

Memorandum of collaboration guidance¹

Background

External moderation is an important element of the national system of quality assurance incorporated within the [Knowledge and Skills Statement for Social Workers in Adult Services, 2015 \(KSS\)](#) (now known as the Post Qualifying Standards (PQS)). The purpose of the national quality assurance system is to achieve national consistency in NQSWs' experience of support, assessment and outcomes.

Every adults services employer is required to be a member of an ASYE partnership. The partnership moderation process will provide peer review, support, challenge and scrutiny of ASYE employer judgements in order to promote consistency and to identify and encourage the adoption of good practice.

Many ASYE partnerships now embrace both adult ASYE and child and family ASYE. This has happened organically and at the choice of participant organisations.

The Skills for Care [external moderation guidance for ASYE partnerships](#) states that an ASYE partnership will have a memorandum of collaboration which is signed by senior leaders within organisations whose areas of responsibility includes social work, outlines governance arrangements, membership, frequency of meetings and parts played by senior managers, principal social workers are expected to assume key roles in external moderation. The memorandum should be reviewed regularly.

This document provides guidance on the composition of a memorandum of collaboration for ASYE adults' external moderation processes. It complements our 'external moderation guidance'.

Skills for Care may ask an ASYE partnership to submit their memorandum of collaboration. This may happen, for example, as part of a national moderation activity being undertaken in relation to a portfolio from an organisation that is a member of the partnership.

Social work partnerships

Some employers may be members of existing wider social work education and development partnerships. Such partnerships may already have a memorandum of collaboration and this may include those who developed a memorandum to meet the requirements of the Skills for Care employer transition fund which operated from 2012–14.

If the broader social work partnership, which may be a teaching partnership, is going to also act as an ASYE partnership for the purposes of external moderation as detailed in the KSS (now known as the PQS), the partnership will need to ensure that ASYE external moderation processes are clearly identified within the memorandum either within the main body of the document or within a sub section.

¹ Partnerships may use an alternative title of memorandum of understanding

Content

The memorandum of collaboration should include the following areas, these could be headings within the document:

1. Introduction and background

This section will include a brief background or history of the partnership, member organisations and the community it serves. If it is a broader social work education or development partnership then this section can explain how ASYE external moderation is incorporated within its structure, remit and activities.

2. Aims and objectives

The purpose of external moderation within an ASYE partnership is to scrutinise both the ASYE final assessment decisions of its individual employer members and the ASYE support and assessment process. The partnership may wish to expand this objective to include other collaborative activities such as supporting the development of ASYE assessors and delivery of an ASYE programme.

3. Governance and compliance

Governance includes clarifying accountability and responsibilities; who is the partnership accountable to and for what? Again, if the ASYE external moderation process is integrated within a wider social work education partnership then there may be a reporting link to a strategic partnership body. If not, then the partnership may accept collective responsibility for ensuring that effective external moderation takes place and each organisation should nominate a principal social worker (PSW) or senior manager with responsibility for ASYE (e.g. Workforce Development Manager) to act as a signatory to the memorandum and commit their organisation to participating fully in the process.

Other areas to include in this section:

- **Decision making**

This should include who has the final say in the event of non-consensus and also record how disagreements or disputes are addressed. A nominated chair will usually have a key role in these situations.

- **Support**

If the partnership is unable to resolve an issue(s) within the partnership, then they may refer the matter to Skills for Care locality managers and national social work project managers for support and advice.

4. Membership and roles

The following areas should be included in this section:

Membership and attendance at meetings:

- Relationship with the private and voluntary sector: is the partnership open to new members, how will it offer support to the private and voluntary sector?
- Whether the partnership includes adults and child and family services or just adults services. If it includes child and family then it needs to specify whether child and family will participate in a joint moderation process or not.

- What constitutes a quorum at meetings?
- Meeting attendance: who attends from each organisation/at what level?
- Whether there is higher education institution (HEI) involvement
- How often is membership reviewed?
- How can people who need care and support contribute to the process?

Roles and responsibilities:

- Chairing meetings
Partners should elect a chair and confirm their role, responsibilities and term of office. The chair should confirm the accuracy of the external moderation summary report.
- Reviewers
Partnership members who are responsible for reviewing ASYE evidence as part of the external moderation process should normally be registered social workers, working at the advanced level of the Professional Capabilities Framework and able to demonstrate professional educator capabilities. The partnership may require reviewers to serve a term of office.

Administrative issues

The memorandum of collaboration should specify responsibilities for managing random sampling and storing and sending out partnership information to members and to the national moderation panel.

5. Moderation procedures and timescales

This section needs to outline how the moderation process will operate and can include the following:

- Moderation timing/timetabling.
- Specifying the evidence to be reviewed, whether it is to be reviewed by one or more reviewers and whether the process includes monitoring the progress of NQSWs throughout the ASYE or only reviewing the final assessment. evidence after the ASYE has been completed and the assessment decision has been confirmed by the internal moderation process.
- The process of giving feedback, including who is given feedback (i.e. employers, assessors and possibly NQSWs) and how is this recorded.
- Predicted volume of evidence in a year.
- Submission dates/lead up time.
- Random sampling methodology and process and how to quantify the 10% for adults ASYE.
- Confidentiality, data protection and information sharing agreements including, what level of anonymising is required or whether a confidentiality agreement is acceptable.
- Venues for meetings.

6. Support and development

The partnership should state how they will support, develop and monitor reviewers to ensure they have on-going capability to fulfil their role in the external

moderation process. This could include activity to support the consistency of decision-making by reviewers.

7. Review and evaluation

This should include arrangements for reviewing the memorandum of collaboration regularly. The partnership should decide the regularity of the review, taking into consideration any future guidance from Skills for Care.