



# Quality Assurance and Moderation Policy

Document Specification:			
Purpose:	To set out NALP's policy for ensuring that it maintains high levels of quality in respect of the qualifications it offers, including the use of moderation of assessment decisions and further verification of those decisions by a process of internal quality assurance		
Accountability:	Governing Board	Responsibility:	Responsible Officer
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### 1. Scope of the Policy

NALP is an Awarding Organisation recognised by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations (“Ofqual”) in England. NALP specialises in providing regulated qualifications to the Legal and associated sectors, in particular for Paralegals, which are respected and recognised by those professions. NALP has forged close links with the other professional bodies within the Legal and associated sectors, such as the Law Society, and is committed to ensuring the provision of the highest quality qualifications to that sector.

As part of its commitment to providing high quality qualifications, NALP operates a four-pronged approach to quality assurance as follows:

- Verification of all assessment briefs against the learning outcomes
- Consistent moderation of assessment decisions
- Regular Internal quality assurance of attainment levels, policies and procedures
- A risk-based approach to external quality assurance of the conduct of approved centres

This policy provides the detail of the activities undertaken in respect of quality assurance, the scope of those activities and where the responsibilities for those activities lie.

### 2. Verification of Assessment Briefs

NALP seeks to ensure that its assessment of learners is appropriate and promotes effective learning through a process of independent internal verification required for every assessment brief.

In order to ensure that the verification process is effective, a robust process has been put into place including:

- All assessment briefs which form part of a module assessment scheme shall be verified.
- The role of the verification is to consider the appropriateness of the assessment brief in relation to the module’s intended learning outcomes and whether the assessment scheme for the module is fair and effective.
- Verification is to be undertaken by the Academic Board or a review panel appointed by the Academic Board.
- The verifier must be provided with the:
  - assessment brief including submission requirements
  - assessment criteria
  - marking scheme
- The verification process must be recorded to include the consideration of the following indicative questions:
  - Are the expectations for the assessment task clearly expressed?
  - Does the assessment brief state clearly the learning outcomes and any key/core skills expected?
  - Is the task a suitable type of assessment for the subject of the module?

- Are the task and its content suitable for the level of the programme?
  - Does the form of the assessment task enable learners to demonstrate the knowledge, skills and understanding identified as the intended learning outcomes?
  - Will the assessment allow learners with differing abilities to demonstrate their capabilities?
  - Is the allocation of marks transparent and are the marks appropriately apportioned?
  - Is the work marked out of 100?
  - Do the expectations shown in the assessment criteria match the intended learning outcomes?
  - Are the formal instructions (rubric) on the front page adequate and clearly expressed?
  - Are the questions clearly written?
  - Are the questions unambiguous in their meaning?
  - Are the questions written concisely?
  - Is there consistent use of instruction verbs?
  - Is there a balanced mix of questions requiring: knowledge, understanding, application, development, calculation, explanation, interpretation and discussion?
  - Are the questions appropriate for the level of the programme?
- The verifier(s) must record and sign off confirmation that the assessment brief is acceptable.
  - The verifier(s) should record any concerns, with any suggested amendments.

### 3. Moderation

All NALP assessments are externally marked by NALP's independent examining team against a marking scheme set and agreed by the Academic Board. The following criteria is set for moderation of these assessment decisions:

- All assessed work (i.e. examination scripts and coursework assignments) at all Levels shall be moderated.
- All assessments must have clearly defined assessment criteria established at the time of verifying the assessment. The form of marking which has been used must be identified and transparent to the moderator (e.g. single or double marking; if double marking – blind or non-blind, annotated or non-annotated).
- The moderator must identify all items sampled as part of the moderation and must keep a separate record of the moderation process to include:
  - the name of the candidate or candidate number
  - the name of the assessor(s) and the marks assigned
  - the name of the moderator
  - a confirmation of the finally agreed marks for all the learners taking the assessment.
- The comments made by the assessor(s) on the learners' work or performance must be available to the moderator.

- As a minimum requirement, moderation should consist of a confirmation that the assessment criteria have been correctly and accurately applied.
- A moderation template which includes the following information should be used:
  - Academic year
  - Programme(s)
  - Module
  - Level
  - Name of marker(s)
  - Name of moderator
  - Type of assessment (e.g. written examination, assignment)
  - Identification of learner sample (by name or number)
  - Reason for selection (e.g. high/low mark, range of programmes)
  - Marks awarded (agreed marks if more than one marker)
  - Moderator's comments
- If a concern is raised by the moderator (e.g. a systematic irregularity or a query on an individual assessment) discussion should take place between the assessor(s) and the moderator prior to the final confirmation of the marks for all the learners taking the assessment. As a result of the moderation process it may be necessary for the assessor(s) to reconsider the marks awarded for the entire cohort of learners and, as a consequence, to make changes either to all marks or to some marks.
- NALP's policy on moderation is **not** a marking policy. NALP differentiates marking and moderation by the following characteristics:

Marking	Moderation
Using academic judgement to assign marks based on the knowledge, understanding and skills a learner has displayed in the assessment task and by reference to the assessment criteria approved in the verification stage.	Checking that the verified assessment and marking criteria for a component of assessment have been accurately, consistently and fairly applied by the assessor(s). The moderator therefore does not need the same level of subject expertise as the assessor(s).
<b>All</b> pieces of assessment within a module are marked.	A specified <b>sample</b> of learners' assessed work is moderated.
Single marking - Marking is done by one examiner. Double marking (non-blind) - A second examiner marks the work with prior knowledge of the marks awarded by the first marker. Double marking (blind) - A second examiner marks the work without prior knowledge of the marks awarded by the first marker.	The moderator should not have been involved in marking the assessment but should be familiar with marking at that academic level. Wherever possible the moderator will not be a member of the module team.
The marker(s) must provide feedback by annotating the assessed work itself or providing a separate feedback sheet which demonstrates	The moderator must have access to the marker's feedback sheets. The moderator must keep a separate moderation record identifying all items

clearly how marks have been assigned.	sampled and recording: learner ID: name of marker(s) and marks assigned; name of moderator; comments on sample; confirmation that assessment criteria have been accurately, consistently and fairly applied; confirmation of all marks awarded for the cohort in that particular assessment.
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#### 4. NALP Internal Quality Assurance

As part of its commitment to ensuring that it delivers the highest possible quality service and qualifications to its centres, learners and other stakeholders, NALP will undertake a model of Internal Quality Assurance which will include, by may not be limited to:

- Review by the Academic Board of the attainment levels of all qualifications, plus results from the moderation undertaken
- Escalation of any issues uncovered to the Governing Board
- The establishing of a review panel to look into any findings from Academic Board reviews, feedback from centres or learners or regulatory changes and guidance, etc.
- Undertaking reviews of all policies and procedures at least bi-annually for those which are only affected by changes in law and annually for those which may be affected by changes in regulations, guidance or industry best practice
- Amending policies and procedures on the back of annual or bi-annual reviews or as necessary to ensure we are meeting all legal and regulatory requirements and recognised best practices at all times as a minimum
- Ensure that all findings and decisions discussed at both the Academic Board and the Governing Board, plus any convened review panels, are fully minuted or otherwise documented
- Version control all policies and procedures so that previous versions are available at all times
- During the review of policies and procedures, a review of the day to day processes followed will also be undertaken to ensure that these are in line with the written procedures and, if any differences are found, a decision will be taken whether the process undertaken should be amended to follow the procedures or, if the new process is more efficient, whether the procedures themselves need to be amended
- Staff and board members will be provided with sufficient training and guidance by the Responsible Officer to ensure that they can carry out their duties effectively
- A compliance log will be kept which will set out every Condition of Recognition, the current status of NALP against that Condition, any action necessary in relation to ongoing compliance with that Condition, who will retain responsibility for ensuring compliance against that Condition and the date any action need to be taken by. This log will be maintained by the Responsible Officer and a fully updated version made available to all members of the Governing Board at the quarterly meetings
- A Risk Register will be maintained by the Responsible Officer setting out the main regulatory, financial, reputational or legal risks and tabled at each Governing Board meeting

Any issues found will be dealt with efficiently and effectively. Where changes need to have the sign off of the Governing Board but waiting for the next Board meeting might unduly delay a change, sign off will be sought via email, as per the Terms of Reference of the Governing Board.

If there are any issues which have caused a regulatory non-compliance, this will be notified to Ofqual as quickly as possible once the issue has been identified. If it is unclear whether or not a non-compliance has occurred but the issue has or may cause an adverse effect for Learners or the integrity of a qualification, a notification will be made to Ofqual setting out the possibility of a non-compliance, the nature of the adverse effect and provide them with a timetable of investigations to confirm whether or not there has actually been a breach of our Conditions of Recognition and/or an adverse effect to Learners, etc.

### 5. External Quality Assurance

NALP follows a risk-based approach to External Quality Assurance. At present all assessment decisions are made by NALP and the majority of the Learners undertake the qualifications via distance learning. Centres may provide tutorial support and guidance, however there is no actual guided learning accounted for within the Total Qualification Time set for the qualifications offered by NALP.

This qualification and assessment model means that the risk of centres being found to have committed malpractice or maladministration is extremely low. It then follows that the risk of an action by a centre leading to an adverse effect to the learner or the integrity or reliability of a qualification or assessment is also extremely low.

In view of the above, NALP does not currently carry out regular centre visits or audits. However, this would be reviewed and a full schedule of external quality assurance would be put into place if the current qualification and assessment model was to change in future. In the meantime, visits or audits would only take place if there was a reason to doubt the integrity of the centre, for instance if they had started requesting a lot of unsupported requests for reasonable adjustments or late registrations of learners, contrary to the normal procedures, or if we had received feedback from learners regarding a centre which gave us cause for concern.