



QQI

Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann



NATIONAL FORUM
FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF TEACHING
AND LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

WORK-BASED ASSESSMENT: SERIES OF EVENTS AND ENGAGEMENTS 2020

Introduction

The National Forum Insight entitled '*Word-Based Assessment Learning: Context, Purposes and Methods*', published as part of the National Forum's enhancement theme *Assessment OF/ FOR/ AS* highlighted the importance of learning experience as an aspect of higher education.

Issues relating to the assessment of work-based learning featured prominently in [QQI's Green Paper on Assessment of Learners and Learning](#) (March 2018).

Work experience and / or developing employability skills is a key national priority¹. Students also rate it as one of their highest measures of 'student success'². Work experience (or work-integrated learning) occurring in parallel with higher education programmes can support and experiential approach to learning.

Work-based assessment as a pillar of work-based learning must be conducted in a manner appropriate to its context (National Forum, 2017, p.1). In the current changing higher education context, students' experience of work placement, in particular its assessment³, is being and could continue to be disrupted by Covid-19 restrictions. It is therefore timely to initiate a national conversation on work-based assessment to share experiences and approaches and together identify good practice responses to the challenges that we now face.

The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in partnership with Quality and Qualifications Ireland are facilitating a series of webinars and a national symposium to explore critical issues and share potential solutions across the range of different work-based learning contexts, to maximise the sector's understanding and response to these emerging issues. The Webinars and National Symposium will be iterative. Webinars' content, activities, pre-activities and discussions will cumulatively address the emerging critical issue(s) highlighted by the participants and will underpin the discussion at the national symposium. All participants are encouraged to contribute to a learning community space to continue discussions between events to debate key issues, share practice and appropriate scholarship.

The series aims to:

1. Discuss work-based assessment of, for and as learning approaches and terminology in the Irish context,
2. Debate the assessment challenges and opportunities across the different contexts
3. Explore critical issues for staff and/or student in the current climate,

¹ National Skills Strategy 2025, HEA, 2018, Department of Education & Skills, 2011

² National Forum 2019 – Student Success Reports

³ National Forum - Assessment of, for, as learning

4. Work towards a National understanding of work-based assessments in different contexts,
5. Build a learning community to encourage collaboration and networking,
6. Identify potential actions for change for enhancing practice and developing enabling policies.

Who should participate?

The series will be of interest to all those involved in work placement or work-based assessment (WBA) including: academic staff, careers officers, students, employers, internship managers, educational developers/technologist and those involved in managing apprenticeships, work experience placements and professional placements.

What is the schedule of events?

| Date | Title & Aims | Pre-reading & Activities: to be discussed in the community space |
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| <p>Webinar 1: Wed., 17th June 2020 14.00- 15.00</p> | <p>Work-based Assessment (W-BA): Shared Challenges and Opportunities</p> <p>What is understood as WBA in the Irish context? What are the shared assessment challenges and opportunities across the different context? What are some key practice insights on WBA? What are one/two critical issues to explore further?</p> | <p><i>Reading:</i> National Forum (2017) McRae & Johnston (2016) Ferns & Zegwaard (2014) <i>Activity:</i> Post webinar poll.</p> <p>Relevant parts of QQI's Green Paper on Assessment of Learners and Learning (March 2018).</p> |
| <p>Webinar 2: Wed., 14th Oct. 2020 12.00- 13.00</p> | <p>W-BA: Exploring the Challenge of Consistency</p> <p>Following the first webinar, some of the main key challenges identified by the participants, i.e. consistency/reliability, feedback, authenticity. The most common theme identified was consistency and reliability in the work experience context. This webinar, therefore, sets out to explore this challenge in more depth. It aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore what is meant by the term 'consistency' in work-based assessment • Examine if the causes of inconsistency differ in the varied placement contexts • Explore what are student experiences of consistency • Consider how the sector addresses the area of consistency going forward, initial thoughts | <p><i>Reading:</i> McNamara (2013) <i>Activity:</i> Investigate further examples of these to share back to shared file/folder, prior to the National Seminar</p> <p>Relevant parts of QQI's Green Paper on Assessment of Learners and Learning (March 2018).</p> |

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| <p>National Symposium on Work-based Assessment Thurs., 19th Nov. 2020 10.00-15.00</p> <p>The key topics to be included in the National Symposium will be informed by the webinar discussions.</p> | <p>W-BA Getting to Grips with Policies and Practices in Work-based Assessment</p> <p>What are some of the solutions to these issues, what actions should the sector take? How can these be enabled by national and institutional policies (expert speakers)? How are these issues being addressed internationally (expert speakers)? What do we need to find out more about (future research needs)? How do we continue the conversation, i.e. Community of Practice?</p> | <p>Relevant parts of QQI's Green Paper on Assessment of Learners and Learning (March 2018).</p> |
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References

- Ferns, S., Zegwaard, K.E (2014) [Critical assessment issues in work-integrated learning](#) *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, Special Issue, 2014, 15(3), 179-188
- McNamara, J. (2013) The challenge of assessing professional competence in work integrated learning, *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 38:2, 183-197, DOI: [10.1080/02602938.2011.618878](https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2011.618878)
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- National Forum (2017) [Work-Based Assessment OF/FOR/AS Learning: Context, Purposes and Methods](#). The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning in Higher Education
- Scully, D., O'Leary, M. & Brown, M. (2018). [The Learning Portfolio in Higher Education: A Game of Snakes and Ladders](#). Dublin: Dublin City University, Centre for Assessment Research, Policy & Practice in Education (CARPE) and National Institute for Digital Learning (NIDL)