COVID-19 Delivery and Assessment Guidance for BTEC Higher Nationals 2020-2021

The guidance in this document is designed to provide support for centres to maintain the quality of provision for the 2020-2021 academic year, and onwards, in response to the conditions that may be required to ensure the safety of staff and students (e.g. social distancing), and the requirements of Ofqual's revised Extended Extraordinary Regulatory Framework (EERF) which states **adaption of assessment as the main mitigation as opposed to delaying assessment or Centre Assessment Grades (CAGs)**.

These are recommendations for delivery and assessment approaches that will be helpful to centres but should not be considered minimum requirements (except in the case of work placement and assessment for the BTEC Higher National qualifications in Healthcare, Social and Community Work and Early Childhood Education), as centres should consider carefully the types of adaptation they may need to make; in order to support the best outcomes for students.

Centres are encouraged to review learning outcomes and assessment criteria carefully to determine whether and how adaptation may be achieved. Centres must not make alterations to learning outcomes or assessment criteria but may take a broad view of how students may evidence achievement, recognising that there are different ways in which a student might provide evidence. Approved unit combinations for qualifications must also be met.

Given the current circumstances due to COVID-19, in 2020-2021 Pearson will continue to temporarily lift the expectation that an HND student would have achieved at least 90

credits at Level 4 before progressing to Level 5 units.[1] This derogation from the standard progression expectation allows centres to respond to the current situation by being flexible in the order of the delivery and assessment of units in light of the need to accommodate social distancing measures.

We know you'll have many questions and we are here to support you. You can contact us via [Pearson Support](#).

Thank you for your ongoing patience and support.

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[1] **Current Higher National rules on progression from HNC to HND: Pearson would expect that an HND student would have achieved at least 90 credits at Level 4 before progressing to Level 5 units. This allows for the students to submit the remaining 30 credits at Level 4 while undertaking their Level 5 study.**

Contents

Support from Pearson

Pearson provides a number of different sources of support, to assist you and your students in studying a BTEC Higher National. While these resources are designed to support all types of delivery, we have highlighted those that may be of particular help to deliver online and through blended learning.

HN Global

A dedicated online learning platform, containing various free resources to support staff delivering a BTEC Higher National programme, as well as guide students who are on their learning journey. The global forum connects students and tutors with the opportunity to discuss common themes and share good practice. HN Global also provides access to the following:

The Learning Zone created for students this includes study materials such as Core Textbooks, Study Skills modules, subject resource libraries and an e-library. Students can also access a **Progression Hub** featuring opportunities to develop employability skills.

The Tutor Resources section hosts a wealth of Delivery Materials, Reading Lists, Blended Learning resources, video guidance on assessment and professional development opportunities. Staff can also access the **QA Hub** for templates and further centre guidance support.

Signing up is simple, you just need to complete a short self-registration form to create your own account, which will grant you access to the resources available to support your programme.

https://hnglobal.highernationals.com/

HN Online

To support blended delivery of units in the Higher Nationals for Business and Engineering Pearson has development HN Online. This digital solution enables flexible blended delivery and provides critical course content via a personalised learning path.

To find out more about HN Online, visit the HN Online pages on our website.

Higher Nationals Training

Pearson offer a range of training to support the planning, delivery and assessment of Higher Nationals. This includes both live online training and pre-recorded videos covering many of the topics necessary to ensure quality of curriculum, delivery and assessment.

To find out about upcoming live online training, visit Training from Pearson.

You can also find our pre-recorded training in the Tutor Channel of HN Global.

Additionally, Pearson have been providing a series of webinars exploring blended learning theories, practices and case studies. These can help you to plan and implement a blended learning strategy for your programme. More webinars are planned for the near future.

To watch past webinars or book for upcoming sessions, visit our HN Online pages.

Student Support

The impact of COVID-19 on students has, in some cases, been seen to effect more than just their academic activity. For some the stress of working from home, changing their mode of learning and the stress of worrying about family and friends is having an emotional impact.

Centres should ensure that they have the necessary systems and information available to assist students who may require additional support. This information should be published on the website and staff should have access to this information in order to assist students as necessary.

Effective Use of Mitigating Circumstances

Changes to the approach to teaching, adaptation of assessment, and other matters that affect all students are **NOT** grounds for mitigating circumstances; since they impact all students.

Mitigating circumstances are *exceptional* to the individual. You cannot apply mitigating circumstances to an entire cohort, because of the impact of COVID-19. The changes to the approach to delivery and, where agreed by Pearson, changes to the assessment and grading are designed to address the circumstances that affect all students.

Where students may be suffering from new or exacerbated problems, caused by a change in circumstances related to COVID-19, they may be eligible for mitigating circumstances.

Curriculum Planning, Delivery and Assessment

Dealing with Social Distancing

While centres may be able to invite students back to campus to engage in face-to-face teaching, this is likely to require some level of 'social distancing' to ensure the safety of staff and students.

Some types of on-campus engagement may be minimally affected by the need for social distancing. However, where groups of students may need to engage with specific equipment or processes this may not be possible with large cohorts. For example:

- Staff demonstrating the use of specialist equipment
- Students accessing and using specialist equipment
- Students accessing lab-based facilities or workshops

- Students using centre-provided specialist equipment outside of the college
- Students and staff working in studios

To safely engage in these activities, taking into account the need for social distancing, it may require that smaller groups be formed. This, in turn, requires further scheduling of groups of students, equipment and staff.

Centres will need to consider a number of factors when seeking to engage students in these practical aspects of their studies.

Centres are advised to start (where possible) the delivery of any units that involve practical assessment as soon as possible in the academic year to accommodate any changes to delivery necessitated by social distancing requirements.

Timetabling of access

Most centres will have limited equipment/facilities, making it difficult to provide access to all students in a cohort within a limited period of time. Where social distancing is required, this will be exacerbated by the need to work with smaller groups. To ensure that students have access to the necessary staff/facilities/equipment, centres will need to carefully plan the timetable to include access.

For example, if you were teaching students how to use a wood lathe, you will have to limit the number of students who can engage in the demonstration by a member of staff; maintaining suitable distance between staff and students. Where in a normal year, you might have been able to process 30 students through these demonstrations in 3 groups of 10 students; maintaining social distancing may require that it now requires 6 groups of 5 students. The implications of this 3-fold increase in time should be planned into the students' overall curriculum.

Beyond the teaching/delivery of this type of activity, is the subsequent need for students to have access to the equipment and facility in order to carry out their work for assessment. For example, students who have had a demonstration of the use of a centrifuge, in studying a Higher National in Applied Sciences, will have need of the centrifuge to carry out lab-based activities for assignments. Again, in order to ensure safety, centres will need to develop a schedule for groups of students to be able to access this equipment.

Time allocated to the unit/activity

Given the above, and the potential that some subjects may involve multiple examples of demonstrations and subsequent access to staff/facilities/equipment, there may be considerable additional time needed to provide students with a suitable learning experience. This may require centres to review the time allocated to the delivery and assessment of practical units.

Where in a previous year, when social distancing was not necessary, it may have been possible to manage demonstration and access to equipment such that all delivery and assessment could be managed within a single term/semester. Now, with the additional time needed to manage the process with social distancing, centres may need to consider whether practical units will require more than a single semester/term to deliver and assess.

Adapting summative assessment

There may be instances where students can be provided with access to equipment, staff and facilities for the purposes of teaching and learning activities, but there is insufficient time to afford them access to the necessary equipment/facilities to work on their assignments.

Where possible centres should document students' engagement with the specialist equipment/facilities during teaching and learning activities. For example, if during their initial demonstration on the use of piece of specialist equipment students have the opportunity to use the equipment themselves, this should be documented; with notes from the tutor on how well the student was able to use the equipment. If necessary, these notes may be used as evidence in summative assessment of the student using the equipment. Thus, where an assessment criterion may say:

> "Demonstrate the use of industry-standard equipment and processes in the production of …"

The tutor's record of students' engagement during teaching and learning activity provides some evidence to support achievement of this criterion.

Cleaning/Disinfecting Equipment

Where multiple students will need to be using specialist equipment within the centre, it is (in accordance with your local/regional/national guidelines) vital that a protocol for cleaning and disinfecting equipment is developed and implemented.

The need to clean and disinfect equipment and facilities will place further demands on the timetabling of access to these resources. Centres should consider carefully the implications of this on the amount of time that will be available for the delivery, students' work and assessment. Again, this may lead to a need for more time to be allocated to some types of units; in order to ensure that all students are able to engage with the range of activities that will form a suitable learning experience.

Ensuring Evidence is Available for Assessment

Given that there may be continued need to different approaches to teaching, learning and assessment, it is important that centres plan their delivery and assessment to integrate different forms of evidence that may be used to support assessment.

Centres should ensure that they are including formative assessment activities throughout the period of teaching and learning delivery of units. This is particularly important for units

that may be delivered over an extended period, with summative assessment at the end. On the one hand, formative assessment is critical to support students to understand their progress and achievement. On the other, the record of student progress in formative assessment may, if necessary, be used in Centre Assessed Grades (should this be made available in the future).

Where practical work may require students to engage with specialist equipment and processes, and these form a part of the teaching and learning activities, tutors are strongly encouraged to keep notes of how students engage with this equipment or process. These notes may, if necessary, be used to provide evidence in Centre Assessed Grades (should this be made available).

How to approach research

Students working on research activities requiring primary research may find it challenging in the current climate. However, when used correctly, the internet can be a good source for scholarly journals, current news, books, credible magazines, general information and other relevant content to help with research-based activities. These sources will need to be correctly referenced in student work.

Primary Data Collection

Typically, activities such as interviews, focus groups, observations, etc. would be conducted in a face-to-face environment. Alternative methods to conduct primary research could include:

- Using video conferencing software to host focus groups, observations and interviews
- Arranging a phone conversation for direct interviews
- Using Live Messaging systems or software such as Microsoft Teams to conduct research amongst peers
- Engaging in email correspondence
- Using social media networks to gauge feedback or interest i.e. consumer voice.

Using online surveys is another approach which is relatively simple to set up. Several free online survey tools are readily available to design and send out to a wide range of participants. Common survey platforms include:

- [Google Forms](#)
- [SurveyMonkey](#)
- [SmartSurvey](#)

An Internet search will reveal numerous other survey platforms that may be utilized.

Secondary Data Collection

Where primary data collection may not be possible, or necessary, students may be directed to use secondary research, which can support the original hypothesis being examined. Many online journals offer free access to scholarly articles and peer reviewed journals. To ensure reliability look for reputable sources online. Many reliable statistics, articles and other information can be found on government and educational websites.

In addition, an Internet search for only scholarly information will reveal further sources. Some open access journals which feature topics across several areas are:

[DOAJ](#)

> DOAJ features more than 8,500 open access journals, many of which are sourced from government, commercial, non-profit, and for-profit sources.

[Oxford Open](#)

> Oxford Open's database is comprised of archived content from more than 300 publications. The majority of these journals are fully open access, and the site also provides an array of optional open access entries (articles with publication costs paid by the author) that users may also access free-of-charge.

[Omics Group](#)

> More than 300 open-access scientific journals on life sciences, pharmacology, environmental science, management, computer science and engineering.

Online Schools also publish a full list of [open access journals](#) by subject.

Many professional bodies and professional membership organisations also publish research studies, case studies and information that students may use to support their research. Typically, these sources will be reliable and relevant. Centres are encouraged to ensure that students are aware of the professional bodies and membership organisations that are relevant to their field of study.

How to approach groupwork

In most cases, the requirement for group or collaborative working does not require that students are physically within the same location. Given this, centres are encouraged to provide students with advice and guidance on the use of alternative methods of collaborating. These may include:

- Email correspondence
- Telephone calls
- Audio/Video conferences (e.g. Zoom, FaceTime, Skype or Microsoft Teams)
- Online forums
- File Sharing Services (e.g. Dropbox, Box, OneDrive, etc.)

Centres are encouraged to review the tools that may be included with their Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). Many VLEs include collaboration and group working tools, which may facilitate students' interaction with each other.

Collaboration is often associated with students being required to discuss and negotiate the roles and responsibilities that each will take in the assignment that they have been assigned. The importance here is that the students communicate; discussing and deciding on their individual actions that will contribute to the overall. This may, for example, be the allocation of different areas of research that will be shared with the others. Thus, more research can be undertaken than by an individual alone. Similarly, if the students are producing a report; each may take responsibility for a different aspect of the report.

In project-based work, it is not necessary that the students are all working on the same response to the assignment brief. Their collaboration may be through any, or all of, the following:

- Initial research, which is shared and critiqued by the group;
- Their individual response to the brief, which is presented to the group for feedback and critique;
- Individual development of different parts of a larger response (e.g. individual works for an exhibition, individual reports on different aspects of a topic, etc.)

The critical aspects of collaborative work are:

- That students are communicating, sharing, discussing and debating the overall output.
- That students recognise their own contribution to the overall output, the contributions of others, and how these combine to form the overall output.
- That students reflect upon the collaborative process; recognising the benefits and challenges, thinking about how they may achieve better collaborations for the future.

Centres are encouraged to provide students with clear guidance on how collaboration may take place when the individuals are not physically together. In fact, for many subjects, it is already very common that work takes place with remote collaborators.

Centres may wish to provide students with guidance on the number of collaborative meetings that should be undertaken, and model agendas for the meetings. Agendas should recognise the progress of the work, so that they help students to understand how they should be progressing. For example, if the assignment were for an 'online exhibition' of graphics work:

- Meeting 1 – Week 1 – Defining roles, responsibilities and research areas.
- Meeting 2 – Week 3 – Research outcomes, initial concepts
- Meeting 3 – Week 5 – Presenting Work-in-progress

- Meeting 4 – Week 7 – Planning the Online Exhibition, review of individual work
- Meeting 5 – Week 8 – Reviewing Online Exhibition, discussing individual written statements for website

The same model could be adapted for students developing a collaborative marketing plan, or computer programme. The importance is to use the schedule of meetings to encourage the collaboration and guide the students in the development of their work.

Group working and collaboration are key skills for every BTEC Higher National student. While the current situation poses challenges for students and tutors, it is important that students continue to have the opportunity to engage with each other and to collaborate. This will ensure that they develop important skills, that will support them in the workplace, and that they continue to share their ideas, challenges and views with each other.

How to approach the use of alternative software

Where students may be required/expected to use specialist software, that they may not have access to outside of the college, centres may allow students to use alternative software; provided students will be able to produce the necessary assessment evidence. Where centres do require students to use specific software, they must be assured that all students can access and use the software on their personal computers as required. In some cases centres may book students info specialist rooms to access specific software took at the college.

Centres are encouraged to provide students with guidance as to suitable free or low-cost software that may be used to undertake work. For example:

- GNU Image Manipulation Program (GIMP) – a free photo editing package
- Tracktion T7 – Free Digital Audio Workstation (DAW)
- BandLab Cakewalk – Free Digital Audio Workstation (DAW)
- Inkscape – Free vector graphics/illustration program
- Blender – Free 3d modelling, rendering and animation system
- DraftSight – Free CAD software (compatible with AutoCAD)
- LightWorks – Free video editing software
- Scribus – Free digital page layout alternative to InDesign
- LibreOffice – Free word processing, spreadsheets, presentation software (compatible with Microsoft Office)

There are many free or low-cost alternatives available. Many software vendors provide free versions of software for students. Searching on the Internet will result in extensive lists.

Some large, industry-standard software vendors provide free versions of their software for education. Two of the most common are:

- [Microsoft](#) – Word, Excel, Powerpoint and other are available for free (this is only available to students who have an email address that is linked to their education provider)
- [AutoDesk](#) – AutoCAD, Revit, Maya, 3DS Max, Inventor and many others are available for free download.

In addition, many vendors offer low-cost educational licenses for their software. For example, [Adobe Creative Cloud](#) (Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign, etc.) offer a low-cost monthly license for students.

Finally, many vendors offer fully functional trial versions of their software. These may allow students to complete work using the same software as found in college. Centres are encouraged to explore whether trial versions of their software may be available and provide students with appropriate guidance.

It is important to keep in mind that, in using any software, it is the underlying skills that are being developed; not the use of specific software. Where an alternative software solution may be available to enable students to complete their work, without the need for considerable expense, this should be given serious consideration.

Where students may be allowed to use alternative software, centres should consider the additional time that may be necessary for students to make the transition to using new tools. This may require additional time to complete assignments.

How to approach laboratory work

Where a practical lab/workshop activity can be substituted by an equivalent non-practical simulated activity, centres are advised to consider accessing licenses of the simulation software for these students to use in completing the assignment (at home).

Where licensing is not viable, centres are advised to explore providing results of relevant practical lab experiments to students to analyse and evaluate in writing a report as an alternative assessment.

How to approach work experience

For those students currently studying an *optional* work experience unit, centres may adapt assessment accordingly if students are no longer able to access the workplace. For example, students can still draw upon any previous work experience and hours fulfilled to complete performance development plans or reflective journals.

Centres can provide additional work-place scenarios and situations for students to address, discuss and resolve, which will help facilitate completion of reflective practice. Assessment tools such as reflective statements, online discussion forums, e-portfolio of action plans for future improvements and a catalogue template for recommended methods and techniques could be used to support assessment.

For those students currently undertaking qualifications where work placement, and/or assessment in work placement is a *mandatory* element of the programme, centres are advised to refer to sector-specific guidance provided for further clarification regarding arrangements in place (see *Appendix 2: Healthcare, Social and Community Work, and Early Years Covid-19 FAQs 2021*).

How to approach presentations

Where the student may be required to give a presentation, centres may consider the possibility that this is done via online systems (e.g. Zoom, Skype, etc.) or that the student records themselves giving the presentation and sends this to the centre/tutor for review. Students can still submit their presentation/speaker notes and accompanying materials to their tutors and question and answer sessions can still be conducted by tutors online, where possible.

In addition, the student being assessed could develop an online survey and share this. Peers and their tutor can provide both live and written feedback on the effectiveness of the initiative in achieving the required objectives, for the student to use to produce reflective evaluations of their performance and its impact.

Digital Archiving of Student Work

We all hope that the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic may be waning and that things will soon return to a more 'normal' situation. However, to ensure that you are able to assess students' work and provide sampling for External Examiners, it is strongly recommended that you consider digital forms of evidence to be integrated into your assignments and assessment and that copies of these are kept by the centre.

The use of digital forms of evidence will vary from subject to subject. For units which require the production of work that cannot be directly digital (like some types of art and design work, for example) students may be required to submit digital photographs of the work that they produce. Where demonstration of a process may be required, centres should consider the use of digital video evidence or ensure that observation/witness records are kept in a digital format.

Additional sector-specific guidance

Healthcare, Social and Community Work, and Early Years

Detailed guidance on work placement and associated assessment requirements are provided in *Appendix 2: Healthcare, Social and Community Work, and Early Years Covid-19 FAQs 2021*.

Construction/Construction and the Built Environment

Where students may be required to demonstrate a process, centres may wish to consider whether a student explaining the process (through a written work or audio-visual presentation) may show sufficient knowledge/skill to allow assessment to take place. Centres must be confident that students have had sufficient prior engagement with equipment/processes to ensure that they are aware of (and can evidence) any health and safety implications to the equipment/process. Any adjustment to the assessment, in these cases, should be considered carefully.

In some cases, for example **Unit 6: Construction Information** (in which students are asked to produce different forms of construction information), it is worth noting that none of the learning outcomes or assessment criteria require the use of CAD/BIM software. While centres may typically require this in their assignment, it is possible to achieve the learning outcomes through the use of hand drawing; although this may not be ideal. Where centres may feel that it is imperative that software is used, for units of this type, they may need to consider the affordance to allow students to use different software; that may be available to them at home, in order to achieve the necessary learning and produce suitable assessment evidence.

Art and Design, Creative Media Practice

Where students may be able to continue to develop project work, artefacts, artwork outside of the facilities offered by the centre, photographic evidence of the process of making and the finished work may be accepted in lieu of the viewing the finished work 'in-person'.

Centres are strongly encouraged to integrate a 'proposal' within their assignments. While the production of a proposal is often a requirement in art & design practice thus a key skill for students to develop, it also provides a very good element of evidence to support the assessment and external examining process. Further, where there are learning outcomes and assessment criteria that call upon students to conduct, analyse and present research and planning a 'proposal' can be a very effective form of evidence and informs the way that they may progress in the other aspects of their development of work.

Music, Performing Arts

Centres are reminded to refer to their local government guidelines to ensure any social distancing and health and safety advice is in place for performances and any close contact delivery and assessment. Special consideration should be given to any units that involve make up application, close contact partner/group work and vocal performances.

Units that contain assessment requiring an audience do not mandate the size of an audience or external venue location, therefore in-house performances with small audience numbers (i.e. socially distanced) are valid and appropriate for assessment, or performances conducted at home with a 'home' audience and submitted via video.

Computing

Where specialist software is required to complete a practical task (programming software, database software, etc.) centres should in the first instance look for alternative/free/online versions which students are able to download and use from home. In the case of hardware, for networking for example, the use of simulation tools such as Packet Tracer would be a good alternative. It must be noted that where students are completing units that also map to vendor certifications, they may not have the necessary skills to undertake the vendors professional exams if they have no practical experience.

Centres may want to consider adapting the assessment so students can provide written (or other type of evidence) to show how they would have done the practical activity, for example; programming can be written out instead of actually programmed in software. Care must be taken to ensure that the alternative evidence provides comprehensive understanding of how the practical task would have otherwise been undertaken e.g. in the programming unit the student will have to 'write' out the algorithms in a suitable language and explain how these would be implemented in the chosen Integrated Development Environment (IDE).

Hospitality Management

At Level 4 for those units that require some practical application in the kitchen e.g. **Unit 9: Managing Food Production** and **Unit 10: International Gastronomy**, centres will need to adapt the assessment strategy for online delivery, for example, students can still create a menu and share images and videos of their creations online. It is not advisable, however, for centres to deliver **Unit 11: Creative Patisserie and Artisan Bakery** and/or **Unit 12: Butchery and Fishmongery**, as these units require specialist methods, equipment and techniques that cannot be assessed by adapting the assessment strategy for online delivery.

If centres can conduct sessions in a training kitchen then this must be in accordance with the Centre's social distancing protocol. Specific attention should be given to kitchen capacity, distance between workstations, time allocated to each session and time required for cleaning and disinfecting between sessions. Health and safety measures that apply to a fully equipped training kitchen must always be adhered to. Please also refer to our guidance above for dealing with social distancing, using specialist equipment and cleaning/disinfecting.

At Level 5, **Unit 29: Managing and Planning an Event** can be assessed using the planning and preparation of a virtual event rather than a face to face event. The assessment strategy can be adapted to either focus on a range of different types of events for the students to research and use as case studies or, if they have prepared and planned a forthcoming event, for the student to arrange contingency and move to a virtual event.

Applied Science

In units such as **Unit 5: Fundamentals of Chemistry, Unit 7: Inorganic Chemistry, Unit 8: Organic Chemistry, Unit 9: Physical Chemistry, Unit 14: Food Technology, Unit 17: Fundamentals of Biochemistry, and Unit 26: Managing Scientific Projects**, the practical component is a learning tool rather than an integral skill (e.g. biochemistry). Here students could research how to carry out practical techniques and interpret specimen results provided by their tutor.

Please also refer to the guidance on laboratory work above where applicable.

Sport and Sport and Exercise Science

Centres are reminded to check with their local authorities to ensure all guidance for Sport and Sport activities are followed.

Where optional units require work experience or work placements, hours are not currently set and *at this time are recommendations only*. If students have evidenced the required work, the placement hours are flexible and at the discretion of the centre. Please refer to the guidance on work experience given earlier in this document.

Where coaching and activity leadership sessions are required these may be delivered by the student who could practically demonstrate a coaching/activity session to a family member (s) who could then provide a witness testimony, evaluation and feedback.

For **Unit 6: Training, Fitness, Testing**, the student could use pre-existing data collected and assessors could present this in the assignment brief as an identified task for interpretation.

For completion of practical work such as **Unit 7: Inclusive Sport**, **Unit 18: Working with Young People**, centres should consider where virtual planned sessions linked to special populations/children/ elderly may be integrated into an amended/adapted assignment brief.

For **Unit 5: Coaching Practice & Skill Development** the centre may wish to draw on pre-published video materials that will enable the student to analyse different coaches working in different environments.

For **Unit 19: Expedition Leadership** and **Unit 20: Residential Leadership Activity Centres** could provide a case study that includes tasks specifically to address how a student could 'demonstrate' potentially with a team task that would show leadership skills.

For **Unit 35: Teaching Practice**, the student can plan a short series of face to face short teaching sessions or virtual sessions where the students are recorded and the assessor can provide summative feedback.

For **Unit 31: Event Management** the student could set up an event that is delivered in the home working environment or offered remotely to peers/family and receive feedback from the participants – there is no need for a minimum number of group members for the event.

Engineering

Where specialist resources are required to facilitate hands-on practical skills and knowledge that are essential to the successful delivery and learning of the content (e.g. **Unit 10: Mechanical Workshop Practices, Unit 47: Analogue Electronics**), centres are advised to adapt their delivery suitably (e.g. blended learning approach) and carry out the practical elements, but spread over a longer period to allow for smaller class sizes. Where specialist licenced software (including simulation tools and CAD software) is required to deliver the content, centres are advised to seek free/evaluation/online alternatives that the students can install and use from home or to extend the existing software licenses for use at home.

Where specialist hardware is required to complete the assignment, and there are no suitable simulation tools, for students completing in 2021 centres are advised to adapt their delivery suitably (e.g. blended learning approach) and assess practical work in small groups. Example units where assessments may need to be adapted include **Unit 10: Mechanical Workshop Practices, Unit 20: Digital Principles, Unit 22: Electronic Circuits and Devices, Unit 23: Computer Aided Design and Manufacture (CAD/CAM), Unit 37: Virtual Engineering, Unit 40: Commercial Programming Software, Unit 41: Distributed Control Systems, Unit 45: Industrial Systems, Unit 46: Embedded Systems, Unit 47: Analogue Electronic Systems, Unit 49: Lean Manufacturing, Unit 52: Further Electrical, Electronic and Digital Principles, Unit 54: Further Control Systems Engineering, Unit 55: Aircraft Flight Control Systems, Unit 56: Aircraft Propulsion Principles and Technology.**

The above guidance also applies to those units where assessment of hands-on practical skills and knowledge is essential in ensuring standards and/or compliance with the professional bodies.

Land-based

Where practical activities require the use of specialist resources such as machines, livestock, or plants it should not be expected that all students will have access to appropriate resources.

The optional work experience unit in the Land-based RQF BTEC Higher Nationals (**Unit 33 for Agriculture**, **Unit 41 for Animal Management**, and **Unit 36 for Horticulture**) has a minimum requirement of 80 hours of work experience. Further guidance is provided within the general guidance at the start of this document on how to approach work experience.

Centres should also remember that health and safety considerations are likely to rule out most fieldwork activities.

Where units have a design focus (such as those within the HND Horticulture Garden Design pathway) centres should refer to the guidance on alternative software above.

The optional unit on teaching in a specialist subject (**Unit 14 for Horticulture**, **Unit 22 for Animal Management** and **Unit 17 for Agriculture**) requires preparation, delivery and reflection on teaching practice. This could be achieved via the use of online systems (e.g. Zoom, Skype etc.) which would facilitate the delivery of an online session to a group and also allow the assessor to view performance without necessitating contact between participants.

Please also refer to the guidance on laboratory work above where applicable.

Appendix 1: Alternative Assessment Techniques

Included below is an indicative list of alternative assessments for the relevant unit level assessments as outlined in the qualification specification definitive documents (See BTEC Higher Nationals).

Note: _Where a centre may seek to design alternative assessments, they must meet the requirements of the learning outcomes and assessment criteria for the unit. No modification to learning outcomes and assessment criteria is allowed._

Assessment Technique	Indicative Alternative Assessment
Case study (physical submission)	Case study (online submission or electronic submission by email)
Discussion forum (in class, verbal)	Virtual meetings (Google class, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, FaceTime, Skype or equivalent platforms)
Discussion forum (written)	Online chat (Google class, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, FaceTime, Skype, VLEs, blogs or equivalent platforms)
Dissertation (physical submission)	Dissertation (online submission or electronic submission by email)
Essay (physical submission)	Essay (online submission or electronic submission by email)
Examination (written, campus based)	Individual Coursework (Or) Essay (Or) Online time constrained examination (MCQs and/or descriptive questions)
Experiment (lab based; face-to-face)	Report on results of the experiment provided by the tutor (online submission or electronic submission by email)
Independent research report (physical copy)	Independent research report (online submission or electronic submission by email)

Oral/Viva (in class, verbal)	Oral/Viva (Google class, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, FaceTime, Skype or equivalent platforms; Telephone)
Peer review (written, in class)	Peer review report (online submission or electronic submission by email)
Presentation (face-to-face, in class)	Presentation (live via Google class, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, FaceTime, Skype or equivalent platforms) Presentation (recorded online submission or electronic submission by email)
Production of an artefact (physical submission)	Presentation of the production phases of an artefact (Google class, Microsoft Teams, Zoo, Skype or equivalent platforms; recorded online submission or electronic submission by email) OR Report on the production phases of an artefact (online submission or electronic submission by email)
Performance portfolio (physical submission)	Performance portfolio (online submission or electronic submission by email)
Practical work (lab based, face-to-face)	Practical work report (simulated tools output; online submission or electronic submission by email)
Project report (physical submission)	Project report (online submission or electronic submission by email)

Role playing (in class)	Role playing (live via Google class, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, FaceTime, Skype or equivalent platforms) Individual report (online submission or electronic submission by email)
Self-reflection (physical submission of the report)	Self-reflection (online submission or electronic submission by email)
Simulated activity (in class demonstration)	Individual report (online submission or electronic submission by email)
Team assessment (written report, physical submission)	Team assessment (report, online submission or electronic submission by email) Individual assessment (report, online submission or electronic submission by email)
Team assessment (verbal, in class)	Team assessment (live via Google class, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, FaceTime, Skype or equivalent platforms) Team assessment (report, online submission or electronic submission by email) Individual assessment (report, online submission or electronic submission by email)
Written task/report (physical submission)	Written task/report (online submission or electronic submission by email)

Appendix 2
Healthcare, Social and Community Work, and Early Years Covid-19 FAQs 2021

Frequently Asked Questions and guidance for providers and colleges delivering BTEC Higher National qualifications in Healthcare, Social and Community Work and Early Childhood Education and Care.

It is important to note that these FAQs <u>only apply</u> where it is intended that students on programme will be starting or continuing in their BTEC Higher National programme in 2021.

Practice-related Requirements and Assessment Guidance for Healthcare, Social and Community Work and Early Years subjects

Q: My student is unable to complete their mandatory placement hours due to the impact of Covid-19. What can we do?

> A: Where a work experience/practice requirement is mandated within a qualification, we expect all students will achieve this requirement in full. Where this is not possible due to the impact of Covid-19 restrictions, students will be able to progress to certification in the following circumstances:
>
> - o The student has completed the minimum required work experience/practice hours listed in the tables below, and all attempts to access further hours have been exhausted
> - o Steps have been taken to support the student to achieve the required work experience/practice hours, including part-time employment, bank and relief options, volunteering, work during holiday periods
> - o Actions taken to secure the full requirement of work experience/practice hours have been recorded and are available for internal and external quality assurance
>
> Continuing HND students who are now in the second year of their programme will be expected to have satisfactorily completed at least 70% of the total work placement hours for Level 4 of their programme (HNC), as well as 70% of their PLAD/PREP.
>
> For the second year of their programme, students are expected to complete a minimum number of placement hours, as stipulated in the table below, as well as 100% of the PLAD/PREP. Students are permitted to meet this requirement through completing these hours in different work placement environments, providing these placements meet the minimum placement requirements as stipulated in the relevant programme specification.

The number of required placement hours for all qualifications in these sectors has not changed and we expect students will complete these hours in full. However, where students are unable to fully complete these hours as a direct result of restrictions related to Covid-19, students will be able to progress to certification in the following circumstances:

- o The student has completed the minimum required work experience/practice hours listed in the tables below, and all attempts to access further hours have been exhausted
- o Steps have been taken to support the student to achieve the required work experience/practice hours, including part-time employment, bank and relief options, volunteering, work during holiday periods and the provision of planned, supervised and structured virtual (online/telephony) support, where they have been trained to do so
- o Actions taken to secure the full requirement of work experience/practice hours have been recorded and are available for internal and external quality assurance
- o Students, whilst on placement are able to satisfactorily provide direct care to service users, as verified by their placement supervisor and their college assessor.

Students in the second year of their programme in 2020-2021:

Qualification/Pathways	Minimum Placement Hours in **Year 2 (2020-2021)**
• **BTEC Level 5 Higher National Diploma in Social and Community Work (all pathways)**	75
• **BTEC Level 5 Higher National Diploma in Healthcare Practice for England (Nursing)** • **BTEC Level 5 Higher National Diploma in Healthcare Practice for England (Healthcare Assistant Practitioner)** • **BTEC Level 5 Higher National Diploma in Healthcare Practice (Nursing and Healthcare Assistant)**	158
• **BTEC Level 5 Higher National Diploma in Healthcare Practice for England (all other pathways)** • **BTEC Level 5 Higher National Diploma in Healthcare Practice (all other pathways)**	75

• **BTEC Level 5 Higher National Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care (all pathways)**	105

New students

Qualification/Pathways	Minimum Placement Hours in **Year 1 (2020-2021)**
• **BTEC Level 4 Higher National Certificate in Social and Community Work (all pathways)** • **BTEC Level 5 Higher National Diploma in Social and Community Work (all pathways)**	75
• **BTEC Level 5 Higher National Diploma in Healthcare Practice for England (Nursing)** • **BTEC Level 5 Higher National Diploma in Healthcare Practice for England (Healthcare Assistant Practitioner)** • **BTEC Level 4 Higher National Certificate in Healthcare Practice (Nursing and Healthcare Assistant)**	158
• **BTEC Level 4 Higher National Certificate in Healthcare Practice for England (all other pathways)** • **BTEC Level 4 Higher National Certificate in Healthcare Practice (all other pathways)** • **BTEC Level 5 Higher National Diploma in Healthcare Practice for England (all other pathways)** • **BTEC Level 5 Higher National Diploma in Healthcare Practice (all other pathways)**	75
• **BTEC Level 4 Higher National Certificate in Early Childhood Education and Care (all pathways)** • **BTEC Level 5 Higher National Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care (all pathways)**	263

Students are permitted to meet this requirement through completing these hours in different work placement environments or the same workplace, providing these placements meet the minimum placement requirements as stipulated in the relevant programme specification.

It is expected that centres consider what is necessary to ensure learners have met the relevant learning outcomes through any practice-based learning, and adjust the hours required above the minimum accordingly. Any adjustments to the hours required for placement above the minimum stipulated must be supported by evidence to justify e.g. where a student has not satisfied the relevant practice-based assessment criteria and is required to do so to ensure the health, safety and safeguarding of individuals they are/may be responsible for caring for, following completion of the qualification.

Evidence to justify includes a full audit trail held at the centre, including the student's attendance log, minutes of meetings that gave rise to the decision, additional supporting evidence from the student's placement, and placement supervisor, that supports this decision, records of discussions with the student that confirm their involvement in the decision. These records should be made available to the External Examiner to audit during the next sampling opportunity.

This adjustment is subject to any subsequent guidance from Ofqual **or relevant professional bodies** regarding qualifications that integrate work placement assessment.

Q: I am running a Higher National programme that confers a license to practice, or includes mandatory workplace assessment requirements. Can my centre use alternative methods to assess practice-based Learning Outcomes and associated criteria, where direct observation is not possible given disruptions caused by Covid-19?

A: Yes. However, where it is safe to do so, observation by an occupationally competent and qualified assessor is preferred as the main source of evidence for all learners.

Where this is not possible due to protracted disruption caused by Covid-19 restrictions, testimonies provided by a suitably experienced employer/manager/leader recruited by the centre to undertake the role of an Expert Witness (EW) will be accepted.

Centres in England can use Expert Witness Testimony (EWT) where EWs have occupational expertise for specialist areas, or where the observation is of a particularly sensitive nature. The use of expert witnesses should be determined and agreed by the assessor assigned to the student. EWs must fulfil the specific requirements detailed in the [Skills for Health Assessment Principles for](#)

[Qualifications that Assess Occupational Competence](). Centres must also ensure they provide EWs with induction, training and ongoing support that is timely, meaningful and appropriate.

Centres in Northern Ireland must ensure that EWs fulfil the specific requirements detailed in the [Skills for Care and Development Assessment Principles]() and/or their recently published ['flexible arrangements']() document. This includes the requirement for Centres to provide EWs with induction, training and ongoing support that is timely, meaningful and appropriate.

International Centres must ensure Expert Witnesses meet the following criteria:

- have a working knowledge of the qualification units on which their expertise is based;
- be occupationally competent in their area of expertise;
- have EITHER a qualification in assessment of workplace performance OR a professional work role which involves evaluating the everyday practice of staff.
- Hold a relevant qualification at or above the level of unit being assessed

Centres must also ensure that they provide EWs with induction, training and ongoing support that is timely, meaningful and appropriate.

Additionally, all centres must adapt their Internal Quality Assurance strategies to ensure that Assessor judgements based on Expert Witness Testimony (EWT) are prioritised for standardisation and sampling activities.

The appropriate use of, recording, standardisation and sampling of EWTs and the process of EW recruitment, induction, training and support will be subject to External Quality Assurance by Pearson.

Certification will not be possible for any of the following qualifications unless substantial assessor observations and/or EWTs are present in a learner's portfolio and that these are based on experience within a real work setting:

Qualification/Pathways
- **BTEC Level 4 Higher National Certificate in Healthcare Practice for England (Healthcare and Nursing Assistant)** - **BTEC Level 4 Higher National Certificate in Healthcare Practice (Nursing and Healthcare Support)**
- **BTEC Level 5 Higher National Diploma in Healthcare Practice for England (Nursing)**

- **BTEC Level 5 Higher National Diploma in Healthcare Practice for England (Healthcare Assistant Practitioner)**
- **BTEC Level 5 Higher National Diploma in Healthcare Practice (Nursing and Healthcare Assistant)**

- **BTEC Level 4 Higher National Certificate in Early Childhood Education and Care (all pathways)**

  BTEC Level 5 Higher National Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care (all pathways)

In these circumstances, triangulation of alternative assessment methods should be used to capture evidence of competence for those aspects of practice not yet observed (or captured) in PREP/PLAD documentation e.g. through Expert Witness Testimony, professional discussion and reflective logs.

Students can also reflect on previous observation records/completed activities on placement to evaluate their practice as related to learning outcomes for assessments not yet completed. The qualified Assessor assigned to the student(s) will be expected to confirm the accuracy of the judgement of the student(s) competency with a signed supporting statement. All judgements will be subject to the usual Internal Quality Assurance protocols.

Q: What about where my program does not include any mandatory requirements for assessment in the workplace, but I have planned for this in my delivery?

For **all other pathways in the Healthcare Practice**, **Healthcare Practice for England, and Social and Community Work qualifications**, where observation of practice in the workplace setting is not mandatory, but is planned, triangulation of alternative assessment methods can be used to capture evidence that would otherwise have been obtained through observation of the student's practice e.g. through expert witness testimony, professional discussion and reflective logs.

Even in these circumstances, the qualified assessor assigned to the student will be expected to confirm the accuracy of the judgement of the student(s) competency with a signed supporting statement to support. All judgements will be subject to the usual internal quality assurance protocols.

For additional guidance and recommendations regarding alternative assessments for practice-related assessment criteria by unit, please refer to the HSCEY Adaptation Guidance on HNGlobal.

Q: Can my centre replace direct observations of practice with remote observations?

> A: In normal circumstances, this is not something we would accept, and continues to be the case. It is also very likely that the student's work placement setting(s) will not permit devices that can take video recordings.

Q: My student is taking the Higher National Diploma in Healthcare Practice for England (Healthcare Assistant Practitioner) as part of the Level 5 Healthcare Assistant Practitioner Apprenticeship Standard, do the same considerations apply to them?

> A: For apprentices, the overarching and primary guidance for what is permissible on programme has been issued by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education and can be found [here](#). Please refer to these carefully in making decisions with regards to delivery and the assessment of the Standard.

For the HND qualification element of the Standard, the considerations in the other FAQs apply.

Q: Where can I get more information and guidance about sector responses to Covid-19?

> A: We have a dedicated [forum on HNGlobal](#) that provides regular updates and an opportunity for you to ask questions specific to BTEC Higher Nationals. In addition, Pearson update our website regularly with the latest information and guidance on Covid-19 and our response to support centres and students across all our qualifications. There is separate guidance for [UK](#) and [International](#) centres, and links on each of these pages to additional information, support, resources and guidance. Please check these regularly to keep informed.

> Here are some links to UK-based Guidance and resources related to Covid-19 that is useful for centres delivering Health and Social Care, Early Education and Counselling qualifications, and related Apprenticeship Standards. These links will be updated regularly as more information is received.

- [Nursing and Midwifery Council Response to the Covid-19 Emergency (for students and educators)](#)
- [Apprenticeship Guidance (England only) - Coronavirus (COVID-19): apprenticeship programme response](#)
- [British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy Coronavirus (COVID-19): Guidance and resources for members](#)
- [Skills for Care Covid-19 Essential Training](#)
- [Coronavirus: Free e-learning resources from Skills for Health](#)
- [Early Education (the British Association for Early Childhood Education) Free Resources and Membership - via HN Global](#)

- [Coronavirus Guidance and Resources from Social Care Online (SCIE)](#)