

The RSL How to Guides

Assignment Briefs

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What are assignment briefs?

Assignment briefs are written within the centre to provide a summative assessment of an individual unit. They are formal assessment documents and are therefore not part of the teaching/learning for any unit i.e. the skills and knowledge learners need for the assessment must be taught prior to the assignment brief being given to learners. They are an assessment of the teaching and learning of that unit. It provides an opportunity for learners to demonstrate their competence in new skills acquired and to conclude the unit and evidence the learning outcomes.

Assignment briefs demonstrate what the learners must do in order to achieve a unit. This means that they must be clearly written to allow learners to understand exactly what they must do in order to achieve.

When should assignment briefs be written?

Ideally all assignment briefs should be written at the start of the academic year to ensure that your planning is completed prior to the start of teaching. There is a requirement for one assignment brief per qualification to be submitted for External Quality Assurance in term one. They must all be written to allow sufficient time for internal verification to take place (allowing for any changes that may need to be made) prior to being given to learners.

Assignment briefs should be reviewed annually to ensure that the information within the briefs is as up to date as it can be. This will allow for any changes to specification and additional guidance such as the use of external links. The review should also include reviewing how clear the tasks are for learners based on previous learner feedback, updating the resources and the vocational scenario. Even if briefs have been agreed in a previous year, the most up to date version will still need to be uploaded for External Quality Assurance to ensure that all the information is up to date and the brief still meets the needs of the learners.

Content of assignment briefs:

Assignment briefs are usually written by the tutor who will be assessing the unit, using the information provided within the relevant unit specification. The assessor must interpret the specification into an assignment brief to be given to learners. It is not sufficient to give the specification to the learners.

Assignment briefs need to contain:

1. ***Qualification title, unit number and name:*** This needs to be accurate and reflect the RSL unit specification documents. Learners work will include the briefs to give the work context. These are therefore formal assessment materials.
2. ***The name of the centre and the tutor assessing the unit:*** This provides the audit trail both for the centre and for RSL.
3. ***The date set and the deadline for submission:*** These are the formal dates of assessment. Remember that the centre will need a policy to deal with late submissions of work and accurate dates should be given.
4. ***The tasks – laid out in accessible way for your learners:*** Although the specifications for each unit include ideas for activities and assessment, each centre is encouraged to provide vocational context to these ideas in order to engage their learners and make the tasks relevant.
5. ***The assessment criteria alongside each task:*** It is vital that learners understand which assessment criteria each task relates to in order to support them in their achievement. This provides a useful reference for those seeking clarification of what they need to demonstrate and should always be included. Remember that the assessment criteria is everything the learner must do to pass the unit.
6. ***Links to related resources (if appropriate):*** You may want to provide specific websites or other resources to get your learners started with research or point them in the right direction to the resources they will need to undertake their assessment. Your vocational scenario may well have an impact on the resources which you direct your learners towards.
7. ***Grading criteria:*** The assignment needs to provide learners with the opportunity to achieve at all levels. In order to provide that opportunity, learners need to be aware of what is required to achieve at each level.
8. ***Submission checklist:*** Learners need a clear idea of what is being asked of them, what individual pieces of evidence are required for submission and a method of ensuring authenticity. You may choose to include this as a list or an actual checklist, depending on the method your learners respond to best.

- 9. *How work is to be submitted:*** There are many ways of getting learners to submit work for assessment which may include physically handing in the work or you may have an electronic submission system.
- 10. *Evidence of quality assurance:*** This is evidence to show that the internal verifier has reviewed the assignment brief and has agreed that it is fit for purpose. This could be a simple box on the assignment brief which asks for the name of the internal verifier and includes the date when the brief was internally verified. More specific feedback on the internal verification process would be included within the internal verification documents (see below.)

Including a Vocational Scenario

The aim of vocational qualifications is to prepare learners for working in a specific industry. The use of a vocational scenario within your assignment briefs will help to engage the learner within the assignment and allow them to see how what they are studying in their school/college/training provider will prepare them for the career they hope to go into.

The vocational scenario is likely to be hypothetical as the reality of being able to fulfil the scenario in a real-world perspective would be difficult. However, using a vocational scenario which allows the learners to frame their response to the brief (even though the situation is hypothetical) will allow them to recognise industry relevance and, ultimately, make the work far more interesting for the learner.

For example, learning about Health and Safety in a classroom environment and asking learners to write a general report about Health and Safety is unlikely to be particularly exciting for learners. Asking them to create a risk assessment for a local performance venue or recording studio, however, is more interesting as this is an environment in which they may wish to work one day. You must make sure that the scenario that you are choosing allows the learners to meet all of the assessment criteria but, beyond that, there are no restrictions to the vocational scenario which you choose.

You can also consider your geographical area when creating the scenario. Is there anything interesting going on locally within music/performing arts which you can use to engage your learners? For example, if you are in Newcastle, using a local theatre or recording studio as the inspiration for an assignment is likely to be more interesting than a venue in London as this is immediately accessible to learners.

Your vocational scenario should also be adapted to the learners you have for that academic year as you will find interests and needs change between year groups and what may engage a group one year may not engage a group the following year.

For Level 3 Performance Tables qualifications, employer involvement must be evidenced as part of the delivery of the qualification. This could include work experience opportunities, masterclasses with industry professionals or working with industry professionals to write the assignment briefs.

Date Set and Deadlines

The dates set and deadlines on the assignment brief should reflect the dates as identified in your Assessment and Internal Verification plan. You should ensure that sufficient time is given to teaching and learning prior to the setting of assessment. You should also ensure that sufficient time is given to allow learners to achieve all the criteria, but not so long that they get bored and/or the assessment becomes part of teaching and learning.

Setting Tasks

The minimum that learners need to do in order to pass a particular unit is the assessment criteria. All assessment criteria must be passed in order to achieve a pass for the unit (this includes all *parts* of an assessment criteria). For example, if there is criteria 1.1 a, b, c and d, a learner must include all of those parts to achieve. If they missed 1.1. a, for example, they would not achieve a pass for the criteria. Therefore, the assessment criteria should form the basis of the tasks.

Learning outcomes tend to lend themselves towards tasks i.e. if there are three learning outcomes, you may choose to write three tasks. The tasks should be written in a way which makes it explicit to the learners what they need to do in order to achieve the assessment criteria.

Consider the use of subheadings within the assignment brief which students could use as the basis for a template when structuring their work.

Assessment and Grading Criteria

As stated before, the assessment criteria are the minimum that learners need to do in order to pass a particular unit. The grading criteria are then used to assess the competency that the learners demonstrate within that. Both assessment and grading criteria must be present on assignment briefs.

It is considered good practice to use distinction grading criteria within tasks to stretch and challenge learners. For example, if the assessment criteria require them to write an evaluation and the distinction criteria asks for a 'comprehensive' evaluation, the start of the task could be phrased as 'write a comprehensive evaluation' rather than just 'write an evaluation.' This allows students to recognise that they will need to write more than a few lines in order to achieve a high grade. While not all students will achieve a distinction, writing the task in this way allows them to aim for it.

Evidence types

One of the positives of vocational qualifications are that they tend not to prescribe a particular approach for meeting assessment criteria. While there may be some specific skills which can only be evidenced in one way, such as the use of a DAW or a performance, there is a degree of flexibility in the way assessment criteria can be evidenced in other areas. For example, rather than asking a learner to write an evaluation, they could give a PowerPoint presentation or a viva voce, which can be videoed as evidence. Allowing learners the option for how they wish to present their work means that you are able to capture a range of learning styles rather than always asking learners to write.

There are a few provisos within that. Firstly, if the assessment criteria states that work must be presented in a particular way, then it *must* be presented in that way otherwise the learner cannot pass. The second is in terms of development of the learner. For example, if you have a Level 3 learner who is hoping to go to university and only ever chooses to submit work in a presentation format, this may not be to their advantage as they will be required to write essays at university and if they have not written essays for two years prior to attending university, they may struggle when it comes to starting university.

Internally Verifying Assignment Briefs:

100% of all the assignments produced in your centre need to be internally verified. They will be subject to External Quality Assurance by RSL. One internal assignment brief per qualification delivered (with accompanying internal verification documentation) must be provided by the date identified in the Key Dates Calendar (available [here](#))

Verification of assignment briefs needs to confirm:

1. The accuracy of the qualification and unit details.
2. The deadlines are clear and realistic.
3. The clarity and accessibility of the language and layout used.
4. Inclusion of all assessment criteria in each task.
5. If the briefs allow the learner to demonstrate all learning outcomes of the unit.
6. If the briefs allow the learner to demonstrate all levels of attainment.
7. If the briefs allow the assessor to differentiate accurately and consistently between a range of attainment?
8. If the briefs allow each learner to generate evidence that can be authenticated and that is valid and sufficient.
9. That it is clear what evidence is required.
10. That the briefs are comparable¹ (throughout the centre.)

All assignment briefs need to contain evidence that they have been internally verified. The way in which this is recorded is at the centre's discretion.

Templates

Centres are free to design their own assignment brief templates as long as they meet the requirements outlined above. If centre wish to use an [RSL template](#), please see the '[Templates](#)' section in '[Help and Support](#)' (to be renamed 'Resources' in 20/21)

¹ Comparability refers to the consistency of assessment demands across a centre and across any level.

External Quality Assurance of Assignment Briefs

A sample of assignment briefs have to be external quality assured by RSL prior to the delivery of the assignment brief. Centres need to submit one internal assignment brief per qualification delivered (with accompanying internal verification documentation) for External Quality Assurance prior to the date identified in the Key Dates Calendar (available [here](#)). (i.e. if a centre delivers Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications, they will submit one brief per qualification.) The different disciplines (i.e. CAPA and MUSPRA) count as separate qualifications.

The brief must be provided at least 6 weeks before it is set. The brief and all amendments must be signed off by an RSL External Quality Assurer before delivery. The 6 weeks will allow:

- 2 weeks for External Quality Assurance by RSL
- 2 weeks for the centre to turnaround any amendments
- 1 week for the External Quality Assurer to review
- 1 week for any further amendments to be made.

The centre is free to choose which assignment briefs they would like to submit to an External Quality Assurer, as long as one assignment brief per qualification is submitted. Where there is more than one assessor within a centre, please try and ensure a range of assessors are looked at. If the same assignment brief as a previous year is selected, the External Quality Assurer may select another to ensure all briefs are looked at for a qualification.

RSL recommend that assignment briefs for new units (i.e. units not previously taught within the centre) are submitted for External Quality Assurance in order to support the centre delivery of a new unit.

An RSL Assignment Brief External Quality Assurance Report Form for the assignment brief/s will be uploaded to <https://cloud.rslawards.com/secure/submission-system> once they have been externally quality assured and you will receive a notification to the email addresses associated with the account. If you have actions, there will be a deadline set for you to make the changes and upload the amended brief to be signed off. If there are no actions and the brief is approved, you are free to set the assignment brief to your students. Please see Appendix 1: RSL Assignment Brief External Quality Assurance Report Form to see the report form that your EQA will complete.

If you have questions about the External Quality Assurance of your assignment briefs, you can speak directly to your assigned External Quality Assurer who will be able to provide you with specific guidance.

Further Reading:

RSL Vocational Centre Handbook (available [here](#))

[RSL Key Dates Calendar](#) (available [here](#))

[HTG Conducting Internal Assessment](#)

[HTG Conducting Internal Verification of Vocational Qualifications](#)

[HTG Preventing Plagiarism](#)

[HTG Conducting Standardisation](#)

[HTG Creating an Appropriate Audit Trail](#)

[HTG Submitting Work for External Quality Assurance](#)

Appendix 1: RSL VQ IV of Assignment Brief Form

Completed within your centre for each assignment brief.

RSL VQ IV of Assignment Brief Form

Assignment Brief Details	
Centre Name	
Centre Assessor/s	
Centre Internal Verifier/s	
Qualification Title	
Unit Number and Name	

Assignment Brief	
Questions	Please provide feedback in the boxes below recognising both good practice and areas for development
Are the Qualification title, unit number and unit name identified and accurate?	
Are the name of the centre and the assessor clearly identified on the brief?	
Are clear deadlines for assessment given? i.e. date set, deadline for submission and resubmission dates where applicable.	
Is the time frame achievable for all learners?	
Is there a relevant vocational scenario that will interest learners?	
Are the tasks written in an accessible way for learners?	
Are the assessment criteria alongside each task?	
Are the grading criteria available on the assignment brief?	
Do the tasks allow learners to achieve all levels of attainment?	
Does the brief allow each learner to generate evidence that can be authenticated?	

Is it clear what evidence needs to be submitted and how it is to be submitted?	
Are there links to related resources (if appropriate)	
Does the assignment generate evidence that is valid and sufficient?	
Are there opportunities for employer involvement identified?	
Overall, is the assignment fit for purpose?	

Overall decision (please indicate one)	
Brief agreed	
Brief not agreed	

Immediate Actions	Date to be completed
Recommendations for Future Development / Good Practice Identified	

Completed by (print name and signature and Date)		
Actions signed off (where applicable) Signature and Date		

Appendix 2: RSL Assignment Brief External Quality Assurance Report Form

Completed by your RSL External Quality Assurer following review of the submitted assignment brief.

RSL Assignment Brief External Quality Assurance Report Form

Assignment Brief Details	
Centre Name	
Centre Assessor/s	
Centre Internal Verifier/s	
Qualification Title	
Unit Number and Name	

Assignment Brief	
Questions	Please provide feedback in the boxes below recognising both good practice and areas for development
Are the Qualification title, unit number and unit name identified and accurate?	
Are the name of the centre and the tutor clearly identified on the brief?	
Are clear deadlines for assessment given? i.e. date set, deadline for submission and resubmission dates where applicable.	
Is the time frame achievable for all learners?	
Is there a relevant vocational scenario that will interest learners?	
Are the tasks written in an accessible way for learners?	
Are the assessment criteria alongside each task?	
Are the grading criteria available on the assignment brief?	

Do the tasks allow learners to achieve all levels of attainment?	
Does the brief allow each learner to generate evidence that can be authenticated?	
Is it clear what evidence needs to be submitted and how it is to be submitted?	
Are there links to related resources (if appropriate)	
Does the assignment generate evidence that is valid and sufficient?	
Are there opportunities for employer involvement identified?	
Overall, is the assignment fit for purpose?	

Quality Assurance Evidence

Questions	
Is there evidence of internal verification?	
Is there any conflict of interest likely to arise within this assessment?	
Is there evidence of meaningful feedback to the assessor?	
If there are actions identified, have these been actioned and then signed off by the internal verifier?	

Overall decision (please indicate one)	
Brief agreed	
Brief not agreed	

Immediate Actions	Date to be completed
Recommendations for Future Development	
Completed by (print name and signature and Date)	

Actions signed off (where applicable) Signature and Date		
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