

Guided Learning Hours Policy

Abstract

This policy establishes a framework for calculating, allocating and documenting guided learning hours (GLH) across all delivery models

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1.Introduction

With the constant advance of creative digital technologies, coupled with the challenges faced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic – including lockdowns and the need for social distancing – the world of education has been compelled to not only keep up with these advances and to align with government restrictions, but to embrace them wholeheartedly. This is necessary to provide the best learning experiences for students, and to ensure they are equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to be ‘job ready’ in their chosen marketplace.

Active IQ recognises its responsibility in this field and has long since had a variety of blended learning options available to accommodate these demands. In the development of qualifications, the allocation of guided learning hours (GLH) has historically been built around traditional models of face-to-face teaching, but it is now recognised that the variety of delivery models in the modern world have stretched the definition of GLH. This required some intervention from the regulators to acknowledge the flexibility of differing learning approaches, thus ensuring that GLH as a defined term now only refers to ‘real time’ contact between centres and their learners (be that either face-to-face or remotely, via virtual classrooms as an example).

This policy aims to set out Active IQ’s requirements of its approved centres. When met, these will ensure that all learners will experience high quality, standardised, interactive and supported learning, no matter which modes of teaching are being used.

2. Guided learning hours: models explained – digital/online (distance learning)

Digital or online learning means using a screen-based technology to deliver part or all a course, whether at a college or via a private training provider and may include all the associated assessments. It ultimately means that a learner may never come face-to-face with a tutor in the same physical space, instead attending via a virtual classroom accessed through a virtual learning environment (VLE). Smartphones, tablets and apps may be used, as well as platforms such as Moodle or Blackboard, along with online assessment, use of video recording and access to ePortfolios where all evidence can be uploaded for assessment and verification. VLEs and discussion forums (both peer-to-peer and tutor-led) have been proven to increase motivation and achievement, while the use of group webinars provides a learning environment similar to a live classroom where attendance, participation and achievement can all be easily logged, recorded and used for individual formative assessment purposes and a solid preparation for any summative exams.

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Digital learning aims to break down the boundaries of traditional learning to deliver modern education. (In 2018, the government placed a requirement on all educational stakeholders to adopt appropriate and innovative technological strategies. This has become particularly important during the pandemic.) It can lead to cost reduction and time-efficient training, and allows access internationally, across time zones, and so on.

3. Blended learning

Simply put, a blended approach is a programme of learning that mixes a combination of live delivery (e.g. via a real or virtual classroom) and non-live delivery (e.g. pre-recorded eLearning, non-supervised learning activities). It may also involve the bulk of the delivery being taught and supported at distance, with the assessments themselves being completed in a face-to-face environment.

4. Face-to-face (F2F) learning

This is the more traditional learning model, in which the programme is taught face-to-face either virtually or in a classroom, work-based in a group, or as a series of one-to-one lessons. Learners should expect to experience revision, homework or consolidation activities outside of the classroom to be completed via some digital means.

5. Active IQ requirements for approved centres

Regardless of the delivery model, centres must provide:

- an appropriate induction onto the programme including:
 - assessment guidance and expectations
 - opportunities for re-assessment and all associated costs
- details of where to go for support, including technical support to manage issues relating to any ICT problems
- the delivery model/plan, including technologies to be adopted and implemented
- clear evidence of how learners will be tracked, supported and communicated with throughout the duration of the course

NB it is not sufficient to enrol the learner, provide access to the resources and digital platform, and then expect the learner to initiate contact
- regular and proactive communication to check progress, offer feedback and provide guidance. This must be logged with appropriate accompanying notes in relation to topics covered, information provided and any action points agreed

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- an appropriate learner management system (LMS) or similar to record the above evidence
- tracked evidence including formative assessment feedback in relation to learners' progress towards their targets, especially where they self-select readiness for assessment
- an appropriate internal quality assurance strategy that has sufficient checks and balances in place to monitor tutor and assessor activity, performance and judgements
- evidence of how it meets the needs of learners who may require additional support in any aspect of their learning
- evidence of process following any learner recommendations if a centre is unable to meet those needs via the intended model
- details of how the centre assures itself of the authenticity of work submitted online
- a set of published metrics (made available) to audit and monitor standards and achievement (outcomes) to ensure the effectiveness of each programme and delivery model overall

All the above will be reviewed and monitored on an ongoing basis after initial approval by the External Verifier team at Active IQ. Access to relevant information and evidence relating to the above requirements must be made available upon request (notwithstanding our obligations to the General Data Protection Regulations).

Wherever and however a qualification is administered, taught and assessed, it is important that it is comparable with any model of teaching, and the standards achieved are comparable with qualifications of the same level and similar qualifications on offer in the marketplace. This undertaking is required by Ofqual, and compliance is required from both awarding organisations and the centres delivering their qualifications.

For further information, please contact your allocated external verifier in the first instance.

6. References to associated documents

Information relating to regulatory compliance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/awarding-organisations-understanding-our-regulatory-requirements>

- Active IQ's approving centre devised resources
- Active IQ's flexible assessment policy
- Active IQ's resource policy

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7. Implementation and dissemination

This policy will be implemented immediately upon approval and available on Active IQ website.

8. Monitoring arrangements

We will review this policy annually as part of our self-evaluation arrangements, revising it as necessary in response to customer and learner feedback, or best practice guidance issued by the regulatory authorities.

This policy will be reviewed in six months by relevant Active IQ and NCFE colleagues to ensure document is aligned and fit for purpose following full integration of Active IQ.

9. Data retention

This policy does not involve the gathering of any personal data; therefore, no data retention timelines or requirements are needed.

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