

Vocational Qualification Assessment Centre (VQAC)

Meeting Your VQ Needs



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Section 1 Introduction

This booklet summarises the support services and facilities that are available for learners registered with the Vocational Qualification Assessment Centre (VQAC) who have a disability, health condition, mental-health disability or specific learning difficulty (such as dyslexia) that may affect their ability to complete their qualification.

The booklet will tell you about what it's like to complete a qualification with the VQAC. You will need to think about the facilities you will need to have in place before returning the 'Meeting your VQ Needs' form included within Section 6. VQAC will then contact you to discuss aspects of your requirements.

The University treats any information you give us as confidential. If you have additional requirements and do not let us know, we may not be able to support you effectively. It is also important to let us know if your circumstances change to ensure our records are up to date. You can also complete and re-submit the 'Meeting your VQ Needs' form to VQAC at a later date if your circumstances change.

Section 2 Completing a qualification with VQAC

Studying with VQAC will involve:

- Reading material
- Producing written work e.g. case studies or reflective accounts
- Making notes
- Using a personal computer and other information technology to access the internet and qualification websites.
- Taking part in face-to-face discussions with your assessor in your workplace
- Communicating regularly with VQAC and your assessor

Time for learning

It is important that you consider how much time you will need to put aside at work and at home to gather evidence for your qualification. Your employer may allow you a few hours each week to work towards your qualification. It's worth asking!

Reading

Most of our materials are in electronic format online and you will be collecting your evidence into an electronic portfolio. However, you are able to use 'actual' books for research and reference.

Making notes

This will be an essential part of your qualification as it will allow you to express your understanding and gather evidence of your performance. Taking notes helps you focus on what is important in what you read and observe, allowing for structured assignments.

Computing

You will need regular and reliable access to the internet and a computer as you will need to spend time working on a computer and most of your work will be assessed online using an electronic portfolio.

Keeping in touch

You can keep in touch with VQAC and your assessor by letter, email and telephone. You can also email your assessor through [Ecordia](#), your e-portfolio once you have started learning.

Face to face contact

You will have at least one session of face-to-face contact with an assessor during the course of your qualification. This will take place in your workplace where your performance will be observed as evidence of your competence.

Section 3 E-portfolio Accessibility

Most of your work will be carried out on an eportfolio system which has the following in-built accessibility facilities:

Font style:

All users can select a preferred font style which will over-ride the centre preferences. Users can choose from a number of font styles.

Font Size:

In addition to browser setting within Internet Explorer, users can select small, medium or large font sizes. All text will then appear as selected; these settings are also applied to the course standards.

Portfolio style:

Users can choose a reduced colour option for view portfolio pages. Being able to reduce the colour back-grounds improve the readability of the pages.

Font and background colour:

Users can select a preferred font colour. The colours include black, blue, red, orange and green. Being able to choose a preferred text colour improves readability for users. The site also supports a high contrast setting which will mean the font can be yellow on a black background.

In addition to the above the system also offers users the following features:

Embedded word processor:

The e-portfolio offers all users the use of an embedded word processor. This means that when accessing the eportfolio users do not need any software other than Internet Explorer 5.1 or later. The word processor can be used in full screen mode allowing the use of a screen reader. The word processor also offers users a spell check facility.

Audio file upload:

All sections of the learner portfolio and resource section of the system support audio file attachments. This enables assessors to use audio recordings to provide feedback to learners and agree assessment plans verbally. These audio recordings can then be accessed by the learner accordingly. Enabling the use of audio recordings throughout the assessment process means that learners with additional learning and or support needs can have their evidence recorded in audio format.

Keyboard and mouse controls:

The e-portfolio is designed for use with or without a mouse. Users can navigate using just the tab and return keys. When using the word processor users can use the Ctrl+ keys to activate functions within the toolbar.

Screen Help:

Throughout the e-portfolio, users can access page help. The page help contains detailed information for users to explain the actions that can be performed in each screen. We also offer video help which users can download direct to their computer to watch a demonstration of the page.

Section 4 Examples of provision for specific needs

If you are blind or partially sighted

If you're blind or partially sighted your needs are likely to be mainly related to reading, taking notes and producing written work. We may be able to provide material as Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) files suitable for a computer with or without assistive technology. PDF files allow you to adjust the text size and background colours. Please note that we can't guarantee that electronic material will be available in the format you want for your qualification, although we will do our best to meet your wishes.

If you are deaf or hard of hearing

If you're deaf or hard of hearing your needs will be mainly to do with effective communication between you and your assessor, particularly during observations or when attending support sessions. Please tell us the best way to communicate with you. Most of our communication with learners is by letter and email. Should you wish to contact us or your assessor by telephone, you may wish to investigate using BT's Text Direct service, where an operator passes on messages between a textphone user and an ordinary phone.

If your mobility is restricted

If your mobility is restricted, your needs will be mainly concerned with access to buildings and rooms. The observation visit will usually be at your normal workplace so shouldn't cause you any additional problems. Please use the observation planning activity to alert your assessor to any issues that may occur during your workplace observation.

If your manual skills are restricted

If your manual skills are restricted, your requirements may be in relation to written work, handling books and using equipment. You will be expected to submit all your work electronically, however, it is equally acceptable to scan in hand-written work. You will need to consider how you will produce clearly handwritten work in a reasonable time, perhaps by using a friend or relative as a scribe.

If you have a specific learning difficulty

If you have a specific learning difficulty such as **dyslexia**, **dyspraxia**, **dyscalculia** or **attention deficit disorder**, your needs may be in relation to effectively processing information. We have provided some further resources you may wish to review in Section 7.

Learners with dyslexia may have difficulty with the large amounts of printed or on-screen text in our qualifications as most are delivered online. Most electronic text can be manipulated on a computer allowing you to adjust the text size and background colours or with software to convert the text into speech. Handwriting, spelling and getting ideas down on paper in a logical order can also be helped by using computers and appropriate software. Such as speech to text applications.

There are specific font styles that can support those with learning difficulties. These include:

- Dyslexia – Comic Sans, Verdana, Helvetica, Open Sans.
- Autism – Helvetica, Verdana, Comic Sans
- ADHD – Open Sans, Helvetica, Verdana.

Typically, those with learning difficulties can find black font on white background difficult to focus on. Using a dark grey colour font rather than black. Consider using a light (not white) colour background such as, pastel blue, yellow, orange.

Alternatively, you may want to consider a screen overlay for your computer to prevent text distortion.

If you have a speech impairment

If you have a condition that affects your speech your requirements will be mainly to do with communication with your assessor and VQAC. At other times you'll be able to communicate either by letter or email if you want to, although we suggest you make it clear how you would prefer to be contacted. All our assessors can be contacted by email. Before an observation, you might like to consider contacting your assessor to explain what would help you and to give an idea of how you manage in other similar situations. If you have significant difficulty in using the phone, you could consider trying either a textphone or a fax machine. Textphones are widely used by people who are deaf or hard of hearing. If you have access to a fax machine, you can also use this to communicate with VQAC.

If you have any mental health concerns

If you have any concerns with your mental health whilst you are studying with us it is important that you do not hesitate to contact your assessor or the VQ team at vq-enquiries@open.ac.uk. Other useful services, providing support to students that may be struggling with their mental health such as [Mind](#) and [Re-think](#) provide support to students and others, that may be struggling or worried about their mental health. Shout is also another support service - [Shout](#), is a free 24/7 text service for those that may be struggling to cope.

Examples of other VQAC provision

This list shows examples of other sorts of provisions that VQAC has available to meet your needs:

- Changing the background and/or font colour of any hardcopy materials that make reading easier.
- Changing the font style and size of any hardcopy materials
- Converting documents to PDF files for use with Adobe 5-9 which has an inbuilt screen reader.
- Providing vocational qualification standards in Word or PDF depending upon your needs
- Carrying out professional dialogues by 'phone
- Agreeing to use expert witness testimony.
- Using website compatible with Dragon screen reader
- Writing qualification materials which allow learners work progress to be self-directed however we do expect to see regular submissions of work.

If you do have a learning difficulty that you may need support from The Open University VQ Assessment Centre, you can inform us of this at any time by completing the form included in this booklet.

Section 5 Contacting the Vocational Qualification Assessment Centre (VQAC)

To seek guidance or discuss your specific needs further you can contact us:

By email: vq-enquiries@open.ac.uk

You can also chat to us using the 'Contact us' facility on our website

If you would prefer to speak to us, you can leave a message on our answer phone service and someone will call you back to answer your query. You can do this by calling 01908 653774 or +44 (0) 1908 653774 if calling from outside the UK.

Section 6 Meeting Your VQ Needs Form

It is important you read this booklet called 'Meeting your VQ Needs' before you fill in this form. If you would prefer to complete this form online, please click on the following link:

<https://forms.office.com/e/9LC4YuaTsn>

Meeting Your VQ Needs form

Please complete this form with as much detail as possible. We will do our best to provide services to help you learn effectively, but we can't guarantee that we will be able to provide all the services and facilities you ask for. If we can't do something you've asked for, we will try to suggest a suitable alternative.

Part 1 Your details

I understand that you will treat the information I have provided on this form as confidential and will pass it on to Open University (OU) staff and the University's agents as appropriate, for the purpose of providing me with services and facilities as a registered learner with The Open University Vocational Qualification Assessment Centre. I give you permission to process the information for this purpose.

Your signature

Date

Title Full Name

OU Personal Identifier

Email address

Contact number

Preferred method of contact

Qualification you are registering for

Qualification start date

Please enter any learning difficulties, medical needs, physical disabilities or mental health conditions that you feel that you may need support with

Please provide information below, to explain to us that we can do to help you to work through your qualification effectively.

Please send your completed form to the Vocational Qualification Assessment Centre, by email to vq-enquiries@open.ac.uk

A member of the VQ team will contact you within 10 working days to discuss your needs further.