

Supporting guidance internal moderation

The model described in this guidance has been developed by a group of employers who have consulted widely across the sector. The model outlines an internal moderation process to confirm the assessment outcome for each NQSW at the end of the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE).

The internal moderation process confirms the assessment outcome on behalf of the employer through reviewing and scrutinising the assessment recommendations of individuals. The purpose of the quality assurance system is to give the profession confidence that employers' judgements are consistent across the country.

The process is relevant for all organisations whether they are a large local authority with a significant number of NQSWs undertaking the ASYE, or a small independent or voluntary organisation employing one NQSW every few years.

In this guidance the term 'ASYE co-ordinator' is used, although it is acknowledged that some organisations use different titles for professionals with responsibility for the ASYE programme.

Purpose of internal moderation

Internal moderation combines two distinct activities:

1. Confirming the assessment outcome through scrutiny and challenge.

- To confirm the formal decision for ASYE on behalf of the employer or employers party to the internal moderation process.
- To ensure the assessment decision has been scrutinised through an agreed process and in line with nationally agreed standards (see below¹).
- To take action if there are concerns that the assessor's judgement is not accurate (i.e. not consistent with the assessment standard), valid, robust and sufficient.

2. Moderation

- To take an overview of the quality and consistency of assessment decisions and give feedback to assessors and the organisation to promote high standards and the continuous improvement of the ASYE process.
- To ensure all assessment decisions are made in line with the with the PQS (formerly known as the Knowledge and Skills Statement), underpinned by the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) capabilities, and are therefore eligible to be recognised nationally.
- To provide samples/evidence to the partnership moderation process and external moderation process and contribute to these processes as required.
- To receive and act on feedback from the partnership and external moderation process.

Internal moderation standards

1. An internal moderation process

Every ASYE employer should have a formal internal moderation process to review and scrutinise ASYE assessments and confirm the employer's final decision. NQSWs and assessors should be provided with specified timescales as to when outcomes will be made available and be informed of the final decision.

¹ For small organisations where there is no other social worker other arrangements may be made. These include asking for a social worker, familiar with the ASYE, from another organisation to moderate the recommendation or to formally join the ASYE moderation panel of another organisation.

2. Overall management and delivery of the ASYE assessment process

The ASYE co-ordinator, with the support of a senior manager nominated by the organisation, is responsible for the ASYE assessment process. The key tasks include:

2.1 Ensuring the employer has a process for allocating, developing and supporting a sufficient number of ASYE assessors. There should be mechanisms for supporting and developing assessors so that their practice is informed by the relevant professional standards and for supporting and managing those who are not yet meeting these standards.

2.2 Monitoring the progress of NQSWs over the course of ASYE and identifying issues relating to support, development, capability and assessment.

2.3 Ensuring reviews of the NQSW are completed to agreed timescales and their progress is monitored in order to ensure that their work is presented in a timely way to the internal moderation process.

3. Management of the internal moderation process

The ASYE co-ordinator, with the support of a senior manager nominated by the organisation, is responsible for the ASYE internal moderation process. The key tasks include:

3.1 They will convene an internal moderation process which will be accountable (on behalf of the employer) for the assessment decisions.

3.2 A minimum of two people should participate in the internal moderation decision-making.

3.3 Assessment decisions should be reviewed by an experienced registered social worker whose practice is informed by the relevant professional standards.

3.4 Other members of the moderation process who are not registered social workers may share the role of scrutinising the quality of the ASYE process.

3.5 The process may be undertaken either in face-to-face meetings or in virtual meetings, depending on local circumstances and decisions.

4. Internal moderation: review and scrutiny of the ASYE assessment decisions

The internal moderation process should ensure that:

4.1 Confirmation of the assessment outcomes is based on:

- a scrutiny of all ASYE assessment decisions made in the organisation
- a full reading of the evidence submitted by each NQSW and assessor (except professional documentation which will be verified by the assessor).

4.2 Each portfolio of evidence is read and reviewed by at least one other person who is:

- a member of the moderation process and not the assessor
- a registered social worker.

4.3 The purpose of reading the evidence for internal moderation of the assessment outcome is:

- to ensure that the requirements of the ASYE have been met (e.g. protected caseload, supervision) and that the evidence submitted is sufficient (e.g. the correct number of direct observations have been completed). This element is recorded in the internal panel template and can be assessed by any member involved in the process.
- to ensure the assessment recommendation made by the assessor is accurate (i.e. consistent with the assessment standards of the PQS and PCF), valid, robust and sufficient. This element can only be assessed by a registered social worker.

- to contribute to the gathering of information and evidence for feedback about the ASYE process to the organisation including, for example, the capabilities of assessors and the quality of practice demonstrated by NQSWs.

5. Reviewing the assessment

If the internal moderators do not agree with the assessor's recommendation or deem that there is not sufficient evidence to support the assessor's decision, agreed action should be taken within a given timescale. This may take the form of:

5.1 A request for more evidence.

5.2 A reassessment of part or all of the evidence with a view to bringing the assessment up to the expected standard.

In relation to the assessor, this may indicate a learning and development need. Agreed action to support the assessor's development should be planned and enabled.

6. Recording and reporting.

Common templates should be used to guide the reviewer(s) and contribute to maintaining consistency in internal moderation. These templates will enable information about quality and themes to be collected. They should be sent to the external moderation process where the set of evidence to which they relate has been selected for review. They may also be used to review organisational processes and develop strategies to enhance the quality of the ASYE process within the organisation.

7. Confidentiality

The ASYE co-ordinator should confirm to new panel members the framework governing the obligation of confidentiality for the internal panel process.

The NQSW is required to demonstrate in their portfolio evidence that they can meet the professional standards for confidentiality governing their social work practice. It is an organisation's responsibility to consider how to address the situation where these standards are not met.

If a NQSW's portfolio is called for moderation by partnership moderation panel or the national panel, the ASYE co-ordinator and NQSW should consider the statement of anonymisation and confidentiality provided by Skills for Care to support them in ensuring that the submitted portfolio meets the standards in relation to confidentiality.

8. Capability issues.

Confirmation of the employer decision should be fully integrated into the employer's human resources' (HR) processes and internal activities should be co-ordinated to ensure final decisions are communicated to HR/team managers/NQSWs in a timely way. HR capability processes should be used in the event of the NQSW failing the ASYE with the expectation that any capability issues will be managed separately from, and in advance of, their final assessment, and therefore will not be considered by internal moderation.

9. Supporting the development and consistency of internal panel moderators

To support the development and consistency of moderators in their decision-making, ASYE co-ordinators should consider the following:

- an induction for new moderators
- before becoming a moderator, the opportunity to discuss with an experienced moderator their review and decision-making processes; this could happen within the context of observing an internal moderation panel
- the opportunity to observe an internal moderation panel
- an opportunity for all panel members to review one or more pieces of evidence and discuss their evaluation of the evidence
- obtaining feedback from moderators on consistency and how to develop it.