National Professional Qualification for Middle Leadership (NPQML) and National Professional Qualification for Senior Leadership (NPQSL): Assessment flexibilities March 2021

The Department understands that the ongoing restrictions as a result of coronavirus (COVID-19) have exacerbated the challenges faced by some NPQML and NPQSL participants in undertaking the requisite activity to enable them to satisfy the criteria, as set out in the Content and Assessment framework (CAF), for completion of their final assessment projects.

In response the Department has agreed with the Quality Assurance Agent (Tribal Education Ltd) to put in place flexibilities to ensure that NPQML and NPQSL participants are not disadvantaged because of the impact of COVID-19 on schools. The optional flexibility we are introducing will support participants, who due to current restrictions, are unable to obtain or access current data due to the cancellation of exams including SAT's and GCSEs in academic years 19/20 and 20/21. This is designed to ensure participants can use a range of alternative data sources to successfully complete their assessment projects.

As with the NPQEL flexibilities which the Department introduced on the 22 February, the majority of the original task criteria for both NPQML and NPQSL will still apply, with the exception of the highlighted criteria as set out in the tables below. These adjustments have been made to incorporate the optional data flexibility and outline that participants will be able to use a range of data, including current and/or most recent (2019) internal and external data available, to inform their project and its outcomes.

NPQML and NPQSL participants can use the optional flexibilities (Table 1 and 2) to demonstrate how the design and intended outcomes of their project, will have a positive ongoing impact on pupil progress and attainment. It remains? important for the participant to show how the anticipated outcomes would be achieved.

Participants should discuss any questions or concerns with their provider in advance of starting their task where possible.

Table 1: NPQML Content and Assessment Framework

Original criteria	Alternative assessment criteria	Required documents
Assessment criteria 1.1.1 - Deploys tools and techniques to manage and analyse data on pupil progress and attainment.	Assessment criteria 1.1.1 - Deploys tools and techniques to manage and analyse data, including, but not limited to data on pupil progress and attainment. If current data is incomplete or unobtainable, the most recent data sets available (2019) can be used to establish a baseline and to identify trends and success criteria.	Raw data analysis of current pupil performance data/previous years pupil performance data
Assessment criteria 1.1.2 - Designs, evaluates and improves plans in light of data on pupil progress and attainment.	Assessment criteria 1.1.2 - Designs, evaluates and improves plans in light of data explored, including, but not limited to, data on pupil progress and attainment. If current data is incomplete or unobtainable, the most recent data sets available (2019) can be used to establish a baseline and to identify trends and success criteria. Other data sources and theory can be used to support plans.	
Assessment criteria 2.1.3 - Implements and evaluates an evidence-based project that improves pupil progress and/or attainment.	Assessment criteria 2.1.3 - Implements and evaluates an evidence-based project that improves pupil progress and/or attainment. Both qualitative and quantitative data can be used as evidence to support project success. If current data is incomplete or unobtainable, the most recent data sets available (2019) can be used to identify an expected data trajectory of improvement following the proposed implementation of plans.	Pupil performance data, including intended or expected outcomes following proposed project implementation.

Table 2: NPQSL Content and Assessment Framework

Original criteria	Alternative assessment criteria	Required documents
Assessment criteria 1.2.1 - Deploys statistical and/or data analysis concepts to identify variation in pupil performance and contributing factors, applying the findings to design of own plans.	Assessment criteria 1.2.1- Deploys statistical and/or data analysis concepts to identify variation in pupil performance and contributing factors, applying the findings to design of own plans. If current data is incomplete or unobtainable, the most recent data sets available (2019) can be used to establish a baseline and to identify success criteria. Other data sources and theory can be used to support plans.	Raw data analysis of internal and external data used with clear signposting as to whether it is current or historical data.
Assessment criteria 2.2.3 - Designs, implements, and evaluates an improvement project that reduces variation in pupil progress and/or attainment across the school.	Assessment criteria 2.2.3 - Designs, implements, and evaluates an improvement project that reduces variation in pupil progress and/or attainment across the school. Both qualitative and quantitative data can be used as evidence to support project success. If current data is incomplete or unobtainable, the most recent data sets available (2019) can be used to identify an expected data trajectory of improvement following the proposed implementation of plans.	Pupil performance data, including intended or expected outcomes following proposed project implementation.

Considerations for Assessors

- Assessors should be mindful, when interpreting supporting data, that participants may find it difficult to present hard data in terms of project outcomes due to the COVID19 restrictions and that in using the optional flexibility that participants can use other data sources and theory, providing they can demonstrate the intended improvement expected following successful implementation of their project.

- Assessors should not penalise a participant if they were already implementing a project. The participant should not be disadvantaged at assessment, if they can evidence that they have readjusted their project to consider the changes experienced through the pandemic and the re-engagement of pupils with their education, at any level.

- If an assessor has questions around interpretation of the mark scheme in relation to any applied flexibilities, they should liaise with the provider assessment lead, or the assessment sub-contractor (as appropriate) who will then contact Tribal should further clarification be required.

Additional guidance

- Data sources used by participants to establish baselines and starting points can be both internal and external, quantitative, and qualitative. The most recent externally validated performance data sets (2019) should be used where possible. Internal school data (attainment and/or progress) for corresponding pupil groups going back to 2019 would also be appropriate in this instance.

- Identifying trends and setting success criteria. Using the data analysis, participants can identify the key areas of curriculum content/teacher practice and development that will have the required impact on improving the overall outcomes for pupils when formally assessed. They could use smaller scale internal data related to pupil performance (e.g. teacher assessment of a specific task related to the project focus) in specific areas of academic development to evaluate the current position and situation. Participants should also explain how both sets (or either) confirm the rationale for the focus of their project and have influenced the ongoing developments to the work.

- An expected data trajectory will require parameters for the intended outcomes to be included, for example: in 12 months' time X %age of pupils will be on track to achieve age related expectations (ARE); if the project ran for a further term, X% of pupils would be expected to achieve their target grades.

- Theory to support design and plans can be established using examples of research projects and how these might help to determine intended or expected outcomes. For example, the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) may provide a good source of information related to this, as would reference to specialist external projects, e.g. Maths mastery (primary or secondary); early reading theory.