some of the information you provide during disputes, investigations and litigation.

**Processing Personal Data as part of your assessment**

- You are not usually expected to process personal data as part of your assessment. We recommend you follow the guidelines below:

  - You should remove client names from all written evidence such as case notes and evaluative commentaries.

  - Where observation of work is required, you should get your client's permission to be observed in a way, which clarifies and respects their right to refuse.

  - Where recordings are used, you should get your clients' permission. Please refer to our privacy policy located at the web link highlighted below for more information about your rights and how we process your data. ([https://www.vocationallearning.co.uk/privacy](https://www.vocationallearning.co.uk/privacy))

**Health and Safety**

Vocational Learning has a primary objective to provide a safe education service and environment for all those affected by the undertakings – employees, students, temporary staff, contractors, tenants, visitors, neighbours and members of the general public.

Vocational Learning regard the statutory safety and health obligations as a minimum standard to be achieved throughout all activities and requires staff at
every level and candidates to accept the promotion of high standards in health and safety as a core objective.

It is our policy to:

• provide and maintain places of work that are, so far as is reasonably practicable, safe and without undue risks to health;

• identify, measure and assess safety and health hazards at work with a view to controlling such hazards and establishing safe places of work and safe systems of work;

• assess the risks to health of harmful substances used by staff and students and introduce measures to remove/minimise such risks, so far as is reasonably practicable;

• provide employees and students with such information, instruction, training and supervision as appropriate to ensure their health and safety;

• Formulate and adopt Safety Rules which will ensure that employees and others for whom they have responsibility are safe from danger;

• ensure that a satisfactory system is maintained for reporting, collecting, analysing and presenting information on accidents, incidents and sickness at work in order to facilitate all necessary investigation and corrective action;

• arrange for the provision of first aid services to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, prompt and appropriate treatment of illness and injury occurring during the course of work;

• arrange for the suitable training and retraining of first abiders;

All staff and students are responsible for their own health & safety and the health & safety of others who may be affected by their acts or omissions. Our Health and Safety Policy is available on request.

Health and Safety Candidate Responsibilities
Your health and safety is very important to us. You are responsible for protecting yourself and others from harm or danger. When attending training sessions at our Training Centre, please make sure you:

• Read and obey all safety notices
• Do not swing on your chairs or sit on the tables as they could lead to serious accidents
• Report any hazards or dangers, which you see to a member of staff.
• Report any accidents, which befall you, both at the training centre and at work to a member of staff and ensure that they are entered in the accident book, which is held by your First Aider.
• Read your copy of “Be Safe” and the enclosed Health and Safety Policy.
• Comply with all the health and safety requirements of your employer.

Fire

In the event of a fire, leave the building in an orderly fashion by the nearest exit and assemble in the car park. Wait there until a roll call has been taken and you are given further instructions. Under no circumstances must you stop to collect your personal belongings or make any attempt to re-enter the building unless you are given permission to do so.
We hope you have found this handbook useful. Further publications on assessment and portfolio building are available on request.

We wish you the best with your course and future endeavours!

Vocational Learning

Learning and Development Team

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